The Corner Gangs of Midcity

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

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

Senior Bandits

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

Moll to Field Worker

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

169 While the amount of newspaper space allocated to gang activities was generally lower in all American cities during the 1960's than the '50's, gangs continued to command periodic attention
The role of the mass media in these developments at once directs attention to the issue of data-gathering and reporting. The part played by the media in creating a highly convincing but largely inaccurate image of city gangs provides a vivid illustration of the critical influence of data-gathering methods on the picture one gets of city gangs and similar social phenomena. The issue of methodology is particularly important in dealing with phenomena such as gangs, youth crime, and low-status communities, which strongly engage human values. The more highly charged an area of inquiry, the greater the likelihood of influence by the values of the investigator and contemporary fashions in explanation. The relation of methods to findings, and of values to methods, are issues of enormous complexity, and cannot be treated in any detail in this work.\textsuperscript{170} It is important, however, before proceeding with a description of the gangs of Midcity, to note briefly at least three characteristics of data-gathering methods which affect the likelihood of obtaining an accurate picture of gangs and their context. These are, first, the “distance” of the analyst from the phenomenon under study; second, the duration of the overall study period, and third, the frequency of recorded observations or data-gathering efforts during the period of study.

The substance of Chapters One, Two and Three deal primarily with the broader social and historical contexts of gang life in Midcity, and is based for the most part on sources of information which stand at several removes from the events, persons, or forms of behavior under consideration. Chapters One and Three present information on community characteristics and youth crime derived primarily from numerical data collected at varying intervals by official agencies, throughout that decade in most of the nation’s largest cities. Prominent among these were Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. The fall-off of media coverage was most marked in New York, probably because it was here that the amount of press attention during the ’50’s had been most inflated.

\textsuperscript{170} Originally planned full chapter on method; eliminated, reasons of economy, other reasons. Many methods used in this book—e.g., historical, demographic, correlational analysis, action-sentiment analysis, field-observation, participant observation, others. Practice followed of including brief discussion of relevant methodological considerations in connection with presentation of findings, where necessary for interpretation and/or clarification.
and consisting largely of counts of the number of persons in different categories.

Chapter Two is based on historical accounts and documents of varying degrees of closeness to the events they describe. With the present chapter the scope of concern narrows, the point of vantage moves in, and the focus of investigation closes in for a direct and intimate examination of gangs themselves, based on intensive, frequent, extensively-reported, long-term field contact. A corps of field workers maintained almost daily contact with gang members for periods of up to three years, reporting their contacts in detail. Research analysts remained in the community for a period of approximately ten years. Most of the research period involved analysis of voluminous data collected during the “intensive contact” period, but additional data-collection on a less intensive basis continued following this period.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The fact that the term “hanging” was used by Midcity residents to convey three somewhat different meanings provides the basis for a more general definition of this practice. As used in the phrase “he hangs out,” the term served to delineate a particular kind of person who pursued a particular kind of practice. Someone who hung out—who habitually assembled with others at a particular locale—was seen to be clearly differentiated from those—(generally conceived to be higher in social status) who did not engage in this practice. The phrase “he hangs with us” conveyed an in-group out-group distinction. It meant “he is one of us”—an accepted member of a solidary association of peers. The phrase “they’re just hangin’ out” was used to refer to a particular set of activities characteristic of hanging—discussing, arguing, roughhousing, courting, playing pranks, playing cards, and so on. From these three connotations there emerges a general definition of the practice of hanging as
conceived by Midcity residents: it was a form of recurrent and localized assembly, 
often outdoors, of a group of peers who saw themselves as contained within a 
solidary associational orbit, and who were thereby differentiated from those who did 
not congregate—during which one pursued a range of customary activities centering 
on generalized interaction.¹⁷³

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

Storekeepers varied considerably in sex and temperament. Three rough 
categories may be distinguished; the storekeeper who was big daddy or big mama to 
the corner gang; the storekeeper who tolerated but was not actively involved with 
the hanging group; and the storekeeper who resented the presence of the youngsters 
but who was too frightened of retaliation to ban their presence.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ On “near-group” idea—Yablonsky issue. Were groups “true groups?” With reference to most 
definitions of “true” groups...solidarity, in-group sense, durability, esprit-de-corps, etc., gangs were 
groups in fullest sense of word.
¹⁷⁴ The corner store as a central feature of the hanging corner and the relations between gangs and 
various kinds of storekeepers afford the basis of extensive treatment. Some material on individual 
stores and storekeepers will be included in the descriptions of intensive-contact gangs, but a more 
comprehensive treatment will not be included in the present volume.
Since it comprised the major locus of “free-time” activity during much of adolescence, the ideal corner had to incorporate a rather delicately balanced set of characteristics. If it were too public the annoyance of local adults and consequent police action would result in overly-frequent disbursement. If it were too private, it would lack the excitement produced by the ebb and flow of city life—store patrons, passing automobiles, passing girls, local drunks, local policemen. If adults were too watchful, the freedom of the gang to pursue many of its customary practices was inhibited, but it was equally important that one be aware of, and stimulated by, the shocked and indignant reactions of certain local adults, especially old ladies and the parents of “nice children”—to the language, dress, and general demeanor of the corner boys and girls.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

176 Quote by member of Black Panthers, 1968, very similar. (1968 Newspaper files, U.S. Gangs--)
to subordinate their individualistic predilections to the demands of group conformity.

In addition to the 15 “major” hanging corners, there were about 35 “minor” corners. The size and composition of the groups hanging out on these corners showed considerable variation; in general, they comprised fewer units of smaller size. One fairly common pattern was a three unit aggregate consisting of one group of older males, one of younger males, and one of females. Other minor corners comprised three male units; the simplest pattern consisted of one male and one female group of similar ages. In those cases where there were not enough adolescents to form a full set of age-graded units, the age-spread within existing units tended to be somewhat wider. The minor corners could be viewed as truncated versions of the more developed corners. The number, age, and sex composition of hanging units on a particular corner were determined by a complex combination of factors, including the size of the adolescent “feeding” population at a given point in time, their age distribution, geographical boundaries, location and size of populations of different social status levels, rates of population in- and out-movement, and so on.¹⁷⁷

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

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¹⁷⁷ Extended analysis of the number, form, size, and composition of street corner groups in a community provides a potential for systematic analysis. Can’t expand here, but good potential for systematic study on comparative basis. Range of variables needed to “account for” variation in size, number, etc. suggested in Asmarom Legesse, “[Some East African Age-] Class Systems,” Special Paper, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, May 1961.
extensive effort to amass this type of information but sufficient work was done to permit some relatively rough estimates.\textsuperscript{178}

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was not possible with the limited resources of the present study to undertake a careful study of all 50 hanging corners in Midcity.\footnote{The Project budget was $55,000 a year for both service and research operations (with a full-time staff of 10 to 12 persons) during the period of major data collection.} Although a good deal of information was collected as to general patterns of adult and adolescent life throughout Midcity as a whole, research efforts were concentrated on three of the major hanging corners in the intensive study area. These corners will be referred to here as the “Bandit” corner, the “Outlaw” corner, and the “Royal” corner—after the names of the major corner aggregates which occupied them. Those who hung out on
the Bandit and Outlaw corners were predominantly white, and those on the Royal corner predominantly Negro. Fairly intensive contact was also maintained with a fourth corner—the “Warrior” corner, which was predominantly Negro—but the experience of this aggregate was not directly utilized in the extensive qualitative descriptions of corner gang life which follow.\(^{182}\)

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

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

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\(^{182}\) Reasons for this: Combination of 1) Work which started later; 2) Considerably less intensive than others; 3) Time and cost of records-coding led to decision not to code fairly extensive field data on Warriors.

youngsters associated with the corner whose pattern of hanging was less consistent. Such youngsters might hang out for relatively brief periods, on a sporadic basis, or at odd hours. While recognized by members of the core group as persons who “hang out with us,” it was not possible for workers to become as familiar with these “fringe” members of the gangs as with the “active” members. In practical terms, this meant that workers often did not learn the names of some of those who hung out in their area, or knew them only as “Red” or “Sister.” Youngsters in this category may be designated as “fringe” members of the gangs, as distinguished from “active” members. For research purposes, only “active” members were counted as members of the “study gangs” which made up the Project’s study population. Fringe members, whose names, addresses and social characteristics were mostly or partly unknown, do not figure in statistical tabulations or other analyses.

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Corner Aggregate</th>
<th>Units on Nearby Minor Corners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Brigands</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Senior Bandits</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Junior Bandits</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Midget Bandits</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>174</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Outlaw Neighborhood: White Lower-Class II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV Marauders</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Senior Outlaws</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Junior Outlaws</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>II Outlawettes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Midget Outlaws</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>126</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>143</strong></td>
<td><strong>48</strong></td>
<td><strong>143</strong></td>
<td><strong>143</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Royal Neighborhood: Negro Lower Class II & III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV Monarchs</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Kings</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>III Queens</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Princes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>III Ladies</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Squires</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>136</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>180</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>180</strong></td>
<td><strong>269</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals: Males | 436 | Females | 95 | 531 | Males | 70 | Females | 67 | 137 | 668

I-IV Age Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I 12-14</th>
<th>II 14-16</th>
<th>III 16-18</th>
<th>IV 18-20</th>
<th>N= Total number known persons affiliated with unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underline = Intensive study group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
It will be observed that the number of members of each of the intensive contact groups given in Table 2.5 is smaller than that given in Table 1.5. For example, the Senior Bandits appear in Table 1.5 with 41 members and in Table 2.5 with 32. These differences reflect a further distinction which was made as to “classes” of gang membership. “Active” members of gangs—that is, those whose names and social characteristics were known—were divided into two classes: core and peripheral. Since, for the most part, the gangs were treated as collective entities for research purposes, it was important that each intensive-contact group represent a relatively solidary group. In order to include only those who “belonged” to the unit in some significant sense, each person known to be affiliated with each intensive study gang was ranked on a four point scale with respect to four criteria—hanging frequency, acceptance by others, status within the group, and pattern of activity participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Status</td>
<td>Higher Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older</td>
<td>Senior Bandits</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger</td>
<td>Junior Bandits</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>154</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those who fell below a particular value based on a weighted combination of assignment criteria were not considered to be members of the gang for study purposes. On these grounds, 84 individuals who maintained some order of
affiliation with the seven groups were excluded from consideration. This accounts for differences in the size of the groups shown in Tables 1.5 and 2.5.\textsuperscript{185} For present purposes, an “ideal” intensive-study population would have comprised sixteen rather than seven gangs—including both age categories and both social status categories for white males, white females, Negro males and Negro females. As it is, gangs of both higher and lower social status as well as older and younger ages are found only in the “white male” category.

One important category, that of lower status (lower class III) Negroes—is not represented among the intensive study groups. In one sense this is unfortunate, since persons in this category comprise a very important part of contemporary lower class society, and manifest the lower class III subculture in one of its classic forms. In another sense the absence of this category is an advantage. A good proportion of contemporary attention to Negroes focuses on those in the lowest status positions, and a good proportion of attention to low status populations focuses on Negroes. The behavioral practices of this particular population category—which, according to one estimate, comprised in the 1960’s roughly two-tenths of those considered to be lower class by virtue of being “poor,” have thus come to represent, for many, the typical or dominant manifestation of lower class subculture.\textsuperscript{186} The general “flavor” of lower class adolescent life conveyed by the present volume is not seasoned by the conventional ingredient of Negro lower-class III subculture. What it may lose thereby in spice, it gains in representativeness, since low status Negroes comprise a clear minority of the contemporary lower class.\textsuperscript{187}

\textsuperscript{185} The method for assigning members to core or peripheral categories, here described in simplified form, was developed and executed by Dr. Hildred Geertz.

\textsuperscript{186} Defining as “poor” a non-farm family of four with an annual income of $3,000 before taxes (1962 dollars), United States President Lyndon B. Johnson presented the statistic that “22 percent (of the poor) are non-white”—which would mean, of course, that of those thus categorized as “poor,” 78\% were white. (Johnson, Lyndon B., Address to Congress, January 20, 1964). 1970 census figures-rural, urban. See U.S. Negro folder.

\textsuperscript{187} While the experiences of Lower Class III Negroes do not figure directly in the present examination of customary behavioral practices of Midcity gang members, they do play an important part in the analysis of court-handled crime. In addition to the 21 gangs in three Midcity neighborhoods comprising 668 persons and the 7 gangs comprising the “intensive study” population
Although lower status Negroes, along with other “logical” categories indicated in Table 2.5, were not represented among the intensive study gangs, there was at least one gang in each of the four sex and race categories; this fact makes it possible for future chapters to explore quite systematically sex and race differences in gang behavior, and to explore somewhat less systematically age and social status differences. Five of the intensive study gangs were male (154 persons) and two female (50); five were white (126) and two black (78); four were older (135) and three younger (69); four were of higher (lower class II) social status (127), and three of lower (lower class III) status (77).

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

The Bandit Neighborhood

During the period between the Civil War and World War II the Bandit neighborhood was well-known throughout the city as a colorful and close-knit

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relations among Bandit Subdivisions

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

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

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

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

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

\footnote{189} The nature of relationships between male and female corner gang subdivisions is described in some detail in the chapter on male sex and mating behavior, especially pages.

\footnote{190} More detailed information on intra-gang kinship ties is included in the discussion of relations between Outlaw subdivisions. Similar numbers and kinds of kin relationships obtained for the Bandit groups. See also the discussion of intra-gang kinship in Chapter One (Family School and Work).
The Senior Bandits

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To a greater degree than in any of the other six groups, crime as an occupation and preoccupation played a central role in the lives of the Senior Bandits. Prominent among recurrent topics of discussion were thefts successfully executed, fights recently engaged in, and the current status of gang members who were in the process of passing through the successive stages of arrest, appearing in court, being sentenced, appealing, re-appearing, and so on. Although none of the contact-period crimes of the Senior Bandits merited front-page headlines, a number of their more colorful exploits did receive newspaper attention. In these instances the stories were carefully clipped and left in Ben’s store for circulation among the

\textsuperscript{192} Gather contact-period data: see JB p. 17
gang members. Newspaper citation functioned for the Senior Bandits somewhat as do press notices for actors; gang members who made the papers were elated and were granted prestige; those who did not were often disappointed; participants and non-participants who failed to see the stories felt cheated.

The majority of gang member crimes were thefts; the Senior Bandits were thieves par excellence. Their thievery was imaginative, colorful, and varied. Most thefts were from stores. Included among these was a department store theft of watches, jewelry and clothing for use as family Christmas presents; a daylight raid on a supermarket for food and refreshments needed for a beach outing; a day-time burglary of an antique store, in which eight gang members, in the presence of the owner, stole a Samurai sword and French dueling pistols. The gang also engaged in car theft. One summer several Bandits stole a car to visit girl friends who were working at a summer resort. Sixty miles north of Port City, hailed by police for exceeding speed limits, they raced away at speeds of up to 100 miles an hour, overturned the car, and were hospitalized for injuries. In another instance Bandits stole a car in an effort to return a drunken companion to his home and avoid the police; when this car stalled they stole a second car parked in front of its owner’s house; the owner ran out and fired several shots at the thieves, which failed to forestall the theft.

The frequency of Senior Bandit crimes, along with the relative seriousness of their offenses, resulted in a high rate of arrest and confinement. During the contact period somewhat over 40% of the gang members were confined in correctional institutions, with terms averaging 11 months per boy. The average Senior Bandit spent approximately one month in four in a correctional facility. This circumstance prompted one of the Bandettes to remark—“Ya know, them guys got a new place to hang—the reformatory. That bunch is never together—one halfa them don’t know the other half...”

This appraisal, while based on fact, failed to recognize an important feature of gang relationships. With institutional confinement a frequent and predictable
event, the Senior Bandits employed a set of devices to maintain a high degree of group solidarity. One arrangement served to maintain intra-gang communication in the face of geographical separation. Lines of communication between corner and institution were kept open by frequent visits by those on the outside, during which inmates were brought food, money, and cigarettes as well as news of the neighborhood and other correctional facilities. One Midcity social worker claimed that the institutionalized boys knew what was going on in the neighborhood before most neighborhood residents.

By common understanding, unconfined members had the privilege of using the clothing and other belongings of the confined, and delegations of gang members would visit the homes of the newly institutionalized to claim this privilege. This form of exchange, since it was reciprocal, served to maintain material as well as informational and associational bonds between separated gang members. The Bandits also maintained well-established methods for arranging and effectuating institutional escape by those gang members who were so inclined. Details of escapes were arranged in the course of visits and inter-inmate contacts; escapees were provided by fellow gang members with escape-facilitating equipment such as ropes to scale prison walls, and getaway cars. The homes of one’s gang fellows were also made available as hideouts. Given this set of arrangements, the Bandits carried out several highly successful escapes; one succeeded in executing the first escape in its history from a maximum security installation.\textsuperscript{193}

The means by which the Senior Bandits achieved group cohesion in spite of recurrent incarcerations of key members merit further consideration—both because they are of interest in their own right, and because they throw light on important relationships between leadership, group structure, and the motivation of criminal behavior. Despite the assertion that “one halfa them guys don’t know the other half,” the Senior Bandits were a solidary associational unit, with clear group

\textsuperscript{193} Additional detail as to the Bandit’s correctional experience, as well as general analysis of the confinement and parole experience of all seven gangs is contained in a chapter on the correctional experience of Midcity gangs which is omitted from the present volume for reasons of economy.
boundaries and definite criteria for differentiating those who were “one of us” from those who were not. It was still said of an accepted group member that “he hangs with us”—even when the boy had been away from the corner in an institution for a year or more. Incarcerated leaders, in particular, were referred to frequently and in terms of admiration and respect.

The system used by the Senior Bandits to maintain associational solidarity and reliable leadership arrangements incorporated three major devices: authority diffusion, contingency anticipation, and role interchangeability. The recurring absence from the corner of varying numbers of gang members inhibited the formation of a set of relatively stable cliques of the kind found in the other intensive-study gangs. What was fairly stable, instead, was a set of “classes” of members, each of which could include different individuals at different times. The relative size of these classes was fairly constant, and a member of one class could move to another to take the place of a member who had been removed by institutionalization.

The four major classes of gang members could be called “key leaders,” “standby leaders,” “primary followers,” and “secondary followers.” During the intensive contact period the gang contained five key leaders—boys whose accomplishments had earned them the right to command; six standby leaders—boys prepared to step into leadership positions when key leaders were institutionalized; eight primary followers—boys who hung out regularly and who were the most dependable followers of current leaders; and thirteen secondary followers—boys who hung out less regularly and who tended to adapt their allegiances to particular leadership situations.

Given the dominant role of criminal activity among the Senior Bandits, one might expect that leadership and followership would be related in some significant way to criminal involvement. This was indeed the case. Each of the five key leaders had demonstrated unusual ability in criminal activity; in this respect the Senior

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194 Based on terminology first proposed by Dr. Mickey Clampit.
Bandits differed from the other intensive-contact gangs, each of which included at least one leader whose position was based in whole or part on a commitment to a law-abiding course of action. One of the Senior Bandit’s key leaders was especially respected for his daring and adeptness in theft; another, who stole infrequently relative to other leaders, for his courage, stamina and resourcefulness as a fighter. The other three leaders had proven themselves in both theft and fighting, with theft the more important basis of eminence.

An examination of selected aspects of the criminal experience of the four classes of gang member shows clearly the relationship of leadership to criminal involvement. In the course of the 20 month contact period, the average key leader was involved in known illegal incidents 18.8 times, the average standby leader 11.1 times, the average primary follower 5.8 times, and the average secondary follower 2.0 times, during each ten month period not spent in institutional confinement.\(^\text{195}\) During the same period the average key leader was confined to a correctional institution for 10 months, the average standby leader 7.3 months, the average primary follower 3.5, and the average secondary follower 3.0.

These figures show that gang members who were closest to leadership positions were also the most active in crime. The confinement statistics, however, suggest that maintaining a system of leadership on this basis poses special problems. The more criminally active a gang member, the greater the likelihood that he would be apprehended and removed from the neighborhood; thus substantially diminishing his opportunities to convert earned prestige into operative leadership. How was it possible, then, for the Senior Bandits to maintain effective leadership arrangements? They utilized a remarkably efficient system whose several features were ingenious and deftly contrived.

First, the recognition by the Bandits of five key leaders—a relatively large number for a gang of 32 members—served as a form of insurance against being left

\(^{195}\) For definitions of the “incident” and “involvement” as measures of criminal activity, see Chapter Ten.
without leadership. It was most unlikely that all five would be incarcerated at the same time, particularly since collective crimes were generally executed by one or possibly two leaders along with several of their followers. (During the contact period, the largest number of key leaders confined at any one time was four, and the average number two). One Bandit key leader expressed his conviction that exclusive reliance on a single leader was unwise: “...since we been hangin’ out (at Ben’s corner) we ain’t had no leader. Other kids got a leader of the gang, like up in Cornerville, they always got one kid who’s the big boss...so far we ain’t did that, and I don’t think we ever will. We talk about ‘Smiley and his boys,’ or ‘Digger and his clique,’ and like that...”

It is clear that for the speaker the term “leader” carried the connotation of a single and all-powerful gang lord, and was not applicable to the diffuse and decentralized leadership arrangements of the Bandits. It is also significant that the gangs of “Cornerville” which he used as an example were Italian gangs whose rate of criminal involvement was relatively low. The “one big boss” type of leadership found in these gangs derives from the “Caesar” or “Il Duce” pattern so well established in Italian culture, and was workable for Cornerville gangs because the gangs and their leaders were sufficiently law-abiding and/or sufficiently capable of evading arrest as to make the removal of the leader an improbable event.  

Having five key leaders made it possible for the Senior Bandits to base prestige on criminal achievement, with the leaders, as exemplars, excelling in criminality, and at the same time to maintain an associational system which would not collapse when the consequences of their criminal activity forced the leaders to vacate their positions. A second feature, the use of “standby” leaders, made possible a relatively stable balance among the several cliques. When the key leader of his clique was present in the area, the standby leader assumed a subordinate role and did not initiate action; if and when the key leader was committed to an institution,

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196 For a description and analysis of leadership in gangs of the “Cornerville” type see Whyte, William F. “Street Corner Society,” etc.
he was ready to assume leadership. The standby leader knew, however, that he was expected to relinquish this position on the return of the key leader. By this device each of the five major cliques was assured some form of leadership even when key leaders were absent, and could maintain its form, identity and influence vis-à-vis other cliques.

A third device which enabled the gang to maintain a relatively stable leadership-and-clique structure involved the phenomenon of “optimal” criminal involvement. Since excellence in crime was the major basis of gang leadership, it might be expected that some of those who aspired to leadership would assume that there was a simple and direct relationship between crime and leadership: the more crime, the more prestige; the more prestige, the stronger the basis of authority. The flaw in this simple formula was in fact recognized by the actual key leaders. In striving for maximal criminal involvement, one also incurred the maximum risk of incarceration. Leadership involved more than gaining prestige through crime; one had to be personally involved with other gang members for sufficiently extended periods to exploit won prestige through specific actions. Such actions included wooing followers, initiation of non-criminal as well as criminal activities, and effecting working relationships with other leaders. Newly returned key leaders as well as the less-criminally-active class of standby leaders tended to step up their involvement in criminal activity on assuming or reassuming leadership positions in order to solidify their positions, but also tended to diminish such involvement once this was achieved.197

Those who failed to grasp the principle of optimal criminality were unable to convert their criminal achievements into leadership. Evidence for this is found by examining the criminal experience of the thirteen secondary followers. The average

197 An increase in the criminal activity of gang leaders attempting to defend or consolidate leadership positions is also reported by James Short and his colleagues for gangs in Chicago. See, in particular, Short, J., “The response of Gang Leaders to Status Threats,” An. Jnl. Sociology, LXVIII (March 1963), 571-79. Their analysis of the “King Rattlers,” where the threat to leadership was posed by a social worker rather than another gang leader, was based in part on the previously reported experience of the Senior Bandits.
confinement rate of this class of gang member during the twenty month contact period was three months; this average, however, was a product of the contrasting experiences of two subclasses. Ten of the boys were confined for short periods or not at all; the other three, however, were confined for an average of 15 months each—three-quarters of the total period, and half again as long as the key leaders. This ratio between “in” and “out” time did not permit these criminally active boys to convert their prestige into leadership, and they were thus constrained to share with the criminally less-active the status of secondary follower. It would thus appear that the “optimum” ratio of freedom to confinement for Senior Bandit leaders was three to five months “in” for every ten “out,” and that a ration in excess of seven to ten precluded the attainment of leadership. It should be added that it was not only practical considerations that prevented the overly criminal boy from assuming leadership. The Senior Bandits had a concept of an “appropriate” degree of criminality; those whose crimes exceeded, in frequency or severity, the limits of appropriate involvement, were deemed to lack elements of control, balance, and restraint necessary to effective leadership.

One fairly evident weakness in so flexible and fluid a system of cliques and leadership was the danger that violent and possibly disruptive internal conflict might erupt among key leaders who were competing for followers or standby leaders who were reluctant to relinquish their positions. There was, in fact, surprisingly little overt conflict of any kind among Bandit leaders. On their release from confinement, leaders were welcomed with enthusiasm and appropriate observances both by their followers and by other leaders. The returnees took the center of the stage as they recounted to rapt listeners their institutional experiences, the circumstances of those still confined, and developments regarding policies, and personnel, and politics at the correctional school.

When they were together Bandit leaders dealt with one another gingerly, warily, and with evident respect. On one occasion a standby leader, who was less criminally active than the returning key leader, offered little resistance to being
displaced, but did serve his replacement with the warning that a resumption of his former high rate of crime would soon result in commitment both of himself and his clique. On another occasion one of the toughest of the Senior Bandits (later sentenced to an extended term in an adult institution for ringleading a major prison riot), returned to the corner to find that another leader had taken over not only some of his key followers but his “steady” girlfriend as well. Instead of engaging his rival in an angry and perhaps violent confrontation, he reacted quite mildly, giving vent to his hostility in the form of sarcastic teasing, calculated to needle but not to incite. In the place of a direct challenge, the newly returned key leader set about to regain his followers and his girl by active re-involvement in criminal activity. This course of action—competing for followers by successful performance in prestigious activities rather than by brute-force confrontation—was standard practice among the Senior Bandits.¹⁹⁸

The intricate system for maintaining associational cohesion in the face of periodic absences by key members—a system which was flexible, fluid, and adaptive—illuminates several aspects of the relationship between the motivation to exercise leadership and the motivation to commit crimes. Although no member of the gang could have conceptualized the operation of this system as a set of abstract principles, it is evident that on some level of awareness the gang members realized the importance of shared and decentralized authority, and that this realization served to inhibit disruptive conflict among leaders; they realized also that optimal rather than maximal criminality was a precondition of their leadership system, and this realization served to keep criminal involvement within certain limits; they realized further that considerations of group cohesion took precedence over personal ambition, and this realization served to restrain attempts to gain exclusive authority.

The will to gain leadership and the desire to maintain a solidary group thus provided for the Senior Bandits both incentives for engaging in crime and incentives

¹⁹⁸ Low level of aggression among leaders in a gang also reported by Short et al., 1963, op. cit.
for inhibiting criminal involvement. The successful leader had to be sufficiently active in crime to earn leadership, but not so active as to default its exercise. Membership in different intra-gang classes was associated with different levels of criminal involvement. Thus, despite the fact that the Senior Bandits were the most criminal of the intensive contact gangs, it is evident that their criminal behavior represented far much more than an impulsive “acting out” of uncontrollable inner impulses. On a partly cognitive, partly covert level, and in a most subtle and intricate fashion, the persistence and viability of the gang as an associational unit played an intimate part in the complex set of influences which motivated its members to commit crimes.\footnote{A psychiatrist in close contact with the Senior Bandits represented them as one of the most disturbed, disorganized, and anomic groups he had ever known. This appraisal was in part a consequence of a clinical perspective which used idealized patterns of normal middle class behavior as an implicit standard for judging normality, in part a consequence of taking criminal behavior as such as a direct measure of “sickness,” in part a result of data-gathering methods based primarily on office interviews with individuals rather than long-term group observation in the “natural” environment of the gang.}

The Junior Bandits

The Junior Bandits were the second youngest of the four male gang subdivisions which frequented the Bandit corner during the intensive-contact period. Above them in the age hierarchy were the Senior Bandits, and below them the Midgets. The Junior Bandits numbered 34 active members, making them somewhat larger than the average Bandit subdivision. Their intensive contact period was just under 10 months, the shortest of all seven study gangs. At the start of this period their average age was 15.5 years, and at the end, 16.4. As was the case for the other gangs, 90% of the boys fell within a two year age span. As already mentioned, the Juniors were linked by kinship with the other Bandit groups, with almost half of the boys having siblings in other subdivisions.

The ethnic and social status of the Junior Bandits was similar to that of their older brother group. The boys were Catholic, predominantly Irish, and lower class
III in social status. Fathers held jobs such as elevator operator, truck driver, and factory laborer. The educational status of the Juniors, while consistent with lower class III status, was somewhat higher than that of the other lower class III gangs. Fifty-nine percent of the boys failed to complete high school, compared with 90% for the Senior Bandits and 82% for the Molls. So far as is known, none of the Junior Bandits graduated from college, although one was reported to have taken post-high school technical training.

**Law Violation, Cliques, and Leadership**

On the basis of a variety of measures of criminality, the Junior Outlaws ranked as the second most criminal of the intensive contact groups. As of a year after the termination of the intensive contact period, 53% of the gang were known to have been arrested at least once; this compared to a 100% arrest rate for the Senior Bandits and a 50% rate for the next-ranking Junior Outlaw. About 40% had appeared in court. On some measures the criminality of the Junior Outlaws even exceeded that of their older brother group. Gang members were known to have been involved in 27 incidents of assault during the contact period—almost three per month; this compared with an all-gang rate of .5 per month, and a rate of .84 for the next-ranking Senior Bandits. Similarly the Juniors ranked first in the percentage of members known to have participated in assaultive activity. They also showed a slightly higher frequency of theft incidents than their older brother group—3.1 incidents per month compared to 2.7 for the Seniors, and a 1.5 male gang average. Despite their relatively high frequency, Junior Bandit crimes tended to be considerably less serious than those of their older brother group. This is evidenced by the fact that the average Junior Bandit had faced court charges 2.0 times by the time he reached 18, while the average Senior Bandit at this age had been charged 7.6 times. Even so, the Juniors ranked second in this respect since the next highest rate, that of the Senior Outlaws, was 1.4.
As the criminal specialty of the Senior Bandits was theft, so the specialty of the Juniors was assault. Their rate of involvement in incidents of assault during the contact period was six times higher than that of the average male gang, and almost four times that of their seniors. As was the case for their general criminal activity, the assaultive activity of the Junior Bandits, despite its high frequency, did not result in as much official action in the long run as that of their older brother group. Through age 18 the monthly rate of court appearances on assault charges for the Juniors was .22, compared to .58 for the Seniors. Even so, the Junior Bandits were involved in more serious assault incidents during the contact period than any other gang. In one instance a Junior Bandit hanging out in Ben’s inflicted a critical (but not fatal) skull fracture on a member of an “outside” gang. This incident triggered off a series of encounters between the two gangs which kept the neighborhood in a state of agitation for over two months. The Junior Bandits displayed the kind of appetite for fighting that their older brothers did for theft; it was a Junior Bandit who said, of an annual parade, “We have a fight there every year; we always go because if anybody wants to start a fight, we want to show we’re ready!”

Each of the seven gangs maintained a somewhat different set of arrangements for accommodating problems of leadership and the coordination of gang activity. The case of the Junior Bandits is of particular interest in that their leadership system combined certain features of the Senior Bandits (same social status, older, more criminal) and that of the Junior Outlaws (same age, higher status, less criminal). The Junior Bandits differed from their older brother group in two significant respects. Younger and less criminal, the issue of whether law-abiding or law-violating behavior would take precedence as a prime basis of prestige was as yet unsettled. Furthermore, the fact that their criminal behavior was less serious meant that they were not faced with nearly so severe a problem of achieving group cohesion in the face of periodic incarceration of key members.

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200 It should be noted that this non-fatal injury was the most serious to have resulted from assaultive activity for all gangs during the entire contact period. See “Assault” chapter, Chapter 13. 337
The 34 active members of the Junior Bandits were grouped into four categories; three relatively stable cliques and a fourth group whose clique affiliation was indefinite or subject to change. The three stable cliques formed a kind of triumvirate consisting of two subordinate cliques which were in direct conflict over the issue of violative behavior, and a dominant clique which served as a general organ of authority.

The two subordinate cliques numbered about seven boys each. As in the case of the Junior Outlaws, one clique was oriented to law-abiding activity as a major basis of prestige while the other was oriented toward law-violation. The leader of the “good boy” or law-abiding clique had no court record, was still in school, and held a steady after-school job in a food store. Settlement house and church personnel considered him well-mannered and well-behaved, an appraisal which enabled him to play a liaison role between the gang and adult agencies. This ability, along with his organizing talent and athletic achievements, formed the basis of his leadership role. He did not, however, utilize his position to act as a forceful advocate of law-abiding conduct; when this issue arose he generally assumed a noncommittal stance. The boy who was generally entrusted with gang funds was also a member of the law-abiding faction.

The leader of the violation-oriented or “bad boy” faction had dropped out of school, worked only sporadically, and was one of the most actively criminal members of the gang. Members of his clique were regarded as rowdies and troublemakers by “Set” personnel, and were refused access to settlement house facilities. When the Junior Bandits assembled to discuss lawful undertakings such as team athletics or a party to raise funds for athletic equipment, members of the “bad boy” faction were generally disorderly and disruptive—throwing bottles or baseballs at their fellows and pulling chairs from under those who were attempting to forward the business of the meeting. Junior Bandits of whatever clique who were

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201 Among those contributing to the analysis of Junior Bandit cliques were Dr. Hildred Geertz, Dr. Mickey Clampit, and Dr. David Kantor.
contemplating an illegal escapade knew that they could get encouragement and direction from the leader of the “bad boy” clique.

During the contact period the two subordinate cliques engaged in a running battle in which the “good boy” faction pressed for lawful activity as a basis of gang prestige and the “bad boy” faction for unlawful. This battle, during the contact period, was essentially a standoff. Occasionally a member of the law-abiding faction succeeded in tempering the unruliness of the “bad boys;” more frequently, however, “bad boys” plans for illegal activity met with little resistance from the “good boys,” who were often enticed into acquiescence or even participation. Fragmentary knowledge of the post-contact period provided some evidence of a triumph for the proponents of illegality; the full course of developments, however, could not be followed as was possible in the case of the Junior Outlaws, where one side won a clear victory.\textsuperscript{202} The role of the dominant clique with regard to this conflict is of some interest, and will be discussed shortly.

Leadership of the Junior Bandits was exercised, in effect, not by an individual but by a group. The dominant clique of the gang consisted of about 10 boys, most of whom were slightly older than members of the two subordinate cliques. Each of the boys in the dominant clique had proven his ability in some activity valued by the gang. One was recognized as a skillful fighter and strategist, and assumed leadership when the gang became involved in combat. The organizational capabilities of another enabled him to take the lead in policy planning, and to maintain some degree of order among participants in planning activities. Two others acted as co-captains of the Bandit football team. Several were skilled in argument and debate, and acted as opinion leaders in policy discussions. It was a member of this clique, moreover, who was formally recognized as the “leader” of the Junior Bandits, although he was a mild, non-assertive person with

\textsuperscript{202} The conflict within gangs between the advocates of law-violation and of law-adherence is discussed from a somewhat different point of view in “The Impact of a Community Group Work Program on Delinquent Corner groups,” op. cit.
no special talents in crime, athletics, or other prestige-conferring activities. The significance of this “weak leader” arrangement will be discussed later.

Members of the dominant clique did not exercise authority after the manner of permanent incumbents of established authority positions. Rather, particular boys assumed leadership for those activities whose conduct fell within their particular sphere of competence. Thus when the gang was engaged in football playing, in gang fighting, in policy discussions—boys recognized as best qualified in that activity assumed leadership. Similarly, when the gang was involved in theft expeditions or dealings with adult agencies, primary responsibility fell to the leaders of the subordinate cliques whose competence in these areas was recognized.

The right of the dominant clique to exercise leadership was, in general, readily accepted by members of the two subordinate cliques as well as those who were not definitely affiliated with a clique. Under ordinary circumstances, however, the dominant clique did not choose to exert their authority with respect to the continuing dispute between the subordinate factions over the issue of violative activity, maintaining instead a position of neutrality. It was only when the dispute became sufficiently intense as to threaten actual conflict that the dominant clique would intervene. In such intervention they acted primarily to resolve the dispute; they did not appear consistently to favor one side or the other.

On one occasion the police had been summoned to restrain members of the “bad boy” clique who were engaged in boisterous drinking and damaging public equipment in the park, during a period when the Bandit football team was doing well in municipal league competition. Members of the dominant clique began to pressure the leader of the “bad boy” clique to refrain from further misbehavior on the grounds that widespread police action against the gang would jeopardize the football team, and in particular, that a police order forbidding Bandits to use the park would leave the team without a practice field. The “bad boy” leader, who was not on the team, angrily pressed for further retaliatory harassment of the police to preserve the honor of the gang. “If I wreck the park, and the cops come down and
chase out the team, and I ain’t on the team, that’s the cops’ mistake, and the cops’ fault, not mine.” This reasoning was firmly rejected by the dominant clique. “We’re all agreed on this. Anyone that screws up the gang is screwing up the team, and he’s out! That’s it, and no more arguing!”

On another occasion, however, the dominant clique put its support behind the proponents of illegality. A Junior Bandit had been attacked by members of a rival gang. Members of the “bad boy” clique, along with others, gathered sticks and clubs and milled around the park, angrily discussing the incident. The “bad boy” leader was not in the area, and the aroused gang members seemed unable to mobilize an organized retaliatory force. At this point members of the dominant clique, noting the apparent leadership vacuum, stepped in and took command. “Okay—ya wanna fight? Here’s the way we do it. Any cops come, ditch ya weapons and clam up. We meet any of them (rival gang) guys, we jump ’em. Anyone that don’t fight, I whip his ass myself...” Thus mobilized and provided with leadership, the attack party, which included members of the dominant clique, set out.

The leadership system of the Junior Bandits was, if anything, even farther removed from the “one big gang boss” pattern than was the “multi-leader power-balance” system of the Seniors. The intricate arrangement of cliques and leadership utilized by the gang enabled it to contain within a relatively unified associational orbit a variety of individuals and cliques with varying and often conflicting orientations. Three features of this system are worthy of note: leadership was situational rather than fixed; authority figures acted as an agent of consensus rather than a source of direction.

The Junior Bandits were not headed by a single individual invested with generalized and inclusive authority. Leadership for particular activities was provided as the occasion arose by boys whose competence in that activity had been established. Leadership was thus flexible, shifting, and adaptable to changing group circumstances. Insofar as there was a measure of relatively concentrated authority, it was invested in a collectivity rather than an individual. The several “situational”
leaders of the dominant clique constituted what was in effect a kind of ruling
council, which arrived at its decisions through a process of extended collective
discussion generally involving all concerned parties. Decisions affecting the group
were thus arrived at in such a way that those who were to execute a plan of action
had taken part in the process by which it was developed.

A final feature of this system concerns the boy who was recognized as “the
leader” of the Junior Bandits. When the gang formed a club to expedite involvement
in athletic activities, he was chosen as its president. Although he was an accepted
member of the dominant clique, he did not, on the surface, seem to possess any
particular qualifications for this position. He was mild-mannered, unassertive, and
consistently refused to take a definite stand on outstanding issues, let alone taking
the initiative lead in implementing policy. He appeared to follow rather to lead; one
night when the leaders of the two subordinate factions became infuriated with one
another in the course of a dispute, he followed both boys around for several hours,
begging them to calm down and reconcile their differences. At one point during the
contact period the gang was on the verge of splitting into irreconcilable factions over
a financial issue. One group accused another of illegitimate appropriation of club
funds; the accusation was hotly denied; angry recriminations arose which swept in a
variety of dissatisfactions with the club and its conduct. In the course of this melee
the leader of the “bad boy” faction complained bitterly about the refusal of the
president to take sides or assume any initiative in resolving the dispute, and called
for a new election. This was agreed to and the election was held—with the result
that the “weak” president was re-elected by a decisive majority, and was reinstated
in office amidst emotional outbursts of acclaim and reaffirmations of the unity of
the gang.

It was thus evident that the majority of gang members, despite temporary
periods of anger over particular issues, recognized on some level the true function
performed by the “weak” leader. Given the fact that the gang included a set of
clique with differing orientations and conflicting notions, and a set of leaders
whose authority was limited to specific areas, the maintenance of gang cohesion required some special mechanisms. One was the “consensual” functioning of the dominant clique; another was the device of the “weak” leader. It is most unlikely that a forceful or dominant person could have controlled the sanctions which would enable him to coerce the strong-willed factions into compliance. The very fact that the “weak” leader refused to take sides and was noncommittal on key issues made him acceptable to the conflicting interests represented in the gang. Further, along with the boy’s non-assertive demeanor went a real talent for mediation; he was convincing and effective in promoting203 conciliatory action. But in addition to the concrete attributes which enabled the leader to function effectively, he also served on a symbolic level to represent the unity of the group. The intensity of the gangs’ emotional reaction to his removal and reinstatement was an indication that the leader in fact served as an embodiment of the notion that the gang could remain a cohesive unit, in the face of its intense factional rivalries and bitter disputes.

The Molls

The Molls were a relatively small gang of white girls whose primary hangout was a corner and back alley about a block from Ben’s store.204 Despite their proximity to the Bandit’s hanging corner, the girls had little contact with the Bandits. Their primary affiliation, instead, was with the Hoods, a boy’s gang of about the same age as the Junior Bandits. The Hoods, numbering 18 active


204 The bulk of field data was recorded by Beverly Ross Fleigel. Associational and offense analyses were done by Dr. Mickey Clampit and Rosetta Mcneil, Aparicio.
members, were not part of the Bandit aggregate, although two or three also hung out with the Junior Bandits. Unlike the Bandit, Outlaw, and Royal gangs, the Molls and Hoods were not part of a larger multi-subdivision gang; instead, the two units, one male and one female, comprised the total aggregate.205

Although the size of the hanging group varied according to the season and changing individual circumstances, the Molls could count about 11 girls of whom they could say “she hangs with us.” A female field worker maintained continuing contact with the Molls for 30 months. She also observed and reported on the Hoods, but contact was not sufficiently close as to warrant their inclusion as an “intensive contact” gang. At the start of the contact period the average Moll was 13.5 years old, and at the end, 16 years. All the Molls were born within two and a half years of one another.

Like the Bandits, the Molls were Catholic—mostly Irish, with one set of sisters of Irish-German background. Fathers who were known and who were employed (several of the Moll’s father were not in the area; several others were steadily unemployed) worked at typical lower class III jobs such as signhanger, plate glass cutter, and factory laborer. Typical also of lower class III life-ways, most of the girls’ mothers worked, holding low-skilled jobs such as housemaid, laundry-press operator, machine operation in a shoe factory, and kitchen worker in a hospital. All eight of the Molls’ families were known to have received some form of assistance from public welfare agencies. With 100% of their families having been on welfare, the Molls ranked highest among the intensive-contact groups in this respect.

The educational experience of the Molls was consistent with the social status of their parents. In accordance with the compulsory education laws, all 11 girls were attending school at age 14; once past age 16, all but two dropped out; none entered college. The Moll’s drop-out rate of about 80% was second only to that of the worst-

205 Despite the fact that the Molls as a gang were not affiliated with the Bandits, there were kin ties between the two groups. Two of the Molls had brothers in the Bandits, and another later married a Bandit.
educated Senior Bandits. As the girls approached the age when leaving school was permitted, they truanted with increasing frequency. Upon leaving school, most of the girls took low-skilled jobs in local factories.

Law-Violation, Cliques, and Leadership

As fourteen year olds, the Molls were known in the neighborhood as “bad girls.” This reputation derived largely from the fact that they dressed in tight dungarees, white shirts, and garrison belts, hung out at night with the Hoods, used obscene language, insulted and played pranks on passers-by, drank beer in public, showed little respect for workers and “good kids” at “the Set,” and were less than dedicated in the matter of school attendance. The Molls themselves, in one sense, shared this appraisal. The principal leader of the Molls once said of herself—“I’m a real gang girl!” In another sense, they felt this reputation to be unfair. To most neighborhood adults, it was axiomatic that girls who were “bad” after the fashion of the Molls must also be sexually “bad.” The Molls resented the lumping together of sexual immorality and what they regarded as conventional illegal behavior. The same girl who boasted of being a real gang girl, fondly reminiscing at 16 of her gangs’ misbehavior at 14, said... “But we never was really bad—not in that (sexual) way...”

What, in fact, was the character of the Molls’ criminal behavior? Later chapters designate as “central complex crimes” a set of offenses conventionally engaged in by adolescent males in low-status urban communities. These include theft, assault, and drinking offenses, but not sex offenses. Although they were girls, the criminal behavior of the Molls closely approximated this complex. Their illegal activity mirrored in lesser intensity that of the local boys, particularly that of their brother group, the Hoods.

By the time they were 17, all 11 of the Molls were known to have engaged in some form of illegal behavior. Five of the girls had been arrested, four had appeared in court, and two had been confined to correctional institutions. The Molls thus
shared first place with the Senior Bandits in the percentage of members known to have been arrested. Their rate of involvement in illegal acts ranked them well above two of the male groups—the higher status Kings and Senior Bandits. Their arrest percentage of 45% compared with a percentage of 8% for the other female gang, the higher status Queens. An examination of the more prevalent forms of illegal activity among the Molls will provide an impression of its character. Their six most frequent offenses were: truancy (15 involvements per ten girls per ten month period); theft (4.7); drinking violations (3.3); property damage (2.8); sex offenses (1.3); assault (0.7). In the number of girls known to have engaged in each offense, rankings were 1- theft, truancy (7 girls); 2- drinking violations (6); 3- property damage (5); 4- sex violations (3); 5- assault (1).

Truancy, the failure to attend school for a day, several days, or extended periods, was for the Molls the most frequent offense. Seven of the eleven girls were known to have truanted, with 44 instances of truancy having been recorded during the contact period. One girl deliberately stayed out of school for three weeks in hopes of being expelled from one school so she could enter another. While out of school the girls often stayed home, sometimes to perform household duties, sometimes to play records and gossip. Mothers’ reactions to truancy varied, both among mothers and by the same mother at different times. In some instances daughters stayed home to care for younger siblings or do other household chores at the request of their mothers (especially those who worked during the day, who then wrote fraudulent excuse notes for the girls). Other mothers were opposed to truancy and punished their daughters if they were discovered skipping school. The girls themselves gave a variety of reasons for truancy, ranging from home obligations to boredom with studies. Whatever their reasons, the Molls’ pattern of irregular school attendance between the ages of 14 and 16 represented an advance manifestation of their ultimate permanent discontinuation of schooling.

Theft was the Molls’ second most frequent offense, and as many girls were known to have stolen as to have truanted. Moll theft was generally quite minor in
comparison with the well-patterned and flamboyant theft of the Senior Bandits. Girls stole post cards, magazines, popcorn, fountain pens, etc., from local stores. Three of the girls engaged in shoplifting from downtown stores, and one was put on probation when caught. In one instance three of the girls stole $31 from the aunt of one of them and bought clothes with the money. This theft was considered by the Molls themselves as their most serious, and they later made some attempts at restitution.

Illegal drinking was the third most frequent offense, with six girls known to have been thus involved. The girls drank at home, on the corner, at school; by themselves and with the Hoods they drank beer, wine, liquor. Most Moll drinking was relatively light, resulting primarily in boisterous behavior; occasionally they drank more heavily and got drunk. One girl who had been drinking quite heavily made a game of darting into the street to see how closely she could avoid being hit by cars. Several times the Molls were caught in illegal possession of liquor; once two girls brought a bottle of whiskey to school; in another instance police caught the Molls and Hoods drinking beer in the park. None of these apprehensions resulted in official action; in the school incident the girls told authorities they had mistaken the bottle of liquor for a bottle of perfume.

Property damage or vandalism, the Molls fourth most frequent offense, ranked high in its capacity to exercise neighborhood residents. Two rough categories of property damage could be distinguished: acts undertaken primarily for excitement and amusement, and those undertaken primarily out of hostility.\textsuperscript{206} Examples of destructive acts which appeared to be motivated primarily by a desire for “fun” were the burning of rubbish barrels in the Molls’ hanging alley, burning the name “Molls” on the ceiling of the housing project recreation room, and breaking

\textsuperscript{206} The issue of the “motivation” of gang crime of various kinds will be treated at length in later chapters. “Fun” and “anger” are also seen as two of a number of possible incentives for theft. The treatment of motivation stresses the multiple nature of motives for particular criminal acts; it is thus recognized that acts of property damage here characterized as motivated “primarily” by a desire for fun or to show anger may also involve other motives as well. Property damage is examined in greater detail in Chapter Eleven.
windows in abandoned houses. Examples of destructive acts directed against persons who had aroused their anger were the breaking of housing project windows after the project manager denied the girls' use of the (Moll-marked) recreation room, and window-breaking at the house of a neighborhood woman whom the Molls believed to be spreading untrue stories about them. The clearest instance of hostility-motivated vandalism occurred when the Molls' principal leader was committed to a correctional institution on the complaint of her mother. The mother had just bought a white Buick sedan with her recently deceased husband's life insurance; the girls attacked the car with nails and glass and scratched it so extensively that it had to be completely repainted.

With regard to sexual offenses, while much of the Molls' sexual behavior violated the moral standards of middle class adults (See Chapter Six), their involvement in sexual activities which violated legal statutes was low relative to other offenses. No substantiated instance of extra-marital sexual intercourse was recorded during the observation period, although indirect evidence indicated that three of the Molls, and possibly a fourth, had engaged in sexual acts which could have resulted in arrest had they been detected. None of these, however, actually did produce official action. This in itself is significant; the Molls were sufficiently circumspect about what illegal sexual activity did engage in so that its existence was hidden from both official and unofficial view. This contrasts with their involvement in offenses such as truancy and vandalism, which they talked about quite freely and even boasted about, under appropriate circumstances.

Direct involvement by the Molls in assaultive offenses, the favorite delinquency of the nearby Junior Bandits, was rare. Only one clearly illegal incident was recorded during the contact period; from their perch on the roof of the housing project Molls threw rocks at a customer leaving the “Delly” below. The rarity of assaultive offenses cannot be attributed simply to the fact that the Molls were

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207 The Molls also ranked low among the study gangs with regard to morally-violative sexual behavior, ranking lowest of the seven gangs. In this respect they differed from the Negro Queens, who ranked second in “disapproved” sexual actions (See Table 2.8, Chapter 8).
female, since the other intensive-contact female gang, the Queens, showed 18 involvements in assaultive acts during the observation period, thus besting one of the male gangs in this respect. This difference between the two female gangs will be discussed shortly.

The Molls also engaged in a number of other offenses during the observation period which do not fall readily under the above categories. One summer they adopted the practice of killing neighborhood cats; several times they provided hideouts for correctional escapees; at other times they carried knives and other weapons for Hoods who were involved in gang fighting.

The actual character of the Molls’ offense pattern has been discussed in somewhat greater detail than is the case for the other gangs because, by and large, the nature of female gang crime is less well known than male, and is subject to a considerably greater degree to distortion and exaggeration. Several points of interest emerge from the foregoing brief description of the Molls’ offense pattern.

The Molls’ major offenses were truancy, theft, alcohol violations, and vandalism. Of these, truancy falls into a special category because its illegality is so directly related to a particular chronological age. Non-attendance at school was no longer illegal once the Molls passed the age of 16, and, in fact, the girls abruptly terminated their involvement in this offense, in the absence of any behavioral reform, by the simple expediency of dropping out of school once they reached the age of 16. The remaining three major violations approximate the “central complex” crimes characteristic of lower class adolescent males; the patterns differ only in that “property damage” appears in place of “assault.” This suggests that vandalism played a role for the Molls similar to that played by assault for the other gangs. It has been noted that much of the Molls’ vandalism represented direct expressions of hostility against particular persons; the Molls attempted to hurt someone by hurting something he owned. It would thus appear, particularly by comparison with the Queens whose rate of assault was much higher, that vandalism served for the
Molls as a vehicle for expressing hostility, in much the same way as did assault in other groups.

One reason that the Molls’ pattern of criminal involvement so closely resembled that of the males was that they had engaged in a serious attempt, particularly between the ages of 13 and 15, to find favor in the eyes of the Hoods, and to become recognized as their girls. The Hoods were among the most criminal of the 14 male gangs whose court experience was examined, ranking fourth in frequency of court appearances between the ages of 14 and 17 and third in court appearances for theft. Their criminal behavior in many respects more closely resembled that of the Senior Bandits than did that of the latter’s own younger brother group.

The Molls’ campaign to gain the trust and affection of the Hoods involved an attempt to show that they shared their general orientation to law-violation. One way of doing this was to approve, support, and abet their criminal activities; another was to themselves commit, if only in an attenuated form, the same kinds of offenses. The Molls themselves, while recognizing their desire to emulate the boys as only one of several kinds of motives, made it quite clear that the wish to gain acceptance by the Hoods was an important reason for committing crimes. One used these words: “Ya know, if ya been hangin’ with them every night, ya wanna do the same things as they do. Ya don’t wanna be an outcast! When the boys hooked pickles, we hooked pickles…” During this period failure to engage in male-type criminality invoked male-type sanctions. A Moll who refused to go along on a property-destruction venture was taunted with the words “Fairy! Fairy!” This accusation of non-masculinity was deserved, one of the girls explained, --“because she won’t do vandalism with us no more.”

The Molls’ attempt to emulate and be accepted by the boys also influenced their sexual behavior. One popular image of girls’ gangs pictures them as freely

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208 See Chapter Nine (Male Sex and Mating), for a more detailed treatment of this phenomenon, as well as a more general discussion of the relationship between male and female gang units.
available concubines, and much writing on female delinquency stresses the centrality of sexual offenses. The behavior of the Molls, particularly during early adolescence, appeared to be predicated on the assumption that the way to get boys to like you was to like them rather than accessible to them. As already noted, the Molls did not flaunt their sexual exploits in order to win esteem, as they did in the case of other offenses; on the contrary, they were quite secretive about what sexual misbehavior they did engage in. Although the social status of the Molls was lower than that of the Queens (Negro, Protestant), it is possible that their reluctance to engage in and/or exploit sexual misbehavior was related to their status as white Catholics.

A further aspect of the Molls’ pattern of illegal behavior concerns their reputation as “bad girls.” It has frequently been observed that standards applied to female behavior are stricter than those applied to male, and that a degree of criminal involvement which might appear as rather modest for boys is seen as quite serious for girls. How “bad” the Molls are adjudged to be depends a great deal on the basis of comparison one uses. Compared with male gangs of the same social status the Molls were not very criminal. Their rate of involvement in all forms of illegal behavior, including truancy, was approximately 25 offenses for each ten girls per ten month period—less than one tenth the rate of the male gangs of the same status (Bandits, 278.1). On the other hand, their rate was approximately the same as that of the higher status (lower class II) Junior Outlaws, and compared to middle class girls, or even with the Queens whose comparable rate was 6.8, the Molls appear quite criminal. Acts such as nightly public drinking by 13 year olds, carrying knives for gang fighters, drinking whiskey in school, chronic and parent-abetted truancy—while scarcely unheard of among higher-status girls, are relatively infrequent and seldom widespread.

The leadership and clique situation among the Molls reflected the fact that their gang was small relative to those of the boys, that they were female rather than male, and that criminal involvement was an important aspect of gang activities.
During most of the contact period the Molls comprised two categories of member—more active and less active. The more active clique comprised six girls who hung out frequently and participated regularly in gang activities. The less active clique was made up of five girls who hung out less frequently and participated less frequently in gang activities. The more active clique was clearly dominant; it set the tone for the gang and provided its leadership.

The Molls’ leadership arrangement could be seen as a truncated version of that of the Senior Bandits. There were two leaders—a principal leader, whose authority was clearly recognized, and a secondary leader. Both girls were members of the more active clique. As in the case of the Senior Bandits, the secondary leader served as a standby who assumed leadership when the principal leader was institutionalized, and relinquished it when she returned.

The more active clique was unequivocally the more criminal. The rate of involvement in illegal acts for the active clique was 23.7 involvements for each ten girls per 10 month period, compared to a rate of only 1.3 for the less active girls. Active members accounted for 43 of the gangs’ 44 recorded truancies; all had been arrested at least once; two had been sentenced in court. None of the less active girls had gone to court, and only one was known to have truanted. The two girls who finished high school both belonged to the less active clique.

It is thus clear that it was the more criminal clique which represented the dominant orientation of the gang as a whole. Further, the principal leader showed the highest rate of illegal involvement of all 11 girls, and the secondary leader the second highest. As in the case of the Senior Bandits, there was little direct conflict between the two leaders. Instead, also like the Senior Bandits, they competed for prestige by striving to excel in illegal accomplishments.

In addition to those associational patterns which resembled those of the boys’ gangs, there were other patterns which reflected the fact that the Molls were female. Prominent among these was a “best friend” pattern which cross-cut the two major cliques. Two girls would develop crushes on one another and spend much of
their time together. They were then known as “best friends,” and shared secrets and confidences until some violation of trust or competition over a boyfriend dissolved their special intimacy into the ordinary ties between gang members. Best-friend pairings were generally of limited duration, with different pairings and re-pairing succeeding each other during the contact period. The relative instability of the best-friend pattern, generally involving two girls but sometimes three, was more prevalent during the summer months, when jobs, visits, and other pursuits reduced the size and stability of the hanging group, and during the latter part of the contact period, as an increase in the tempo of mating and a divergence of life paths weakened ties to the larger gang.

An understanding of the particular forms of criminal behavior, leadership, and associational patterns found among the Molls may be approached by a consideration of their major status characteristics—particularly those of age, sex, social class, and ethnic status. As younger adolescents their involvement in mating was more collective than that of older adolescents. As females they were less criminal than males of similar social status and shared associational forms with other non-gang female groupings. As lower class III gang members they were more criminal, and more masculinely criminal, than females of higher status, and shared associational forms with “tough” male gangs. As white and Catholic, they were less active in sexual violations, and more active in theft, than their black Protestant counterparts, the Queens. This approach to the explanation of gang behavior, both criminal and non-criminal—one which views differentiated forms of customary behavior as responsive to the simultaneous influence of the subcultures of a set of “status classes”—plays a major role in the present work, and will be treated in greater detail in the later theoretical discussion of “subcultural conjunction.”

*The Outlaw Neighborhood*

The Outlaw street corner was less than a mile from that of the Bandits. The neighborhood environment, however, was quite different. Like the Bandits, the
Outlaws were white, Catholic, and predominantly Irish, with a few Italians and Irish-Italians. But their social status, here designated as lower class II, was sufficiently higher than that of the Bandits as to be reflected in significant differences in both their gang and family life.²⁰⁹

The Outlaws hung out on a classic hanging corner—complete with drug store, variety store, a neighborhood bar (Callahan’s Bar and Grill), a pool hall, and several other small businesses such as a laundromat. The corner was within one block of a large park, a convenient locale for card games, lovemaking, and athletic practice. Most residents of the Outlaw neighborhood were oblivious to the deafening roar of the elevated train that periodically rattled the houses and stores of Midcity Avenue, which formed one street of the Outlaw corner. There was no housing project in the Outlaw neighborhood, and none of the Outlaws were Project residents. Most of their families rented one level of one of the three-decker wooden tenements which were common in the area; a few owned their own homes.²¹⁰

In the mid-1950’s the Outlaw neighborhood experienced significant changes as a consequence of the in-movement of Negroes previously described. During this period most of the white residents, gradually and with reluctance, left their homes and moved out to the first fringe of Port City’s residential suburbs, abandoning the area to the Negroes. Prior to this time the Outlaw corner had been a hanging locale for many years. The Outlaw name and corner dated from at least the late 1920’s, and perhaps earlier. One local boy who was not an Outlaw observed disgruntledly that anyone who started a fight with an Outlaw would end up fighting son, father, and grandfather, since all were or had been Outlaws. A somewhat drunken and sentimental Outlaw, speaking at a farewell banquet for their field worker, declared

²⁰⁹ The bulk of field recording for all Outlaw gangs was done by Mason Moton. Analysis of cliques, leadership, and associational patterns were done by Dr. Mickey Clampit and Rosetta McNiel.
²¹⁰ All the buildings on and near the Outlaw corner, as well as much of the surrounding area, were completely razed during the “urban renewal” phase of the 1960’s. At the time of writing, no new construction had been undertaken, and for a good part of the decade the Outlaw neighborhood described here consisted of rubble-strewn fields.
impassionedly that any infant born into an Outlaw family was destined from birth to wear the Outlaw jacket.

One consequence of the fact that the Outlaw corner had been a hanging locale for many years was that the hanging aggregate, during the 30 month observation period, included a full complement of age-graded subdivisions. Another consequence was that the subdivisions were closely connected by kinship. There were six clearly differentiated subdivisions on the corner: the Marauders, boys in their late teens and early twenties; the Senior Outlaws, boys between 16 and 18; the Junior Outlaws, 14 to 16; and the Midget Outlaws, 11 to 13. There were also two girls groups, the Outlawettes and the Little Outlawettes (the two are merged in Table 1.5). The number of Outlaws in all subdivisions totaled slightly over 200 persons, ranging in age, approximately, from 10 to 25 years (Table 1.5).

The several subdivisions were closely interrelated by a complex network of kinship ties. Seventeen of the 26 Senior Outlaws had relatives in other subdivisions; for example, four had brothers in other subdivisions, two had sisters, and one had a nephew. Within the group itself were three sets of brothers and a pair of cousins. Twelve of the 24 Junior Outlaws had relatives in other subdivisions; most were brothers, but there were some uncles and cousins as well. The group itself contained two sets of brothers (one of them twins) and two sets of cousins. Three of the Outlawettes were sister of Outlaws.

On the conservative assumption that 1930 was the first year that gangs began to hang out on the Outlaw corner, and that a new subdivision formed every two years, there would have been a minimum of a dozen groups bearing the Outlaw name and perpetuating the Outlaw tradition by the time the study period

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211 Kinship ties among gang members were not studied on a systematic basis. Data on kinship presented here and elsewhere were obtained through information which appeared in field records and other sources, and do not represent exhaustive counts. Kinship figures thus represent minimum estimates; it is most likely that a systematic study would have revealed such ties to have been even more extensive than indicated by available data.
started.\textsuperscript{212} This fact, along with the intricate kinship intermeshing of the age-graded subdivisions, makes it difficult to conceive the Outlaws as anything other than a “group.” Although it is quite likely that some among the many kinds of gangs found in American cities comprise relatively ephemeral and casually interrelated congeries, it is quite evident that the Outlaws with their clear sense of group identity, their multi-generational background, their well-ordered system of subdivisions, their kinship ties, their esprit-de-corps and fierce group loyalty were indeed a “group” in the truest sense of the word.\textsuperscript{213}

The cohesiveness of the Outlaws, during the 1950’s, was enhanced in no small measure by an adult who played a central role in their lives. This was Rosa—the owner of the variety store which was their principal hangout. While older members of the Marauders congregated nightly in Callahan’s Bar, and some of the Senior Outlaws hung out in the drug store where one of their number worked as clerk, most of the Outlaws most of the time, and all at some time, remained close to the wooden door stoop and unpainted planked floors of Rosa’s Variety.

Rosa was a stout, unmarried woman of about 40 who was, in effect, the street corner mother of all 200 Outlaws. But she was a most extraordinary kind of mother, since she was intimately familiar with the world of the corner, and obviously in sympathy with it. For example, her knowledge of big league baseball and basketball was so detailed and so current that one Outlaw bestowed upon her the ultimate compliment—that in this respect she hardly seemed like a woman at all. On rainy summer afternoons when the Outlaws had too little money for the movies or pool they sat in Rosa’s store, watching television and playing whist. They were seldom denied permission to congregate in the store, although occasionally when they became too boisterous or stayed too long, Rosa would shoo them out.

\textsuperscript{212} 1930 is the earliest year for which a reliable informant reported a group bearing the Outlaw name to be present on the Outlaw corner; it is highly probable, however, that Outlaws were on the corner prior to this date.\textsuperscript{213} Ref. to Yablonsky, “near group” issue.
In return, the boys minded the store for Rosa on those occasions when she was called away, and even during the age period when they were most active in thievery, served as trustworthy and responsible clerks. On one wall of her store Rosa mounted a bulletin board where the Outlaws could post notices, telephone messages, and athletic rosters. She acted as banker for funds earned by the group, and loaned money to improvident gang members. One Outlaw who decided to save as much money as he could before entering the service was torn between the alternatives of banking his money with Rosa or in a commercial bank. Over and again Rosa scolded the Outlaws for their misbehavior, gave them advice on all sorts of matters from love problems to work prospects, sympathized with the occasional gang member who had fallen into disfavor among his mates, instructed them in the techniques of holding raffles and running dances, and wept when the Outlaws presented her a gift at a banquet given in her honor.

Rosa’s store remained an effective clearing house for all information relating to the Outlaws. Most of the Outlaws who entered the armed services wrote faithfully. Rosa maintained a large scrapbook containing pictures of the Outlaws and newspaper accounts of their athletic activities, and kept on her highest shelf the baseball trophy won one year by the Seniors. Asked about an Outlaw who had moved to another neighborhood, Rosa was hurt and upset. “I can’t figure out what’s wrong! He ain’t been around or phoned in two weeks!” In 1965 Rosa’s store was demolished as part of the Midcity Urban Renewal Program. By this time most of the Outlaws had left the neighborhood, and Rosa had leased her store to a black man who served an almost totally Negro clientele.

**Relations Among Outlaw Subdivisions**

Each of the six subdivisions of the Outlaws maintained an identity as a distinct group with definite group boundaries. The nature of the aggregate did, however, allow for a considerable degree of associational flexibility. Both the size and composition of subgroups could be adapted to the associational requirements of
different circumstances. One such circumstance was team athletics. Most male gang members maintained some order of involvement in football, baseball, basketball, or some combination of these. Although the typical male subdivision averaged approximately 30 members, the full complement was seldom available on a consistent basis for team participation. Thus, one subdivision could generally provide the personnel for two basketball squads (five men per squad) or one baseball team (nine men), but it was almost impossible to compose a football squad (25 to 30 men) out of a single subdivision. The Outlaws generally entered such a team (“The Midcity Outlaws”) in the municipal recreation department league, drawing on the manpower resources of the Juniors, Seniors, and even, on occasion, the Marauders.

It was not unheard of, moreover, for the Outlaws to utilize non-Outlaws as team members. But the conditions of such utilization illustrate nicely the Outlaws’ conception of aggregate boundaries. In one instance several football-minded members of the Senior Bandits, whose own ranks were too depleted by incarceration to permit them to form a team of their own, approached the Outlaws (their sometime gang fighting enemies) with the unusual request that they be permitted to play on the Outlaw team. Since they were able athletes they were accepted. But it was clear that acceptance as team members did not mean acceptance as gang members. When the Outlaws bought jackets one of the Bandits asked if he, too, could buy one. He was told firmly and explicitly, “You don’t hang with us, so you ain’t an Outlaw, and nobody but Outlaws gets Outlaw jackets.” Nor were the Bandits permitted to wear football uniforms purchased out of Outlaw funds, having instead to obtain their own.

On the other hand, quite a few of the boys who hung out on the Outlaw corner but did not play with the teams were authorized to get and wear Outlaw jackets. It was thus clear that the principal and necessary criterion of membership in the group was hanging out; participation in athletic activities alone did not provide a sufficient basis for being considered “one of us” by the Outlaws. These
examples show clearly that the Outlaws maintained a distinct sense of identity vis-à-vis outsiders and other corner groups. It is equally evident, despite instances of joint action by two or more subdivisions—that each age-graded subdivision regarded itself as a distinct group. This was so obvious to the Outlaws that it was difficult for them to understand how outsiders could perceive the total aggregate as an undifferentiated “gang,” without distinguishing between subdivisions.

When a local priest donated a check to the “Midcity Outlaws” football team (the name used by the merged Junior-Senior-Marauder team) the boys were quite puzzled as to why the priest failed to specify which of the Outlaw subdivisions was to receive the money, and were amused at his ignorance of group structure. Both Juniors and Seniors could lay claim to the check as made out, and in an effort to avoid possible Junior-Senior conflict, a leader of the Seniors visited the priest and asked him to make out two separate checks (hinting, in addition, that each should be in the same amount as the first). He explained that the team was composed primarily of Seniors, and that a few of the more able “little kids” were permitted to play with them as an act of kindness. This explanation upset the Juniors, who resented the implication that players from their group were merely an unimportant adjunct to a Senior team.

With few exceptions, gang members remained with the same subdivision throughout adolescence. An unusual instance of a change from one subdivision to another provides an insight into the psychic significance of the subdivision as a unit of affiliation. Ordinarily membership in one or another of the age-graded divisions was fairly well determined by one’s age. Boys near the higher and lower age limits, however, had some choice in this respects. Both the Junior and Senior Outlaws, during the observation period, formed “clubs” to facilitate their involvement in athletics. The youth serving as vice president of the Juniors was somewhat older than his fellows, and handled his job competently. Both these characteristics attracted the attention of the Seniors, who encouraged him to hang out with them instead of the Juniors, and to attend their meetings. Flattered, the boy began to
move toward the orbit of the older boys. Shortly afterwards he dropped the name by which he was known to the Juniors, and adopted the new (and tougher) nickname of "Rocky." He did so well with the Seniors that he was made treasurer of their club. He was unable, however, pulled by divided loyalty, to relinquish his position with the Juniors. His dilemma was resolved for him, forcefully. One night the leader of the Seniors strode into a meeting of the Juniors and solemnly announced—"Rocky is in the big clique now; he's with the wheels. You guys'll haveta get someone else..."

This incident illuminates the nature of affiliation with a subdivision as well as certain aspects of relations between subdivisions. The boy’s adoption of a new name is a classic practice, found in many primitive, and less primitive, societies, whereby one’s assumption of a new group affiliation is perceived as a fundamental change in one’s identity. Equally classic was the formal announcement whereby ties to the old group were ritually severed and ties to the new ritually confirmed. The boy’s powerful reluctance to give up his affiliation with the younger group, and the necessity of executive fiat to pry him loose, attests to the intensity of the affiliation, and the gravity of relinquishing it. The incident also shows that in the world of the lower class gang as in other worlds competence is at a premium, is competed for, and is rewarded. The capacity of the older group to entice the boy away from the younger and to impel their acceptance thereof attests to their superior prestige, and in this respect, at least, the legitimacy of their authority.

Although each subdivision zealously guarded its own identity (the Seniors were particularly upset at being mistaken for the Juniors) and were in many respects competitive with the others, their mutual relations were, for the most part, friendly and cooperative. The Juniors and Seniors, in addition to joint athletic participation, played cards together, and sometimes hung out in Rosa’s at the same time. Their common identity as Outlaws was particularly in evidence during periods of conflict with other gangs. At one point the Juniors were “going for bad”—attempting to establish a reputation as tough fighters—and deliberately provoked a fight with another gang. The Seniors, past the age when fighting was a prime basis
of “rep,” scolded the Juniors for their provocative actions. Nevertheless, along with some of the Marauders, they joined with the Juniors to retaliate against retaliation by the outside gang.

Relations of the younger groups with the oldest subdivision, the Marauders, were less intensive than those between Juniors and Seniors. Most of the older boys were out of school and working; quite a few were married; most preferred Callahan’s bar to Rosa’s as a hangout, and thus spent less time on the corner than the 14 to 18 year-old Juniors and Seniors. Several of the Marauders had established city-wide reputations as athletes and thieves, and thus were held in great respect, especially by the Juniors—one of whom said of the Marauders, in awed tones—“Them are some rough cats!” Leaders of the Marauders often exercised the prerogatives of their superior age and prestige by acting as mediators in the case of disputes between the younger subdivisions. When members of the younger subdivisions became discouraged at athletic defeats, they were given support and encouragement by the Marauders—one of whom said to the Seniors that someday, if their team kept improving, they might be as good as the BIG kids (viz., themselves).

Alliances between subdivisions with respect to local matters shifted according to circumstance. During the gang fighting incident just described, the Marauders sided with the Seniors in censuring the Juniors as troublemakers. On the other hand, when a Marauder attempted to order out of Rosa’s a noisy group of Juniors, which included one or two Seniors, the Seniors warned the Marauder to be less high-handed, since a larger group of Seniors was hanging outside on the corner, and could be quickly enlisted as allies of the Juniors to form a group so formidable that the Marauders “couldn’t touch” them.

This brief discussion shows that relations between Outlaw subdivisions were complex and subtle, involving, in varying degrees, mild to intense inter-division competition, shifting patterns of alliance and rivalry, situations of teaching and learning, dominance and subordinancy, and an over-arching sense of common identity as “Outlaws” which was most strongly activated during times of conflict.
with other gangs. In these respects inter-division relations closely resembled those of numerous other kinds of multi-unit collectivities, such as blocs of nations, states of the union, and sets of siblings.\(^2\) It should be noted, however, that relations both within and between the several Outlaw subdivisions were more solidary than those of either of the other multi-subdivision gangs—the Bandits and the Royals. While both class and ethnic influences probably affected these differences, (the Bandits were of lower status; the Kings Negro), the higher degree of residential stability of the lower class II families which fed the Outlaw gangs was in all probability a major factor. The following sections will describe briefly the two Outlaw subdivisions which were studied most intensively—the Junior and Senior Outlaws.

**The Senior Outlaws**

Second oldest of the male Outlaw subdivisions, the Senior Outlaws, numbered 25 active members. They were under intensive observation for a period of 27 months, having been contacted for study three months after the Juniors. At the start of the observation period the Senior Outlaws ranged in age from fifteen and a half to seventeen (average age 16.5), and at its termination, seventeen and a half to nineteen and a half (average age 18.7). The ethnic and social status of the Senior Outlaws was similar to that of the Juniors, the two groups being linked, as has been shown, by kinship. In the Senior Outlaws, as in the Juniors, there were four boys with Italian family names. About half were Irish, and the rest bore names of Scotch, French Canadian, English, and Scandinavian derivation. Consonant with lower class II social status, the fathers of the Seniors held jobs such as cook, bartender, carpenter and mechanic.

It would appear, however, for reasons to be discussed later, that a fair number of the Senior Outlaws aspired to positions higher than those of their fathers. In this respect they differed from their age mates, the Senior Bandits, and,

\(^2\) Poss. Reference to Evans-Pritchard “fission-fusion” concept.
to a lesser extent, from their gang mates, the Junior Outlaws. Almost two-thirds of the Senior Outlaws finished high school, compared to about one-half of the Juniors, and only 10% of the Senior Bandits. More Senior Outlaws took some form of post-high-school training than did any of the other white gangs. While none of the boys followed the conventional middle class pattern of going directly from high school to a four year liberal arts college, five of the Seniors did attend local colleges, generally taking night courses in technical fields such as electrical engineering. Two of the Seniors were known to have received college degrees. The occupational status of the Senior Bandits as young adults reflected their educational experience. By the time the average gang member had reached the age of twenty-six the gang ranked with the lowest of the five male gangs in percentage of members holding “low manual” jobs (50% compared to 53% for the Junior Outlaws and 83% for the Senior Bandits: See Table 2.4). The highest skilled jobs held by gang members included those of electronics technician and draftsman; more typical jobs were those of machinist, bookbinder, and policeman.

**Law Violation, Cliques, and Leadership**

During the age period from 17 to 19, when the Senior Bandits were under direct observation, their criminal involvement was low relative to the other male gangs. For example, they ranked lowest among male gangs in their rate of involvement in illegal acts (7.6 per 10 boys per 10 month period, compared to the all-male-gang rate of 53.3), and lowest in both theft and assault involvements (See Tables 3.4 & 4.4). Pre-observation-period data, however, reveals that they were considerably more criminal during earlier adolescence. For example, during the 14 to 17 age period they ranked third in court appearances for theft, with higher rates than the Junior Outlaws and Kings at the same age. This and other evidence indicates that up to age 17 the Senior Outlaws had been just about as active in crime as the other lower class II male gangs, but had reduced such activity thereafter. They engaged in an unusually low amount of theft during the
observation period, and about half of the boys were not known to have been involved in law violation of any kind. Of those who were, however, seven were arrested and appeared in court, and three were committed to correctional institutions.

The Senior Outlaws thus provide an example of an older adolescent gang whose level of criminality was relatively low. In this respect they furnish an instructive comparison with the three male gangs thus far described. In both of the younger gangs, the Junior Bandits and Outlaws, leadership and clique structure reflected an intense struggle between advocates and opponents of law-violation as a prime basis of prestige. The lower class III Senior Bandits, having passed the age during which this struggle was most acute, had clearly resolved it in favor of criminality. There was no evidence during the observation period of factional polarization around the issue of crime as a basis of prestige. This resolution was directly reflected in Senior Bandit leadership; all five key leaders sought and gained prestige through violative behavior.

Leadership in the same-age, lower class II Senior Outlaws reflected in like manner a resolution of the law-conformity versus law-violation conflict, but with opposite results. Although the gang was not under direct observation during their earlier adolescence, the experience of the two gangs who were, along with the evidence that the Senior Outlaws themselves had been more criminal when younger, would suggest that the gang had in fact undergone a similar struggle, and that the proponents of law-conformity had won.

In any case, the events of the observation period made it clear that the Senior Outlaws sought “rep” as a gang primarily through effective execution of legitimate enterprises such as athletics, dances, and other non-violative activities. In line with this objective, they maintained a consistent concern with the “good name” of the gang, and in “keeping out of trouble” in the face of constant and ubiquitous temptations. For example, they attempted (without much success) to establish friendly relations with the senior priest of their parish—in contrast with the Junior Outlaws, who were on very bad terms with the local church. At one point during the
contact period when belligerent Bandits, claiming that the Outlaws had attacked one of the Midget Bandits, vowed to “wipe out every Outlaw jacket in Midcity,” the Senior Outlaws were concerned not only with the threat of attack but also with the threat to their reputation. “That does it,” said one boy. “I knew we’d get into something. There goes the good name of the Outlaws.”

Leadership and clique arrangements in the Senior Outlaws reflected three conditions, each related in some way to the relatively low stress on criminal activity: the stability of gang membership (members were rarely removed from the area by institutional confinement); the absence of significant conflict over the prestige and criminality issue; and the importance placed on legitimate collective activities. The Senior Bandits were the most unified of the direct observation gangs; there were no important cleavages or factions; even the distinction between more- and less-active members was less pronounced than in the other gangs.

As in the other gangs, leadership among the Senior Outlaws was collective and situational. There were four key leaders, each of whom assumed authority in his own sphere of competence. As in the case of the Bandit gangs there was little overt competition among leaders; when differences arose between the leadership and the rank and file, the several leaders tended to support one another. In one significant respect, however, Outlaw leadership differed from that of the other gangs; authority was exercised more firmly and accepted more readily. Those in charge of collective enterprises generally issued commands after the manner of a tough army sergeant or work-gang boss. Although obedience to such commands was frequently less than flawless, the leadership style of Outlaw leaders approximated the “snap-to-it” approach of organizations which control firmer sanctions than do most corner gangs. Compared to the near-chaotic organizational behavior of their younger brother gang, the organizational practices of the Seniors appeared as a model of efficiency. The “authoritarian” mode of leadership was particularly characteristic of one boy, whose authority prerogatives were somewhat more generalized than those of the other leaders. While he was far from an undisputed
“boss,” holding instead a kind of “prima inter pares” position, he was as close to a
“boss” as anything found among the direct-observation gangs.

His special position derived from the fact that he showed superior capability in an unusually wide range of activities, a circumstance which permitted him wider authority than the other leaders. One might have expected, in a gang oriented predominantly to law-abiding activity, that this leader would serve as an exemplar of legitimacy, and rank among the most law-abiding. This was not the case. He was, in fact, one of the most criminal of the Senior Outlaws, being one of the relatively few who had “done time.” He was a hard drinker, an able street fighter, a skilled football strategist and team leader, an accomplished dancer and smooth ladies man. His leadership position was based not on his capacity to best exemplify the law-abiding orientation of the gang, but on his capabilities in a variety of activities, violative and non-violative. Thus, even in the gang most concerned with “keeping clean,” excellence in crime still constituted one salient basis of prestige. Competence as such rather than the legitimacy of one’s activities provided the major basis of authority.

Why was leadership among the Senior Outlaws more forceful than in the other gangs? One reason emerges by comparison with the “weak leader” situation of the Junior Bandits. Younger and of lower social status, factional conflict over the law-violation-and-prestige issue was sufficiently intense to that only a leader without an explicit commitment to either side could be acceptable to both. The Seniors, older and of higher status, had developed a good degree of intra-gang consensus on this issue, and showed little factionalism. They could thus accept a relatively strong leader without jeopardizing gang unity.

A second reason also involves differences in age and social status, as these relate to the world of work. In contrast to the younger gangs, whose perspectives more directly revolved around the subculture of adolescence and its specific concerns, the Senior Outlaws at age 19 were on the threshold of the adult world of work, and some in fact were actively engaged in it. In contrast to the lower status
gangs whose orientation to gainful employment was not and never would be as “responsible” as that of the Outlaws, the activities of the Seniors as gang members more directly reflected and anticipated the requirements and conditions of the adult occupational roles they would soon assume.

Of considerable importance in the prospective occupational world of the Outlaws is the capacity to give orders and to take orders in the execution of collective enterprises. Unlike the Bandits, few of whom would ever occupy other than subordinate positions, the lower class II Outlaws belonged to that sector of society which provides the men who exercise direct authority over groups of laborers or blue-collar workers. The self-executed collective activities of the gang—organized athletics, recreational projects, fund-raising activities—provided a training ground for the practice of organizational skills—planning organized enterprises, working together in their conduct, executing the directives of legitimate superiors. It also provided a training ground wherein those boys with the requisite talents could learn and practice the difficult art of exercising authority effectively over lower class men. By the time they had reached the age of 20, the leaders of the Outlaws had experienced, in the gang, many of the problems and responsibilities confronting the army sergeant, the police lieutenant and the factory foreman.

The nature and techniques of leadership in the Senior Outlaws had relevance not only to their own gang but to the Junior Outlaws as well. Relations between the Junior and Senior Outlaws were the closest of all the intensive-contact gang subdivisions. The Seniors kept a close watch on their juniors, and served them in a variety of ways, acting as athletic coaches, advisers, mediators, and arbiters. The older gang followed the factional conflicts of the Juniors with close attention, and were not above intervening when conflict reached sufficient intensity or threatened their own interests. The dominant leader of the Seniors was particularly concerned with the behavior of the Juniors; at one point, lecturing them about their disorderly conduct in Rosa’s store, he remarked, “I don’t hang with you guys, but I know what you do...”
In important respects the position of the Senior Outlaws with regard to the Juniors resembled that of the dominant clique of the Junior Bandits. Like the dominant clique, they exercised, or attempted to exercise, major authority functions such as direction, mediation, adjudication, and arbitration. Their exercise of such authority did not, however, prevent rival ideologies within the Junior Outlaws from precipitating an open factional split, whereas such a split did not occur among the Junior Bandits. Why was Junior Bandit leadership able to forestall a factional split in their gang, while leadership exercised by the Senior Outlaws for their Juniors failed to do so? Several reasons may be noted.

The first concerns the locus of authority. In the case of the Junior Bandits, the dominant clique and the two rival factions were contained within the same associational orbit. In the case of the Outlaws, despite the relative closeness of the Junior and Senior subdivisions, the Seniors did not “belong” to the Junior gang. This was clearly evinced in the statement of the Senior leader—“I don’t hang with you guys, but…” Thus, the Junior Bandits saw their leadership as originating within their own gang; the Junior Outlaws as outside, with “outside” authority considerably less compelling.

A second reason has to do with techniques of authority. Within the Senior Outlaws, as has been seen, authority was exercised more forcefully than in other gangs. The Seniors used similar techniques in attempting to control the behavior of the Juniors, issuing tough commands and angrily berating those who failed to obey. However effective this may have been for the older group, it served primarily to antagonize the younger. Since the right of the Seniors to exert authority at all was, at best, weakly recognized by the Juniors, they were scarcely likely to embrace with enthusiasm its harsh or peremptory exercise. The dominant clique of the Junior Bandits, in contrast, generally kept a gentle hand on the helm, with their “weak” leader operating effectively through indirect authority. Further, the dominant clique seldom took sides with either of the rival factions; this contrasted sharply with the Senior Outlaws, who, in line with their own law-abiding orientation,
consistently threw their support behind the “good boy” faction of the Juniors. The obvious partisanship of the Seniors only served to accentuate the rebelliousness of the “bad boy” faction, who saw themselves unfairly beset by a hostile coalition of “good boys” and Seniors. Thus, in the case of Junior Bandits, the use of non-authoritarian leadership techniques along with the maintenance of a neutral position by the dominant clique militated against a factional split; in the case of the Junior Outlaws, the authoritarian methods of the seniors along with their partisan support of the “good boys” served to accentuate rather than alleviate inherent divisive forces.

The fact that the Seniors favored the “good boy” faction was not fortuitous, and relates to a third aspect of the failure of their leadership to prevent factionalization. The younger gang, during the observation period, was moving toward the age when lower class II boys experience the maximum sense of obligation to engage in crime, while the older boys were moving away from that age. Assuming the conventional stance of lower class males who have passed the peak of their criminal activity toward those who are in or moving towards it, the Senior Bandits made repeated attempts to reform the Juniors by pointing out the error of their ways. The general tenor of their advice was “Wise up, you guys. You’re actin’ just like we did when we was your age, but we finally learned that that’s just dumb kid stuff. Straighten out, and don’t be idiots like we was.” Upon hearing that some of the Juniors had started to hang out in Midcity Center with members of the Junior and Senior Bandits, the dominant leader of the Seniors used these words, “Them guys (the Bandits) ain’t no good. You hang around with them, you’re headin’ for a pack of trouble. We used to fight with them all the time. I never did like them bastards because they’re always goin’ for bad. You never see none of us guys (Senior Outlaws) around there now…”

The Seniors also tried to restrain the violative behavior of the Juniors on grounds that at first appear inconsistent with their “goin’ for bad is kid stuff” argument. They attempted to interdict certain forms of behavior, particularly
drinking and drinking-engendered disorderliness, on the grounds that the Juniors were too young for such activities. Neither type of appeal—that based on acting too young or that based on being too young—had much effect in restraining the Juniors. Driven by the urgent desire to earn their own manhood, they could not accept as a substitute for criminal behavior the knowledge that the older-and-wiser Seniors had earned theirs by such behavior. Nor were they willing to desist from illegality because of the assertion that they were too young; the assertion instead had the opposite effect of impelling them to pursue more ardently what they were told was a badge of adulthood.

One might suppose that the Seniors would have been in a particularly strategic position to influence the Juniors and to control their delinquent behavior. Operating within an identical neighborhood and subcultural orbit, admired and respected, eminently qualified through personal experience to understand the forms and reasons of youthful illegality, their failure to restrain the “bad boy” faction or to preserve gang unity is of more than passing interest, since programs of delinquency prevention frequently proceed from the premise that the best agents of control are “indigenous” persons with similar life experiences, preferably ex-gang members themselves.

There is little doubt that the Seniors were animated by a serious desire to curb criminality and maintain solidarity among the Juniors. Their failure to do so derives in part from the manner in which they attempted to assume direction toward this end. Their authority was exercised from a position which the Juniors perceived as external to their own immediate associational orbit; they utilized techniques of leadership which were effective for them but were unacceptable to the Juniors; they aggravated inherent factionalization by consistently favoring one faction over the other; they demanded of the Juniors adherence to behavioral standards which were appropriate for themselves but not for those two years younger. The Seniors were in fact too close to the Juniors and too emotionally involved in similar problems to command the degree of detachment, of sensitivity to
internal group processes, of awareness of the urgent need of the younger boys to earn their own manhood, that might have enabled them more effectively to achieve their objectives.

The Junior Outlaws

The Junior Outlaws, numbering 24 active members, were the third oldest of the four male subdivisions on the Outlaw corner. The intensive observation period was thirty months. At its start the boys ranged in age from 13 to 15, and at its close from 15 to 17. This two and a half year period, during which the average Junior Outlaw moved from the age of 14.9 to 17.4 years, was for them, as for many lower class II males, a period of substantial increase in the frequency and seriousness of illegal behavior. An account of the events of this period, recorded in detail as they occurred, provides insight into the process by which age-related influences engender criminality.215

The national and religious background of the Juniors was similar to that of their older brother gang, to which, as shown earlier, they were linked by kinship. Their fathers’ occupations also reflected lower class II status, including jobs such as bricklayer, mechanic, chauffer, and milk deliveryman. A small minority of these men had attained somewhat higher positions; one became the owner of a small electroplating shop, and another rose through the ranks to become a plant superintendent. This man’s family was one of the first to leave the neighborhood as Negroes began to move in. The educational status of the Juniors was higher than that of the Bandit gangs, but lower than that of their older brother gang; a little under half of the boys failed to complete high school. Only one of the Juniors was known to have entered and completed college; he had belonged to the more “law-

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215 The bulk of field recording for the Junior Outlaws was done by Mason M. Moton; supplementary recording by Reverend Carl R. Scovel. Preliminary analyses of leadership and factions were done by Rosetta McNeil Aparicio.
“abiding” faction of the gang, and attended a local Catholic college on a football scholarship.

**Law Violation, Cliques, and Leadership**

Consistent with their age level and social status, the Junior Bandits were considerably less criminal than the lower status Bandits, but considerably more so than their older brother gang, the Senior Outlaws. They ranked third among the five male gangs in illegal involvements during the observation period (25.0 involvements per ten boys per ten months), well below the second ranking Senior Bandits (54.2) and well above the fourth ranking Kings (13.9). They ranked second in their rate of involvement in drinking violations, and fourth in theft and assaultive offenses. Seventeen of the 24 boys were known to have engaged in some form of illegality during the observation period; seven were arrested and appeared in court, and one was committed to a correctional institution.

It is clear that the affairs of the gangs thus far described were ordered not by autocratic ganglords, but rather through a subtle and intricate interplay between leadership and a set of elements such as personal competency, intra-gang divisions, and law violation. The case of the Junior Outlaws is particularly dramatic in this regard, since the observation period found them at a critical point of choice—the age period when boys of this social status level are faced with a serious decision—the amount of weight to be granted to law violating behavior as a basis of prestige. Because there were in the Junior Outlaws two cliques, each of which was committed quite clearly to opposing alternatives, the interplay of the various elements over time emerges with some vividness, and echoes the classic morality play wherein forces of good and evil are locked in mortal combat over the souls of the uncommitted.

At the start of the observation period, the Juniors, 13, 14, and 15 year olds, looked and acted, for the most part, like “nice young kids.” By the end of the period both their voices and general demeanor had undergone a striking change. Their
appearance, as they hung out in front of Rosa’s store, was that of rough corner boys, and the series of thefts, fights, and drinking bouts which had occurred during the intervening two and one half years gave substance to that appearance. During the early phase of the contact period the Juniors comprised three main cliques; seven boys associated primarily with a “good boy” who was quite explicitly oriented to law-abiding behavior; a second clique of seven boys associated with a “bad boy” who was just starting to pursue prestige through drinking and auto theft; and a third, less-frequently congregating group, who took a relatively neutral position with respect to the issue of violative behavior.

The leader of the “good boy” clique played an active part in the law-abiding activities of the gang, and was elected president of the formal club organized by the Juniors. This club at first included members of all three cliques; however, one of the first acts of the club members, dominated by the “good boy” leader and his supporters, was to vote out of membership the leader of the “bad boy” clique. Barred from formal club meetings, the “bad boy” leader and his followers continued to hang out on the corner with the other Juniors, and in this context attempted to gain influence over the uncommitted boys as well as members of the “good boy” clique. This effort proved unsuccessful, since during this period athletic prowess served for the majority of the Juniors as a more salient basis of prestige than criminal behavior. Disgruntled by this failure, the “bad boy” leader took his followers and moved to a new hanging corner, about two blocks away from the traditional Outlaw corner.

From this corner, a tangible symbol of the ideological split within the Juniors, the “bad boy” leader continued his campaign to wean away the followers of the “good boy” leader, trying to persuade them to leave the old corner for the new. At the same time, behavior at the “bad boy” corner became increasingly delinquent—involving, among other things, noisy drinking and thefts of nearby cars. These incidents produced complaints by local residents which resulted in several police raids on the corner, and served to increase the antagonism between what now had
become hostile factions. Determined to assert their separateness, the “bad boy” faction began to drink and create disturbances in Rosa’s store, became hostile to her when she censured them, and finally stayed away from the store altogether.

The antagonism between the two factions finally became sufficiently intense as to bring about a most unusual circumstance; --plans for an actual gang fight, (a “jam”) of the type characteristic of rival gang aggregates. The time and place for the physical encounter was agreed on; no one from either side showed up. A second battle site was selected; again the combatants failed to appear. Both the plan for the gang fight and its failure to materialize were significant from the point of view of intra-gang relations. The fact that a physical encounter between members of the same subdivision was actually projected showed that factional hostility over the issue of law violation had reached an unusual degree of bitterness; the fact that the planned encounters did not in fact occur indicated a realization that actual physical combat might well lead to an irreversible split.

A reunification of the hostile factions did not take place for almost a year. During this time changes had occurred in both factions which had the net effect of blunting the sharpness of the ideological issue which divided them. Discouraged by his failure to win over the majority of the Outlaws to the cause of law-violation as a major badge of prestige, the leader of the “bad boy” clique began to hang out less frequently. During this same period the eight “uncommitted” members of the Junior Outlaws, now moving toward their middle teens, began to gravitate toward the “bad boy” corner—attracted by the excitement and risk of its violative activities. More of the Juniors than ever before became involved in illegal drinking and petty theft. This trend became sufficiently pronounced as to draw in members of the “good boy” clique, and the influence of the “good boy” leader diminished to the point where he could count on the loyalty only of his own brother and two other boys. In desperation, sensing the all-but-irresistible appeal of illegality for his erstwhile

216 During the initial stages of contact the “bad boy” leader ranked first among his group in frequency of hanging out; a year later he ranked 7th among the 8 boys in his clique.
followers, he increased the tempo of his own delinquent behavior in a last-ditch effort to win them back. All in vain. Even his own brother deserted the regular Outlaw corner, although he did not go so far as to join the “bad boys” on theirs.

Disillusioned, the “good boy” leader took a night job which sharply curtailed the time he was able to devote to gang activities. Members of the “bad boy” clique now began a series of maneuvers aimed at gaining control of the formal club. Finally, about two months before the close of the thirty month contact period, a core member of the “bad boy” clique was elected to the club presidency. In effect, the proponents of illegality as a major prestige basis had won the long struggle for dominance of the Junior Outlaws.

This achievement, while appearing on the surface as a clear victory for the “bad boy” faction, in fact represented a far more subtle process of mutual accommodation. The actions of each of the opposing sides accorded quite directly with their expressed convictions; each member of the “bad boy” faction averaged about 17 known illegal acts during the observation period, compared to a figure of about two per boy for the good boy faction. However, in the face of these sharp differences in both actions and sentiments respecting illegality, the two factions shared important common orientations thereto. Both shared the conviction that the issue of violative behavior as a basis of prestige was a paramount one, and one which required a choice. Moreover, both sides remained uncertain as to whether the choice they had made was the correct one.

The behavior of both factions provides evidence of a fundamental ambivalence with respect to the “demanded” nature of delinquent behavior. The gradual withdrawal of support by followers of the “good boy” leader and the movement toward violative behavior of the previously “neutral” clique attest to a compelling conviction that prestige gained through law-abiding endeavor alone could not, at this age, suffice. Even more significant was the criminal experience of the “good boy” leader. As the prime exponent of law-abiding behavior, he might have been expected to serve as an exemplar in this respect. In fact, the opposite
prevailed; his rate of illegal involvement was the highest of all the boys in his clique, and had been so even before his abortive attempt to regain his followers by a final burst of delinquency. This circumstance, resembling the leadership situation in the Senior Outlaws, probably derived from a realization that a leader acceptable to both factions would have to show proficiency in activities recognized as prestige conferring by both.

It is equally clear, on the other hand, that members of the “bad boy” faction were less than serenely confident in their commitment to law-violation as an ideal. Once they had won power in the club they did not keep as their leader the boy who had been the dominant figure on the “bad boy” corner, and who was without question the most criminally active of the Junior Outlaws, but instead elected as president another boy who was also criminally active, but considerably less so. Moreover, in the presence of older gang members, Seniors and Marauders, the “bad boy” clique was far more subdued, less obstreperous, and far less ardent in their advocacy of crime as an ideal. There was little question that they were sensitive to, and responsive to, negative reactions by others to their behavior.

It is noteworthy that members of both factions adhered more firmly to the “law-violation” and “law-abiding” positions on the level of abstract ideology than on the level of actual practice. This would suggest that the existence of the opposing ideologies and their corresponding factions served important functions both for individual gang members and for the group as a whole. Being a part of the same associational orbit as the “bad boys” made it possible for the “good boys” to reap some of the rewards of violative behavior without undergoing its risks; the presence of the “good boys” imposed self-desired restraints on the “bad,” and helped protect them from dangerous excesses. The behavior and ideals of the “good boys” satisfied for both factions that component of their basic orientation which said, “violation of the law is wrong and should be punished;” the behavior and ideals of the “bad boys” that component which said, “one cannot earn manhood without some involvement in criminal activity.”
It is instructive to compare the stress and turmoil attending the struggle for dominance of the Junior Outlaws with the leadership circumstances, described earlier, of the Senior Bandits. In this gang, older and of lower social status (lower class III), competition for leadership had little to do with a choice between law-abiding and law-violating philosophies, but rather with the issue of which of a number of competing leaders was best able to demonstrate prowess in illegal activity. This virtual absence of effective pressures against delinquency contrasts sharply with the situation of the Junior Outlaws. During the year-long struggle between the factions the Juniors were exposed to constant pressures, both internal and external to the gang, to refrain from illegality. External sources included Rosa, whom the boys loved and respected; a local youth worker whom they held in high esteem; their older brother gangs, whose frequent admonitions to the “little kids” to “straighten out” and “keep clean” were attended with the utmost seriousness. Within the gang itself the “good boy” leader served as a consistent and persuasive advocate of a law-abiding course of action. In addition, most of the boys’ parents deplored their misbehavior and urged them to keep out of trouble.217

In the face of all these pressures from persons of no small importance in the lives of the Juniors, the final triumph of the proponents of illegality, however tempered, assumes added significance. What was it that impelled the “bad boy” faction? There was a quality of defiance about much of their delinquency, as if they were saying—“We know perfectly well that what we are doing is regarded as wrong, legally and morally; we also know that it violates the wishes and standards of many whose good opinion we value; yet, if we are to sustain our self-respect and our honor as males we must, at this stage of our lives, engage in criminal behavior.” It is scarcely possible, in light of the experience of the Junior Outlaws, to maintain that their delinquency sprung from any inability to distinguish right from wrong, or out of any simple conformity to a set of parochial standards which just happened to differ from those of the legal code or the adult middle class. Their delinquent

217 See Chapter Five.
behavior was engendered by a highly complex interplay of forces, including, among other elements, the fact that they were males, were lower class II, and, of critical importance in the present instance, moving through the age period when the attainment of manhood was of the utmost concern. An adequate explanation of their behavior must engage these elements and others, a task to be essayed in future chapters.

The Royal Neighborhood

The Bandit, Outlaw, and Royal neighborhoods were located at the corners of a rough triangle whose sides were about three-quarters of a mile in length. Despite this proximity, however, the former two neighborhoods were predominantly white, and the latter predominantly black. The Royal corner stood at the intersection of two busy thoroughfares in a mixed residential-commercial district. At or near the corner were a drug store, a luncheonette, a barber shop, a beauty parlor, and other commercial facilities.

The Royal corner was, during the 1950’s, the “in” hangout for the Negro adolescents of Port City—some of whom would travel considerable distances from the several Negro neighborhoods scattered throughout the city to hang out in Midcity. It was here that the “action” was. An aura of excitement, of adventure, of promise pervaded the corner. It furnished a reservoir of attractive young men for girls seeking mates, and attractive young women for males. On summer evenings as many as 200 adolescents might be ground clustering around the four street corners of the Royal intersection. While the regular day-and-night habitués lived, for the most part, in the immediate area, the recurrent influx from other parts of the city imparted to the Royal corner a degree of cosmopolitanism that was lacking in the nearby white corners.

The attraction of the corner for adolescents from a relatively large geographical area made its gangs less homogeneous than those of the Bandit and Outlaw corners, and they included persons of a considerably wider range of social
status levels and life orientations. One extreme was represented by the Viceroy's (known as “the winos”) whose involvement in drinking, narcotics, thievery, and pimping was extensive and serious; another by the college-oriented clique of the Kings, several of whom became successful professional men.

The relative heterogeneity of the Royal corner reflected several characteristics of the Negro population of Port City during this period. It was relatively small, as seen earlier, comprising about three percent of the population of the greater metropolitan area. Local neighborhoods thus contained smaller numbers of adolescents to feed local gangs; the desirability of larger groups, particularly for purposes of mating, prompted many youngsters to seek out a corner where large numbers congregated. More important, the fact of “being black” during this period carried more weight relative to social status than did the fact of being white. The whites of Midcity were sensitive to social status differences within their own race, and their associational patterns reflected this sensitivity. Black adolescents were also sensitive to social status differences, but their common racial status could override such differences to a greater degree than among whites. Moreover, the social status situation of Midcity Negroes during this period was highly fluid; many were ambitious and aspiring, so that adolescent gangs could and did include persons whose prospects of altering their social position were quite different.

Unlike the Bandit and Outlaw corners, there was no store on the Royal corner whose owner maintained a special relationship to gang members. There were two establishments whose owners might have filled this role but did not, each for a different reason. The logical “home” store was the Royal Drug, located at a favored hanging spot, and providing the Royals with telephone facilities, candy and cigarettes, and pinball machines. Its owner was a white man who had remained behind when the Jewish community formerly occupying the Royal neighborhood had moved away. Unlike Sam, who was also Jewish, he had taken no steps to develop a close relationship with his Royal clients. Directly across from the Royal
Drug was the Shabazz Luncheonette, whose proprietor was black. The Shabazz, however, was something less than ideal as a corner “home” for the Royals because it served as a center for a variety of illegal enterprises; its owner booked numbers and horses, and maintained a message center wherein pimps, prostitutes and their customers could negotiate business arrangements. The proprietor was not unfriendly to the Royals, but it would have been rather awkward all around had he afforded them the freedom of his establishment.

Lacking a corner “home,” the Royals generally hung out on the door stoops of the dwellings near the corner (some of which were the homes of gang members), and in the summer frequented the small park nearby. Many of the girls, and some of the less criminally-oriented boys, also frequented a recreation hall run by a Negro Congregational church located about a half-block from the corner.

The Royal corner was more in the mainstream of community life than were either the Outlaw or Bandit corners. It was busy and active, and the Royals who frequented it could find amusement, diversion, and sometimes excitement in the flow of motor traffic, the passing of local drunks, the taxicabs which loaded and unloaded prostitutes and customers at the Shabazz luncheonette, and other activities of the corner. In the flurry of physical reconstruction which accompanied the massive urban renewal and social reform programs of the 1960’s, the whole of the Royal neighborhood and its environs was razed, and in its place was constructed an orderly and homogeneous housing development of the suburban subdivision type. The physical features and activity patterns of the Royal corner were wholly obliterated. The successors of the adolescents who frequented the corner in the 1950’s moved their base of activity to another corner about a mile away, where the luncheonette, variety store, pool hall, and other attributes of a suitable hanging corner were still standing.\textsuperscript{218}

\textsuperscript{218} It became fashionable during the 1960’s to refer to that part of Midcity where the Royal corner was located (prior to its physical destruction) as a “Black Ghetto,” and to picture it as characterized by unrelieved misery, hopelessness, frustration, and a radical restriction of mobility, both physical and social. Three years of intensive field observation of the Royal corner provided little direct
Relations Among Royal Subdivisions

Due in part to the cosmopolitan nature of the Royal corner, in part to the large numbers of youth it attracted, in part to the fact that some neighborhood residents were relatively new to the community, and in part to a general tendency for Negro group relationships to be less solidary than white, the Royal gang and subdivision situation was rather more complex, and rather less structured, than that of the white corners. The general associational principles were, however, essentially the same. There were several sets of gang subdivisions, differentiated by age and sex. In some instances there were several distinct subdivisions at the same age level, something rarely found on the white corners. In general the basis of membership in one rather than another of these same-age subdivisions was, as in the case of intra-gang cliques in the white gangs, the complexion of one’s orientation to law-violation. For example, occupying a parallel position to the 16-18 year old Kings were the same-aged Knights. The average Knight was considerably more active in crime than the average King. However, consistent with a considerable degree of intra-gang heterogeneity among the Kings, the most criminal of the Kings “went for bad” to a greater degree than the least criminal of the Knights.

The major set of royal gangs comprised five subdivisions (see Table 1.5). On the male side were the Monarchs, ages 18 to 20; the Kings, ages 16 to 18; the Princes, ages 14 to 16, and the Squires, ages 12 to 14. The major female subdivision was the Queens, ages 14 to 16. A parallel and more criminally-inclined set of gangs included the Viceroyys, boys 18 to 20, the Knights, 16 to 18, and the Ladies, girls 14 to 16. The clique situation of these latter gangs was fairly complex; the gang name “Ladies,” in particular, is used to refer to a number of cliques, some rather loosely related to others. The 270 adolescents comprising the eight gangs of Table 1.5 did

support for such an image. Along with the problems and frustrations the Royals shared with other American adolescents and other American Negroes, there existed in this area an atmosphere of excitement, a level of creative expression, a sense of promise and opportunity, which seemed, impressionistically, to be greater than those of either Bandit or Outlaw corners. However appropriate the “ghetto” label may have been for some urban Negro slums, its application to the Royal neighborhood of Midcity involved a particularly restricted conception of the actual life-style of its residents.
not exhaust the number of habitués of the Royal corner; hanging out with regular variety were an additional number of youngsters not directly associated with particular hangs. Despite an impression that relations among the Royal gangs were more fluid than those among the white gangs, evidence derived from the analysis of the Kings would appear to indicate that they were connected by kinship to about the same degree.219

While it is impossible to do justice to the heterogeneity and complexity of the Royal corner by describing only two of its gangs, the Kings and Queens—such description will provide a picture which is not wholly unrepresentative. These two gangs, when compared to the full range of Royal gangs, did embody a degree of internal heterogeneity which exceeded that of any of the white gangs thus far described.

**The Kings**

The Kings were the largest and most cohesive of the Royal gangs, numbering 39 active members. They were under direct observation for 34 months—the longest period of any gang.220 At the start of this period the average King was 16.4 years of age, and at the end, 19.1. Most of the Kings (70%) were born within two years of one another. Ancestors of most of the Kings were Africans brought to the American South as slaves. As is the case for most American Negroes, they varied in color according to varying degrees of white admixture in their ancestry. None, however, was as light as the “high yellow” of slavery days or as the average North American Caucasian; few were as dark as native Africans. Most of the Kings were Protestants, primarily Congregationalists and Episcopalians. A few, during the observation period, converted to Catholicism. One King, along with his ex-Queen

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219 The relatively complex pattern of association of the Royal gangs and subdivisions has been somewhat simplified for purposes of clarity and economy.

220 The bulk of field recording for the Kings was done by two workers. The first, Henry R. Previte, maintained contact with the gang for 18 months, and the second, Reverend Jack F. Russel, for 16. Additional field data were obtained from the records of Ethel Grumman Ackley, the “Queen” worker, and Walter B. Miller.
wife, later became an active Black Muslim, and was involved in the killing of a prominent Black Nationalist leader during the 1960’s.

Relations between the Kings and the Monarchs, their older brother group, were rather distant. This was due in part to the fact that the general life orientation of the Monarchs was more characteristic of a lower social status level. Relations with the younger Princes and Squires, on the other hand, were fairly close. As was the case among the Outlaws, the Kings took an older-brotherly interest in their juniors. Several Kings organized and coached a Squire football team. Kings and Princes sometimes participated jointly in gang activities, and several of the Princes were regarded as quasi-members of the Kings. Some Kings were in fact the actual older brothers of Princes and Squires. The Kings were linked by kinship to other Royal gangs to about the same degree as the white gangs. At least one-third of the Kings had relatives in other Royal subdivisions. These included six brothers, six cousins, and ten sisters, seven of whom belonged to the Queens, the Kings’ sister gang. Within the gang itself were two pairs of brothers and a set of three cousins. Thus, while the average King family had lived in Midcity for a shorter period of time than the average Bandit or Outlaw family, the Royal gangs were interrelated by blood and marriage to a similar degree.

The Kings, in common with the Outlaws, are here categorized as lower-class II; this categorization, however, represents more of an averaging-out of a wider range of social status levels than is the case for the white gangs. The Bandits and Outlaws drew their membership from neighborhoods whose residents represented a relatively narrow social status range, and sons, by and large, pursued occupations similar to those of their fathers. The Kings, for reasons already discussed, drew their membership from a broader segment of the social class spectrum, and, in addition, included a larger proportion of boys who aspired to elevate their social position. In the case of generationally-stable gangs like the Senior Bandits, most of the indexes to social status—parents’ education, parents’ occupation, children’s’
education, children’s’ occupation—were mutually consistent; in the case of the Kings, there was less correspondence among the several indexes.

Most of the Kings' fathers pursued characteristically lower-class II and III occupations, such as railroad station cleaning man, college dormitory janitor, and factory laborer. An important minority, however, held jobs more characteristic of somewhat higher status within the lower class. Among these men were a barber who owned his own shop, a pullman waiter, and an airline porter. The educational circumstances of the Kings, like those of their sister gang, the Queens, were quite typical of the circumstances of other American ethnic groups during that stage of their history when some substantial portion of the group is in the process of effecting a relatively rapid rise in social status. Only 26% of those Kings whose post-observation-period educational experience was known failed to complete high school—the lowest drop-out rate of any of the male gangs. Of the 23 Kings who did complete high school, 12 entered colleges, about half in Port City and half in the south, and 7 received college degrees. The 18% college graduation rate of the Kings well exceeds that of any of the other study gangs, and approaches the national average for all categories of young adults. In addition, one of the Kings, after making an outstanding record as an undergraduate in an Ivy League college, attended medical school and was awarded an internship in surgery, in a top west coast hospital.

The occupational circumstances of the Kings, like their educational circumstances, reflected the diversity generally found in a lower class ethnic group during a period of accelerated upward social movement. Toward the higher end of the occupational scale were the college graduates whose training had equipped them for higher status jobs; these included the surgeon just mentioned, a federal probation officer, an elementary school teacher, an IBM technician, an insurance salesman, and an engineer. Toward the lower end of the scale were men working in jobs such as car-wash attendant, shoe-factory worker, and railroad laborer. In a different category were two professional pimps, a man in and out of prison in
connection with the narcotics traffic, and a man sentenced to life imprisonment for a murder stemming from his involvement in a variety of illegal enterprises.

Despite the divergent nature of these extremes, however, the young-adult occupations of the rank-and-file of the Kings were quite similar to those of the average Outlaw, and not too different from those of their fathers. In their middle twenties just about half (51.5%) held positions in the bottom two occupational categories of the U.S. Census—a figure almost identical to that of the white lower class II Junior Outlaws (52.2%). All three lower class II male gangs fell within a similar 70-80% range with respect to occupancy of positions in the bottom five Census categories. The “average” King is readily assignable to the “lower class II” category on the basis of occupational status, but occupational variation within the gang was sufficiently wide so that some members fell above or below that category.

**Law Violation, Cliques, and Leadership**

During the period of their adolescence the King's involvement in illegal behavior was relatively low. Rates based on both official and unofficial data were close to those of the Senior Outlaws. For example, they ranked lowest of the male gangs in the percentage of members known ever to have been arrested up to a year following the observation period (25.6%) and also in the percentage committed to correctional institutions (7.7%). They also showed the lowest rate of court appearances per individual up to age 18 (0.8 compared to an all-gang average of 2.7) and were tied for last place with the Junior Outlaws in the rate of court charges (1.0 per individual). The King’s level of criminality was thus closer to that of white gangs of similar status (e.g., Outlaws), than to that of black gangs of lower status (e.g., Lancers).

There were, however, some differences between the criminal experience of the Kings and that of the white gangs that reflected their heterogeneity, and also, perhaps, differences in ethnic subcultures. The overall volume of King crime was similar to that of the Senior Outlaws, who were of the same age and social status,
but age trends, particularly with respect to theft and assault, were somewhat different. The criminal activity of the Senior Outlaws peaked during their earlier adolescence and slacked off during the later teen years; the Kings were relatively law-abiding during earlier adolescence but became more criminal as they approached their twenties. For example, for the period up to age 17 the Kings ranked last among the male gangs in the rate of court appearances for theft, but for the period up to age 21 they ranked third in court appearances, and second in the rate of theft charges. The Kings also showed a relatively high rate of assaultive offenses both during and after the observation period, ranking second in assault involvements and third in court charges for assault.

The King’s late-teen peak in crime was primarily the work of a relatively small clique. As the socially-aspiring boys approached manhood they diminished their involvement in illegal behavior, while the socially-stable and criminally oriented boys increased theirs. This is of more than passing interest. Despite the presence in the gang of an influential group who were both higher-status-oriented and lawfully inclined, and a level of adolescent criminality consistent with lower class II status, one segment of the Kings continued to maintain a close involvement with criminal enterprises whose potential for violence was high. Within a decade of the observation period two Kings figured in dramatic murders, both arising out of the relationship between procurer and prostitute. One man shot and killed his woman; the other was shot and killed by his. Further discussion of the role of violence and of distinctive aspects of lower class Negro crime is included in later chapters.

Analyses of intra-gang cliques presented thus far have centered primarily on differing orientations to the role of violative behavior by youths of similar social-status circumstances. Cliques among the Kings reflected an additional important factor—that of “upward social mobility,” or ambition to elevate one’s social position. These two dimensions—orientation to illegality and orientation to status change—provided the major distinction of cliques within the Kings. Boys who aspired to
higher social status are designated as “socially mobile;” boys who did not, “socially stable.”

Five cliques could be distinguished on the basis of these two dimensions; socially-mobile and law-abiding, socially-mobile and conventionally criminal, socially-stable and law-abiding, socially-stable and conventionally criminal, and socially-stable and seriously criminal. There was no clique representing a sixth logical type, socially-mobile and seriously criminal. The Kings themselves were quite aware of these bases of differentiation, although they did not use the terms used here, nor make as fine distinctions. They conceptualized the difference between the socially-mobile and the socially-stable cliques primarily in terms of mental capacity, using the sarcastic designation “geniuses” for the mobile cliques, and the equally sarcastic designation “idiots” for the socially-stable. The Kings knew quite well that some of “the idiots” were considerably less than idiotic when it came to brainwork connected with horserace handicapping, poker, or managing a stable of prostitutes. Gang members used the term “hoodlums” to make the distinction between the criminally-oriented and law-abiding cliques, although they had no specific term for the latter.

The socially-mobile and law-abiding clique numbered six members, all of whom were planning to attend college. These boys hung out less frequently than did the other Kings, and tended to grant precedence to academic activities when the demands of gang and school came into conflict. During the latter part of the observation period most of these boys relinquished active participation in corner life as they intensified preparation for or began to attend college. One member of this clique, a major leader of the Kings, did continue his close involvement with the gang despite the imminence of his departure for college.

Eleven boys belonged to the socially-mobile and conventionally-criminal clique. Most of these boys were planning on post-high school-training, generally in local colleges or technical institutes. Their criminal activity, for the most part, was of the relatively mild variety characteristic of many higher-status and/or socially-
aspiring lower class adolescents, centering on petty theft, some bouts of heavy drinking, and participation in a gang fight or two. This type of youthful criminal experience is often borne like a banner in later years (in moments appropriate to disclosure) by males with origins in ethnic groups such as the Italians and Jews, whose peaks of upward social mobility occurred in the relatively recent past. The role of such violative behavior for these socially mobile boys will be discussed shortly.

The socially-stable and law-abiding clique numbered eleven boys. Their relatively low rate of criminal involvement was commensurate with one possible life-style within the lower class—that referred to in the unselfconscious prose of bygone years as “poor but honest.” Most of these boys aspired to, and eventually assumed, positions such as factory machinist, armed-forces non-commissioned officer, or policemen—jobs of which a “record” of more-than-average youthful crime can prove a drawback. The socially-stable and conventionally criminal clique comprised six members. This adaptation was a dominant one among Midcity’s lower class II males, although within the Kings it was pursued by a minority. While the vocations ultimately followed by these boys were similar to those of their more law-abiding counterparts, the potential handicap of youthful criminal involvement was a considerably less compelling consideration, during adolescence, than the lure of prestige via criminality.

The socially-stable and seriously-criminal clique, finally, was composed of five boys for whom adolescent participation in crime served as a possible training ground for continuing adult involvement. These boys, particularly in their late teens, sometimes joined members of the lower-status Viceroy and Knights to engage in crimes such as pocketbook thefts, store burglaries, and taxi-driver holdups. Several became involved in pimping operations during their teens, and continued such involvement into adulthood. Of the five socially-stable and seriously criminal members of this clique who had a try at more serious crime as part of the
role-practicing process of adolescence, three continued such involvement during their twenties, and two did not.  

The criminal involvement of the several cliques reflected their basic orientations. As might be expected, the highest rates of involvement in illegal acts during the observation period were shown by the socially-stable and seriously criminal clique, and the lowest by the socially-mobile and law-abiding clique. Rather surprisingly, however, the second highest rate was shown not by the “conventionally criminal” boys who were socially-stable, but by the socially mobile group. This finding casts some light on the attitudes of gang members to upward risk of stigmatization thereby; those who did so aspire, on the other hand, ran a serious risk of being branded as unmanly or sissified.  

The belief that academic interests were effeminizing carried considerable weight even in a gang which included a fair proportion of boys who were academically inclined. Far from constituting a basis for claiming prestige, the hope of elevating one’s status through educational achievement was regarded, within the context of gang life, as a kind of secret vice. It was most important, therefore, that

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221 This delineation of King cliques is somewhat simplified. Some gang members were marginal to one or more cliques, and some showed “mixed” orientations, pursuing a life pattern in which legitimate and illegitimate enterprises were carried on simultaneously or in sequence. (A discussion of the mixed legitimate and illegitimate pattern of income acquisition is included in Chapter Eleven, “Theft.”) Probably the most dramatic case of this mixed adaptation was that of one extremely able and intelligent King who was pulled between the worlds of legitimate and illegitimate endeavor. Expelled from high school shortly before graduation after an angry encounter with a teacher, he moved into the world of procuring, and within a relatively short period established a reputation as the top pimp in Midcity—with an extensive stable of prostitutes, a luxurious car, and a handsome income. This achievement gained him community-wide respect—including that of his colleagues who were now engaged in middle class professions. A brush with the law and other events helped him decide to leave “the life” and he became a successful real estate agent. This operation was infiltrated by narcotics operators, and he left Midcity to return to “the life”—this time with a procuring operation in a resort area centering on his white mistress. In the course of a violent scene whose details are not fully known, he murdered this woman, turned himself in, and was sentenced to life imprisonment. This case is one of the few involving the 200-odd members of Midcity direct-observation gangs where the concept of psychic conflict could be employed to good advantage to derive an amplified explanation of the motivation for violative behavior. Even here, however, it was the lower class subcultural milieu of Midcity which provided the basic definitions and conceptions of possible life-paths through which these conflicts were played out.

222 For a discussion of the use of the accusation of homosexuality as an epithet, see Chapter Nine (Male S. & M.). Discussion of tensions between “corner boys” and “college boys” in William F. Whyte, Street Corner Society.
the upwardly mobile boys be in a position to counteract the stigmatizing potential of academic ambition by showing that they were just as “tough” or tougher than the socially-stable boys. One quite effective way of doing this was to engage in criminal behavior of the “conventional” type.

Leadership arrangements in the Kings embodied still another combination of the elements of strong and weak authority, differing orientations to social-status change, and differing orientations to criminality. As in the other gangs, each of the five King cliques had a “leader” or most important boy. There were also, as in the case of the Junior Outlaws, two leaders with more generalized authority—one acting as the embodiment and proponent of law-abiding behavior, the other as the spokesman for the law-violating course of action. Both of these leaders were forceful and articulate. The leader of the “Hoodlums” was a sharp-witted boy who was, during this period, actively engaged in thievery from parked cars. The law-abiding leader was a member of the socially-mobile and law-abiding clique who hoped to convert his ability as a track star into a college scholarship.

The acrimonious dialogue between these two boys and their followers, locked in debate over a particular issue or course of action, continued unabated during the nearly three years of intensive observation. These debates covered a wide variety of issues; general deportment, modes of money-raising, relations with other gangs, relations with adult agencies. The respective positions of the antagonists reflected the polarity of their contrasting orientations.

However, unlike the Junior Outlaws, where the strength of the rival leaders was fairly equal, there was no doubt among the Kings as to the primacy of leadership. The law-abiding leader was clearly dominant; moreover, his style of authority exercise, as in the case of the Senior Outlaws, was direct and forceful. Why did the Kings, with the most diverse elements of any of the male gangs, tolerate a leader who was not only authoritarian but who consistently discriminated against important interests in the gang?
Several characteristics of the gang are relevant here. The first relates to the nature of interpersonal bonds among gang members. Compared to the white gangs, relations among gang mates appeared to be somewhat less intimate. Interpersonal relations were characterized by a lesser degree of mutual dependence, and gang members were less likely to submerge their individual identities into a corporate identity. There were more “characters” and “stars,” and fewer “team men.” It was thus somewhat more difficult for the gang to effect collective action by the processes of consensual agreement and voluntary cooperation. This created a problem, in that the achievement of important group objectives demanded effectively coordinated action. One device for coping with this problem was the use of relatively strong superordinate authority, and a fair degree of obedience to leaders who were willing and able to exercise it.

A second characteristic relates to one prevalent orientation to authority among lower class populations. As discussed elsewhere, many lower class people, while appearing on the surface to resent firm or forceful authority, in fact have a “covert” desire for strong external controls. Among the Kings this orientation had particular force in light of two attributes of gang members; all were adolescent, and a fair proportion were socially mobile. As male adolescents in a lower class Negro community, the Kings were conscious of powerful and persisting pressures to follow the path and gain the rewards of “sinful” living. At the same time, those who were socially ambitious knew that the maintenance of a pattern of law-abiding conduct was importantly related to upward social movement. The very existence within the gang of a clique, though small, of socially mobile and law-abiding boys, furnished a testament that such a course of action was possible; the conduct of the “good boy” leader, embodying and exemplifying this course of action, served as a behavioral reference point which was valuable even to the most violatively-oriented gang members. His effectiveness, exemplar an agency of virtuous behavior, was well served by the “authoritarian” manner of his leadership. The more compelling the

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223 Miller, W.B., Lower Class Culture...Milieu...Op. cit.
temptations to stray from the paths of righteousness, the more necessary it was that the voice of countermanding authority be strong. It is most significant that the “hoodlum” clique of the Kings, while constantly complaining about the arbitrary, unjust and discriminatory character of the “good boy” leader’s authority, did at no time elect to move out of his orbit of influence, which they were quite free to do had they so desired.

For the Kings, and particularly its “bad boy” element, the stern and punitive authority of the “good boy” leader served, after the fashion of the hell-and-brimstone Baptist preacher of the south, to chasten the sinful and buttress the tempted. It is of interest in this respect to note that the Kings, in their formal gatherings, employed the rituals of organized religion to a greater extent than did any other gang; each meeting was opened and closed with a prayer, during which all gang members, including the young thieves, pimps, gamblers and ladies-men of the “hoodlum” faction, sat silently, with heads reverently bowed.224

A third characteristic of relevance to the “strong leadership” of the Kings involves occupational considerations. The Kings, like the Senior Outlaws, were older adolescents of lower class II status, and, also like them, assigned considerable importance to the effective conduct of collective activities. During the observation period they organized and executed a number of well-run collective enterprises including several large public dances and a scrap-paper drive. The Kings also organized a number of musical groups; one of these became sufficiently competent as to perform on a professional basis in local night clubs. The abilities necessary to such enterprises—formulating plans, directing action, accepting direction, resolving differences, raising and handling money—are also highly useful to adult participation in the world of work. The willingness of the Kings to choose and retain a “strong” leader was related in part to the realization that practice in the direction

224 The tendency for lower-status Negroes to conduct certain kinds of secular collective enterprises after the fashion of religious enterprises, with respect both to the forms of collective interaction and the religious quality of commitment to objectives and ideals, was well exemplified in the general and specific social reform movements which played so prominent a role among American Negroes during the 1960’s.
and execution of collective activities could serve as valuable preparation for their future occupational circumstances.

The organizational skill of the Kings was also reflected in their experience with organized athletics. During the observation period the gang formed a club whose primary purpose was the facilitation of team athletics. The Kings were able to field successful teams in football, baseball, and basketball; their football teams were particularly effective, and a King team, in its third season, succeeded in winning the championship of the Port City municipal athletic league—winning out over an Outlaw team at the end of a hard-fought season.

The special role of athletics among the Kings merits brief attention. Whatever their differences with regard to social mobility or unlawful behavior, the majority of the Kings shared a common respect for the skills necessary to successful athletic performance. Included among their heroes were the stars, and particularly the Negro stars, of basketball, track, boxing, and baseball. This common interest, and the common participation arising from it, served as an important unifying influence in a gang composed of diverse elements.

Athletic competence, furthermore, was of particular import for the socially-mobile boys, on practical as well as symbolic grounds. Few King families were in a position to provide significant financial support to those with college aspirations; few Kings were sufficiently competent academically to earn scholarship aid through academic excellence; under these conditions the athletic scholarship became the logical route to college. The feats of King athletes, publicized in the sports pages, drew the attention of college coaches and others with athletic interests, and most of the Kings who were able to enter college did so on the strength of their athletic ability.

Athletic competence in general and school-connected athletics in particular also served on a symbolic level to ease the way for the socially-mobile King. Gaining a reputation as a “tough” athlete served in some measure to counteract the “effeminacy” stigma of academic interests. Many members of the socially-mobile
and conventionally criminal clique were active both in athletics and crime, seeking thereby double insurance against such stigma. The prestige of athletics even provided for the socially-mobile boys an acceptable excuse for engaging in study; since poor academic performance meant dismissal from school teams, one could say “I gotta go study so I won’t get kicked off the f----g team,” without losing face.

Athletics, for the Kings, thus served a variety of useful purposes. It legitimatized academic involvement by the socially-mobile; it was able in some degree to counteract the stigmatization of academic ambition; and it served as an important unifying influence in a gang whose members represented diverse backgrounds and maintained diverse ambitions. In this respect, as well as others, the situation of the Kings closely resembled that of other ethnic groups undergoing the “separating-out” process characteristic of a period of high social mobility.225

The Queens

The Queens, “sister” gang to the Kings, numbered 39 active members. The gang was under intensive observation for just two years, and close contact was maintained with a selected subgroup for an additional eight months. At the start of the 24 month observation period the average Queen was 16.0 years old, and at its close, 18.0. The educational and occupational status of the Queens, taking sex differences into account, was quite similar to that of the Kings. All of the Queens were Negro; in contrast to the Kings, several were quite light-skinned. The features of one Queen leader, whose white mother had married a black band leader, were essentially Caucasoid.

The social status of the Queens is here designated as lower class II. As in the case of the Kings, this designation involves a wider range of status variation than was found in the white gangs, and a lesser degree of concordance among the several measures of social status. The status range of the Queens did not, however, extend

225 This process is discussed in Miller, Walter B., “Implications of Lower Class Culture...” op. cit. 394
as far downward as was the case for the Kings. Although one clique within the Kings attained higher social status than most of the Queens, the status of the gang as a whole was the highest of all seven gangs. Their rate of high-school completion exceeded that of many lower class I populations; a substantial 80% completed high school, in sharp contrast to the 20% figure shown by the white Molls.

The educational capacity indicated by the Queens’ high school completion rate did not, however, result in a rate of college entrance equivalent to that of the Kings, whose high school completion rate was slightly lower (74%). While 12 of the Kings enrolled in regular four year colleges, none of the Queens did so. Two of the girls did take post-high school training—one attending secretarial school, the other nursing school. Both the higher rate of high-school completion and the lower rate of college entrance reflect differences between males and females in the role and significance of advanced education—differences discussed elsewhere.

The occupational status of the Queens and their parents, like that of the Kings, reflected the circumstances of an ethnic group in the process of moving up in the social scale. Occupations covered a fairly wide range. Most fathers held typical lower class II and III jobs such as barber, porter, shoe factory operative, and cab driver. A few held jobs more characteristic of higher status within the lower class. These included a bandleader, a carpenter, and a sandhog. One man worked as chauffer for a United States senator who later became president. As is common at this status level, many of the Queens’ mothers also worked, holding low-skilled jobs such as chambermaid, cook, waitress, and laundry worker.

Many of the Queens, like their mothers, became working women. Their occupations as young adults, however, showed that their education had prepared them for jobs of considerably higher status. The Queens ranked lowest of all groups in the proportion of members holding jobs in the bottom two census categories (36%), as well as in the bottom four (12%) and five (48%). Thus, about 27 of the young adult Queens known to be working held “white collar” jobs such as secretary, bookkeeper, and IBM punch operator. The occupational elite of the Queens, in the
world of legitimate endeavor, was represented by the girl who became a registered nurse.

Some of the Queens also held jobs in the lower skill categories, as did some of the Kings. Somewhat over one-third of the girls worked in low-skill occupations such as factory operative and housemaid. Two of the Queens, once the protective influence of the gang had waned, worked on a part-time basis as prostitutes. The most financially successful of the working Queens was a girl who became a full time prostitute. She rapidly gained a reputation as one of the best in her field, and within a few years of the observation period was able to purchase an expensive home for her mother and sisters in a middle class residential district. As a predictable and expected business hazard, the girl was arrested several times on charges of prostitution, and once, when unable to arrange the usual pay-off, spent several months in a women's correctional institution. The not-quite-complete quality of the Queens' movement toward higher status reflected in the diversity of their occupational experience also characterized the situation of their highest-status worker, the registered nurse. One of the major reasons that she gave for aspiring to this position, and working so hard to achieve it, was that it would greatly facilitate the task of raising and supporting her two children, both born out of wedlock.

The Queens had less of a sense of corporate identity than any of the other gangs, for reasons to be discussed. This did not mean, however, that there was any dearth of significant links among gang members, or between themselves and other gangs. On the contrary, kinship ties among the Queens, and between the Queens and Kings, were the most numerous of any gang. The Queens contained five pairs of sisters and three pairs of first cousins; over 40% of the girls thus had close relatives in the gang. Furthermore, five Queens had brothers, and three first cousins, in the Kings. One of the Queens, with cousins in both gangs, married a King. The density

\[226\] The role of the gang as an insulating mechanism against prostitution is discussed in Chapter Eight.
of kinship ties among the Queens was directly related to their clique structure, to be discussed shortly.\textsuperscript{227}

\textit{Law-violation, Cliques, and Leadership}

As might be expected from their educational and occupational experience, and consistent with their sex and class characteristics, (female, lower class II), the Queens ranked lowest of all seven gangs in almost every measure of criminality. For example, they ranked last in the percentage of gang members known to have been arrested up to a year after the observation period (7.7\%, compared to 25.6\% for the next-lowest Kings, and 45\% for the Molls), and in their involvement in illegal incidents (Queens, 6.8 involvements per ten girls per ten month period; Molls, 25.2; all-gang average, 31.4). No Queen was committed to a correctional institution during the observation period. The Queens also ranked lowest in every offense except one—assault. Here they ranked fifth in their participation in assault incidents during the observation period.

Comparing the Queens with the Molls with respect to the six offenses examined for the latter shows low or negligible rates of involvement by the Queens in those offenses which were most prevalent among the Molls—truancy, theft, drinking, and property damage. In assaultive offenses, by contrast, the Queens’ rate was higher. Only two involvements in assault were recorded for the Molls during the observation period, producing a rate of 0.7 involvements per ten girls per ten months; the Queens, with 18 recorded involvements, showed a rate of 1.9. With respect to known sexual offenses, both female gangs showed low rates.

Differences between the female gangs in offense-patterning reflect age, ethnic and social status differences which will be examined in some detail in later chapters. The lower rates shown by the Queens in the conventional lower status adolescent offenses of theft, drinking, truancy and vandalism are consistent with

\textsuperscript{227} Further discussion of the relation of kinship and friendship ties in the gangs is presented in Chapter Five.
their social status; their rate of assault is not so consistent, and raises the possibility of a special link between being Negro and assaultive activity. Evidence to be presented later does not show a direct association between Negro status alone and assault; among the 14 male gangs whose criminal records were studied, whites showed slightly higher (1.3 times) rates than blacks. (See Table 18.13, Chapter 13). The possibility remains that being Negro and female involves a particular disposition toward assaultive activity—a possibility to be discussed in the chapter on assault.

The relatively low rate of involvement in sexual offenses shown by the Queens as well as the Molls merits brief attention at this point, although a more comprehensive analysis of female sexual behavior awaits a later chapter. The Queens were Negro girls living in the major lower class Negro community of Port City; they were in a highly nubile age category (16 to 18); many were quite attractive and several unusually so; they were in close and constant contact with males of the same age and social status; some of the males were actively criminal; sex and mating were dominant concerns of both male and female gang members. These circumstances might lead one to expect a high rate of violative sexual behavior among the Queens.

The Queens did, in fact, engage in a good deal of sexual activity of a kind which seldom commands enthusiastic support by middle class adults, ranking second highest of the seven gangs in the frequency of their involvement in sexual actions seen as violating adult middle class standards. Such activity, however, was conducted in such a way as to attract very little notice by law enforcement officials. The Queens, like the Molls, were most circumspect about violative sexual behavior; rather than flaunting their sexual exploits they made every attempt to keep them secret. Moreover, their expressed sentiments with respect to sexual behavior were quite at variance with their actions; they maintained, on the surface, the most “moral” position in this respect of all the gangs, resulting in a substantial
discrepancy between word and deed (Chapter Four). These characteristics indicate an unusual degree of emphasis by the Queens on the control of sexual behavior.

As will be shown in the discussion of female sexual and mating behavior, a major function served by the gang for the Queens was that of delineating norms of sexual behavior and acting on a continuing basis to enforce these norms. One such norm enjoined habitual private rendezvous with male peers; such rendezvous were called “deals;” another norm enjoined unfaithfulness to ones’ “steady” boyfriend; the act of being alone with another boy was called a “sneaky.” The very existence of explicit norms proscribing common forms of adolescent female behavior, along with a quasi-juridical system for enforcing them, to be described, testifies to a high degree of stress on the careful control of sexual behavior.

This phenomenon may be understood, in part, by considering that the development of such control could prove most useful in attaining at least two of the adult roles prospectively open to the Queens—that of middle-class-oriented housewife and that of prostitute. The utility of “controlled” sexual behavior to those who aspire to higher status has frequently been pointed out. The capacity to control one’s impulses in a situation where one is surrounded by attractive but socially-stable boys is a vital part of a policy of deferring intimate involvement until one can be sure that a prospective mate in fact aspires to higher status, and has the capacity to achieve it. In addition, the widespread perception that sexual looseness is an attribute of lower class status, and particularly of lower class Negro status, served for socially-aspiring Queens as a cogent incentive for the exercise of sexual control.

With respect to prostitution as an adult pursuit, the capacity to control one’s sexual behavior with a high degree of nicety is central to effective professional functioning. The successful prostitute must be able to control her immediate impulses, and to “turn love off and on,” to an even greater degree than the upwardly mobile female. One must make love only with the particular person, and in the particular way, and under the particular circumstances which will produce
maximum customer satisfaction, and maximum monetary return. A well-developed
capacity to control one's sexual impulses is a sine qua non of professional success.
The Queens' well-developed system of controls over sexual behavior thus served at
the same time to inhibit legally-violative sexual behavior and to provide useful
preparation for a number of possible adult pursuits.

Cliques and leadership in the Queens reflected several sets of related
influences. One was their status characteristics (female, older, Negro, lower class
II); another, their relationship with the Kings. As already mentioned, the Queens
were less solidary, and had less of a sense of corporate identity, than the other
gangs. This was in accord with several of their status characteristics. In Midcity,
female gangs in general, and older female gangs in particular, were less solidary
than male; Negro gangs were less solidary than Caucasian; socially-mobile gang
members maintained looser ties than the socially-stable. Also involved was the
Queens’ relationship to the Kings, which differed in certain respects from that of the
Molls and the Hoods. The Hoods were definitely important to the Molls, but they
also maintained a high degree of independent identity. The Queens were
considerably less independent of the Kings, and their relationship with them was a
major reason for their existence as a gang.

The “ emulation of the boys” phenomenon reported for the Molls was also in
evidence, to some extent, among the Queens. For example, they started a formal
club shortly after the Kings started theirs. More important was the relationship of
the Queens to the Kings as sisters, as sweethearts, as would-be sweethearts.
Queens who had brothers in the Kings were enabled, through gang membership, to
maintain a degree of common participation and mutual interest with their brothers
in the Kings during adolescence which would serve them well in future years, when
many would be faced with the responsibilities of motherhood without being able to
rely on the presence of a legal spouse in the household. Even more important was
the access to “boys” provided by gang membership. Girls with brothers in the Kings
had a good “in” with their brothers’ gang mates; girls without brothers had a good
“in” with the brothers of girls who did. The importance of the Kings as a mate-reservoir was underscored by the statement of a girl who, near the end of the observation period, decided to leave the gang. “I ain’t had no luck with the Kings,” she said, “so I decided I better find another corner.”

Once mating alliances were formed, membership in the gang served several useful purposes. Joint participation with the Kings in a variety of gang-connected ventures provided good opportunities for proximity and mating activities. The Queens were loyal supporters of King athletic teams; they seldom failed to attend their public contests, and took great pleasure in following, with pride and excitement, the exploits of their brothers and sweethearts on the playing fields. Membership in the Queens also enabled the girls to keep tabs on their boyfriends—a most important consideration in the highly competitive mating atmosphere of adolescent Midcity, where the possibility that one’s “steady” might pull a “sneaky” was never far away. One reason the Queens gave for having their club meetings on the same nights as the Kings’ was that in this way they could be reasonably sure that their boyfriends were sufficiently occupied as to preclude sexual adventuring with other girls. The Queens persistently (although unsuccessfully) attempted to secure attendance lists of the Kings’ meetings, since the absence of a boy’s name on such a list was presumptive evidence that he was engaged in pulling a “sneaky.”

The existence of the Queens as a group as well as the nature of their gang activities were tied to their brother gang to a greater degree than was the case for the Molls, but this does not mean that they lacked a distinctive identity. Their pursuits significantly differed from those of the Kings, centering on activities and concerns characteristic of adolescent females. Some significant portion of the Kings’ energies as a group were devoted to the organizational arrangements necessary to effectively-coordinated collective action; the Queens, by contrast, utilized the group in large part as a forum for discussion of matters such as dress, cooking, entertaining, parties, who-is-going-with-whom, and standards of taste and demeanor. The intensity of the Queens’ concern with the latter subject was
indicated by their participation in a practice they called “Topic Night,” to be
discussed further in later chapters. This was a periodic gathering during which each
of the girls in turn was subjected to critical review by her gang mates as to the
acceptability of her conduct during the recent past. Forms of behavior such as
wearing overly tight dresses, taking part in too many “deals” and failure to meet
entertainment obligations were pointed out and censured.

As an associational unit the Queens differed in certain respects from the
more solidary gangs. The clique, for the most part, was a more significant unit than
the gang as a whole. There were four main cliques consisting of about eight girls
each, and another seven girls who were not directly affiliated with any of the
cliques. Like the Molls, whose dominant clique included a three-sister grouping,
sister pairs formed the nuclei of three of the Queen cliques. Each clique, in fact, was
roughly analogous in size and form to the Moll gang as a whole, and the Queens as
a gang could be seen as a loose confederation of eight-girl cliques plus hangers-on.

The composition of the cliques remained fairly stable during the observation
period, but there were some changes, as different girls moved in and out of the
position of “best friends” and ex-“best-friends.” The making and breaking of best-
friendships often depended on which girl’s brother her gang mate was interested in,
or which girl was making a play for the “steady” of another. The composition of the
cliques, similarly, was influenced by which of the Kings various girls might be going
with.

Since activity-coordination was not a major concern of the Queens, clique
leaders served more as opinion leaders in matters of taste, style, and current fads
than as directors of organized enterprises. In two of the cliques with pairs of sisters,
one or both of the sisters were recognized as clique leaders. There was also, as in
the other gangs, a factional division centering on the issue of violative behavior.
Two of the Queen cliques were seen as “good girls;” one as “bad girls;” the fourth
shared features of both types, but inclined toward the good. As in the case of the
Kings, the major “good girl” faction and its leaders were recognized as dominant.
The two sisters who were leaders of this faction were socially ambitious, highly concerned about the “good name” of the gang, and active in school activities. A major leader of the “bad girl” clique was the half-Caucasian daughter of the bandleader who, early in the observation period, was ejected from the major “good girl” clique for getting drunk several times, and particularly for urinating in public while drunk.

The Kings were quite sensitive to the “good girl” – “bad girl” division in the Queens, and referred to two subgroups within the “bad girls” as “the drinkers” and “the fighters.” The mainstays of “the fighters” were two sisters whose propensity to resort to physical force was decried by the “good girls.” Once when members of the “good girl” faction failed to invite the sisters to a party, they invaded the affair with their comppeers, and rapidly reduced it to a shambles by engaging the invited guest in fistfights.

A brief comparison of the Queens and the other female intensive-observation gang, the Molls, will serve at the same time to summarize some of the salient features of the Queens as a gang, and to suggest ways in which these features were related to their particular status characteristics. The Queens and Molls were alike in that their relationship to a boys’ gang was a major reason for the gangs’ existence and in that emulation of the boys’ activities played some part in the gang life of the girls. The brother gang, however, was more important to the Queens than to the Molls, and emulation of “the boys” was less important for the Queens, and mating more important, than for the Molls.

The two gangs were similar in that the basic associational unit was a clique of about eight girls, and that sets or pairs of sisters served as nuclei of cliques. The Queens, with four major cliques, were less solidary than the Molls, who had one dominant and one subordinate clique. With respect to crime, the Queens and Molls were alike in showing low rates of known sexual violations; they differed in that the Molls showed higher rates in theft, drinking offenses, truancy, and vandalism, while the Queens showed higher rates in assault. Both gangs maintained a similar
pattern of circumspection with respect to violative sexual behavior. Low truancy rates among the Queens reflected a stress on formal education which resulted in a high rate of high school completion; high truancy rates among the Molls reflected an orientation to education which resulted in a high drop-out rate.

The two gangs differed in that the “good girls” were the dominant clique in the Queens, and the “bad girls” in the Molls. Brother gang members who excelled in athletics were the principal heroes of the Queens; those who excelled in crime the heroes of the Molls. Finally, while the control of conduct and general demeanor was of concern to both gangs, the Queens placed far more stress on such control—particularly the control of sexual conduct. Both the similarities and differences of the two girls’ gangs reflected the fact that they shared in common the status of female, while differing in age, ethnic, and social status. It is important to remember in this connection that the Molls, more criminal and less well-educated, were white, and the Queens, less criminal and better educated, black. In this instance as in many others the influence of social status was clearly more significant than that of racial status. The nature of the relationship between these and other status characteristics to patterns of gang behavior will be explored in some detail in later chapters.