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In no respect, however, are any of the above responsible for any errors of fact or interpretation which may appear in this study. For these the writer takes full responsibility.

This dissertation is dedicated to Sam Drake and Frank Burnette - two real friends to the "man in the street."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>The Theoretical Setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>The Communities and the Method of Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>On The Block - A Profile of the Street and Its Habitués</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Sociability and Aggression In Interpersonal Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Playing The Block - Making a Living and Dodging the Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Street and Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Retrospect and Prospect - A Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix I - Famous Negro Streets and Corners In Twenty-Four Selected Urban Communities | 156 |

Appendix II - A Glossary of The Street | 158 |

Appendix III - What They Say About The Street in Other Communities | 162 |

Appendix IV - Statistical Tables | 166 |

Bibliography | 170 |
NEGRO STREET SOCIETY: A STUDY OF RACIAL
ADJUSTMENT IN TWO SOUTHERN
URBAN COMMUNITIES

CHAPTER I

THE THEORETICAL SETTING

INTRODUCTION

A significant feature of the average American town or city having a relatively large Negro population is the existence of a community whose inhabitants are predominantly Negroes. As a rule there may be found within such a community many institutions paralleling in form and structure those of the larger community, but which are functionally oriented toward the specific needs attending the Negro's minority status. Where casual observation may not reveal the basic differences in the functions of such institutions, they may be found to exist, nevertheless, when subjected to systematic investigation and examination.¹

One of the characteristics of the larger community which has its parallel in the Negro community is the existence of a main street. A close examination of the two,

¹ Various students of race have made worthwhile contributions on such subjects as the Negro School, the Negro Church, and The Negro Family.
however, reveals that the Negro main street, in addition to providing some goods and services for the population, has other significant functions.

Attracted to this street are various elements of the Negro population who find, both in the institutions which dominate it and in their interpersonal relationships with each other, more available means of satisfying certain needs than can be found on Main Street in the larger community. Trading and shopping, which may be held as a primary consideration for the influx of people into the latter area, is, to them, secondary and incidental. The Street presents a social and moral climate conducive to and permissive of types of behavior on the part of these habitués which make it a significant phenomenon both in the structure of the Negro community and in the community at large.

The present study is an inquiry into the social character of life on the main streets of two Negro communities in the urban South.

**Background In Theory:** In a social system where the policy toward a minority group is one of segregation and exclusion, the minority tends to develop negative reactions which may range all the way from hopelessness and resignation to distrust and hatred. Various escape
devices may be found which, while functioning toward the
end of adjustment to a forced situation, at the same time
serve to isolate the group and thus reinforce its minority
status.

The extent to which the minority in this case could
exhibit a "united front" in its reaction to subordinate
status and treatment would be influenced by the differ-
ences in contacts and relations of its members with the
majority group. For example, class structure within the
minority group would be a result as well as a cause of
differential relationships with the majority group.

Highly correlative with the factor of class differences
in reaction to minority status is that of differential as-
similation. The extent to which any individual within the
minority population has assimilated the culture of the ma-
jority group must necessarily be reflected in the manner
in which he adjusts to his subordinate position in the
social structure.

In a society dominated by prejudice, a minority,
whose constituents possess easily distinguishable physical
characteristics, may in many instances be forced to accept
en masse the majority group's appraisal.

Part and parcel of the pattern of Negro segregation
in America is the factor of differential treatment which,
in most situations, is weighted to the disadvantage of the
Negro. This is evident in most of the normal patterns of life. Play, education, work, and neighborhood and political life are distinct and differentiated for colored and white.

Within this system the Negro American, therefore, has a dual identification. He is at once an American and a Negro. Such identification involves his acceptance of an ideology determined by the majority who are most influential in shaping the American pattern. This is merely another aspect of the American dilemma thesis as set forth by Myrdal. Just as the white American is in a dilemma because his ideal and real culture patterns are in conflict, so is the Negro American in a dilemma because his values as an American (and hence a participant in an essentially white set of values) and as a Negro (a minority group member) are in conflict. Unable to resolve this conflict by full participation in the larger American culture, the Negro seeks adjustment within the limits of the segregated pattern - the nature and degree of adjustment varying with participation in the wider culture.

Thus one cannot speak broadly of Negro adjustment in the United States. The nature of white-Negro relations and thus the mode of accommodation on the part of the subordinate group varies as the scene shifts from a Northern to a Southern region. Similarly, within regions, there is
variation in the shift, say, from an urban to a rural setting. Further, within the local areas the pattern of racial segregation and discrimination varies according to localized social, economic, and historical factors.¹

The Relevant Literature: Much of the literature focused upon problems of adjustment attending the concentration of ethnic minorities in the urban environment has been oriented to the natural area - community conceptual frame.² Gist and Halbert³ indicate the general theoretical context in which these studies are set when they refer to the tendency of like individuals to become segregated in space and to form little cultural or racial islands which, though contiguous, do not interpenetrate

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² "Ethnic communities are groups bound together by common ties of race, nationality or culture, living together within an alien civilization but remaining culturally distinct. They may occupy a position of self-sufficient isolation or they may have extensive dealings with the surrounding population while retaining a separate identity...." (Carolyn F. Ware, "Ethnic Communities," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. III, p. 607.)

each other. They are termed natural areas, because they are considered results of a natural process rather than products of deliberate plan. Since these areas are the products of competition and social selection, they become relatively homogeneous and are characterized by a racial or cultural complexion which distinguish them from other areas. The bases of population selection may be such criteria as economic status, racial characteristics, religious beliefs, and moral codes.

Park\(^1\) ascribes to the natural area its own peculiar traditions, customs, standards of decency and propriety. He points out that, while each may not have a language of its own, there is at least a universe of discourse, in which words and acts have a meaning, which is appreciably different in each local community. The moral region, which might be thought of as a rendezvous and a place of resort as well as abode, is described by Park as the result of influences within the neighborhood which tend to segregate and distribute the city's population. "Detached milieus" are developed in which vagrant and suppressed impulses, passions, and ideals emancipate themselves from the

dominant moral order. Although synonymity of the concepts natural areas and community are merely implied in Park's observations, several studies of racial or ethnic areas have, in fact, indicated them as having the characteris-
tics of the community.¹

Carolyn Ware² observes that ethnic communities vary according to their origin, their cohesive factors, the attitudes of the outer community, and the nature of the civilization of which they are a part. Differences in economic status rather than of organization are stressed as the more frequent barriers between groups. Significant as regards the fate of an ethnic community are such fac-
tors as its internal leadership, the extent of isolation or contact, the attitude of the majority group and the eco-
nomic and political texture of the society of which the community is a part. In reference to those factors which may minimize or magnify the fact of racial identity as a significant factor in influencing the facility with which different types of ethnic communities merge into the larger community, she writes:

¹ Cf. Pauline Young, Pilgrims of Russian Town (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1932).
"... The importance of race varies not only with the degree of racial divergence but with the strength of race prejudice in the dominant group... Race becomes more potent as a differentiating factor when reenforced by differences of culture or status. The American Negro is confined to certain occupations and excluded from full participation in American life partly because he started as a slave; his former servile status has strengthened the color line, forcing him to stay within the ethnic group.1

Striking parallels are drawn between the Jewish and Negro communities in spite of the fact that one is based on religious and cultural ties while the other is founded on racial bonds. Wirth2 projects the Ghetto as an institution representing a prolonged case of isolation. Results of the efforts of its constituents to make adjustment to the larger and strange community, the Ghetto is regarded as a form of accommodation in which one of the divergent population groups effectually subordinates itself to another. In addition, it is described as a form of toleration and an instrument of social control. A product of needs and practices rooted in both the religious and secular aspects of their customs and heritages rather than one of design, the Ghetto, according to Wirth, offers the


Jews a place where they can relax from the etiquette and the formality which feature their conduct in the gentile world. Analyzing the Ghetto in terms of the community, he significantly remarks:

What makes the Jewish community - composed, as it is in our metropolitan centers in America of so many heterogeneous elements - a community, is its ability to act corporately. It has a common set of attitudes and values based upon common traditions, similar experiences, and common problems. In spite of its geographical separateness, it is welded into a community because of conflict and pressure from without and collective action within. The Jewish community is a cultural community. It is as near an approach to communal life as the modern city has to offer.¹

Frazier regards the Negro community as a "little social world" or moral order having its own public opinion and system of stratification. Class differentiation as well as group solidarity are significantly related to the spatial distribution of the population. It is within this social world that the Negro seeks and acquires status. At the same time, it is here that controls are maintained.¹


In his analysis of the Negro community in Chicago, Frazier views the distribution and segregation of the population as a result of the general process of segregation of cultural and racial groups characteristic of urban growth. With the southward expansion of the Negro community in Chicago, different elements, through the process of selection, became segregated into seven zones. The spatial pattern of these zones reflects the occupational and cultural organization of the Negro community. "The division of labor represented in the occupational organization of the Negro community," writes


2. This position is most specifically defined in Professor Burgess' analysis of city growth. He wrote: "In the expansion of the city a process of distribution takes place which sifts and sorts and relocates individuals and groups by residence and occupation. The resulting differentiation of the cosmopolitan American city into areas is typically all from one pattern with only interesting minor modifications. Within the central business district or on an adjoining street is the 'main stem' of 'hobohemia,' the teeming rialto of the homeless migratory man of the Middle West. In the zone of deterioration encircling the central business section are always to be found the so-called 'slums' and 'bad lands,' with their submerged regions of poverty, degradation, and disease, and their underworlds of crime and vice. Within a deteriorating area are rooming-house districts, the purgatory of 'lost souls.' Near by is the Latin quarter, where creative rebellious spirits resort. The slums are also crowded to overflowing with immigrant colonies... Wedging out from here is the Black Belt, with its free and disorderly life." (Ernest W. Burgess, "The Growth of the City," in Robert E. Park (ed.), op. cit., pp. 54-55).
Frazier, "shaped the social organization of the community. The social organization was embodied in those institutions which developed in response to the efforts of different classes with common interests to carry on group life and maintain control...."\(^1\)

A more recent study of the South Side of Chicago by Drake and Cayton points again to the spatial patterning within the Black Belt similar to that for the larger community, a phenomenon that Frazier had earlier revealed in his statistical analysis of the seven zones. Upon these zones, however, are superimposed "neighborhoods" which fall into the three categories of "best," "mixed," and "worst." Unlike Frazier, however, these authors make no attempt to analyze the Negro community by areas. The use of the name "Bronzeville" when referring to the entire community reveals something of the solidarity and cohesiveness within the Negro population in spite of the differences in socio-economic status and resulting interests and value differences as indicated in Frazier's zonal analysis. Though the customs and habits of Bronzeville are essentially American, the authors caution that they carry "overtones of subtle difference."

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1. The Negro Family in Chicago, p. 103.
Further analyzing this "world within a world" or "city within a city," these authors point out that while there is little difference in the form of its institutions from those of the larger community, there is significant difference in content. This difference is explained by the fact that the community is spiritually isolated from the larger world and as a consequence has developed its institutions along a different course from the white institutions and by the fact that the 'culture' of Bronzeville is a part of a larger national Negro culture. By investigating the Negro Newspaper, the Negro Church, Negro-owned business, and the 'policy racket,' Drake and Cayton attempt to define the nature of the Negro's adjustment within his own social world and at the same time indicate the character of white-Negro relations in Midwest Metropolis (Chicago) as a whole.¹

A marked trend in recent literature on the Negro community is the development of the class-caste hypothesis. It stresses both the nature of social stratification and the relative importance of the various factors upon which power and prestige in the Negro community are based.

The American Youth Commission, in seeking the answer to the question, "What are the effects, if any, upon the personality development of Negro Youth of their minority racial status?", directed a series of studies in Negro communities in the North, South and border states.

These investigations, conducted by a number of outstanding American sociologists and anthropologists, were based on conditions as found in the particular areas and varied in their research methods accordingly. There is great similarity in all the studies, however, in that the data are limited to Negro adolescents and that caste and class form the basic concepts. The series emphasizes the fact that in every Negro's personality there are certain evidences

1. This commission was established in 1935 by the American Council on Education for the purpose of studying the problems and needs of youth in America and working out programs and plans of action to help them solve their problems. For a more complete statement of its purpose see (Robert L. Sutherland, Color, Class, and Personality, Washington, D.C., American Council on Education, 1942, p. vii.)

2. The principal volumes in this series are: Ira DeA. Reid, In A Minor Key (Washington, D.C., 1940); Allison Davis and John Dollard, Children of Bondage (1940); Charles S. Johnson, Growing Up In The Black Belt (1941); and W. Lloyd Warner, and Others, Color and Human Nature (1941). The series is summarized in Robert L. Sutherland, op. cit., (1942).
of his castelike status.\(^1\) This is true whether he lives in an urban or rural community and whether his geographical location is North, South or border area. Although class membership within the Negro caste is of considerable importance in determining standards of behavior and methods of adjustment, the shadow of race is forever present, cutting across class and all other differentiating factors.

Dollard uses life histories to study the social fabric of "Souterntown." He attempts to discover through the life of the individual the "emotional forces surging against the barriers and outlets of the governing order" and thus reveal the main structure of Negro-white adjustment in the community. He also suggests the significance of psychological types as culture indices. The hypothesis is considered that in the field of the mores and collective life, any person is a good sample of his culture. Thus in the life history of any single Negro will be found the dilemma typical of his class and caste position.\(^2\)

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1. An important study using the same approach as the American Youth Commission series is Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner, Deep South (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941). For a discussion of the caste and class concepts see Sutherland, op. cit., pp. xvii-xix.

"It is exactly the function of any culture," he observed, "to pattern its objects characteristically and to leave in every single individual the mark of the more...."¹

Strong reveals that the collective orientation of a minority group may be studied through social types. He observes that some of the social types in the Negro community of Chicago reflect race pride as a reaction to minority status and that while most Negroes condemn types that are ingratiating to whites, the upper class is more appreciative of race pride and more sensitive to what discredits the race than is the lower class.² The naming by any group of social types among its members indicates recognition that the individual who fits a type is one "who gives expression, through his distinctive manner of acting, to a particular set of latent trends in the group."³

At considerable variance from the views previously cited concerning the genesis of many of the forms of Negro behavior in the relatively isolated Negro community is the


position taken by Herskovits. He attempts to show how uninstitutionalized African survivals have, when aggregated, contributed to the total pattern of Negro behavior and have helped to distinguish it from other patterns in the population. He states his position in this way:

"... The realistic appraisal of the problem attempted here follows the hypothesis that this group like all other folk who have maintained a group identity in this country, have retained something of their cultural heritage, while at the same time accommodating themselves, in whatever measure the exigencies of the historical situation have permitted, to the customs of the country as a whole."

With very few exceptions, however, contemporary American students of Negro life, while employing varying techniques and methods both in the field and of analysis, show substantial agreement on the fact of existence of cultural or non-racial characteristics among the Negro population which reinforce the fact of race in setting it apart as an ethnic community. The extent or degree

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2. Exceptions would be such studies as have emphasized the importance of "race traits" as definitions of the Negro as a significant phenomenon. Examples of studies of this approach are Frederick L. Hoffman, *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro*, (New York, 1896), and Howard W. Odum, *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro: Research into the conditions of the Negro Race in Southern Towns; A Study in Race Traits, Tendencies and Prospects* (New York, 1910)
to which the institutions and behavior patterns of the Negro community differ from those of the larger community, it appears, is influenced by such factors as geographic location, economic conditions, and historical definitions of purely local as well as sectional intergroup contacts. Such factors not only describe and determine the boundaries and limits of minority group participation in the larger culture but are significant determinants of participation within the more circumscribed Negro world. Thus they indicate the nature and direction of the adjustment the Negro must make within and outside his social milieu.

Perhaps there is no better way to conclude the survey of literature most immediate to the present study than to refer to the tremendous work of Myrdal, in which is contained at one place or another, in some form, observations on just about every subject significant to the Negro Problem in America. The following is one of his many significant commentaries:

"... The Negro is an alien in America, and in a sense this becomes more evident when he steps out of his old role of the servant who lives entirely for the comfort of his white superiors. Ignorance and disparity of interests arising out of segregation on the part of the whites, increased by voluntary withdrawal and race pride on the part of the Negroes, becomes itself an important element increasing and perpetuating isolation between the groups.
Negroes adjust and have to adjust to this situation. They become conditioned to patterns of behavior which not only permit but call for discriminatory patterns of behavior on the part of the whites. The people who live in the system of existing relations have to give it meaning. The Negroes have the escape, however, that they can consider the system unjust and irrational and can explain it in terms of white people's prejudices, material interests, moral wrongness and social power. They can avoid contacts and in the unavoidable ones have a mental reservation to their servility....

Myrdal reiterates the fact that Negroes must and do adjust to the situation growing out of total or partial exclusion from participation in various areas of the American culture or from sharing the total "American Dream." The fact that such adjustment may take a variety of forms and directions is indicated by numerous studies using various approaches and concerning themselves with different aspects of the same phenomenon.

Problem of the Present Study: In urban communities, North and South, in which there are relatively large concentrations of Negroes, there may be found within the segregated Negro community a distinct area in which there is a concentration of business establishments and other

institutions which cater almost exclusively to the Negro population. As a rule the majority of these institutions are located on a single street which serves, in addition, as a thoroughfare for the Negro community as a whole. Although there may be other streets with varying degrees of similar activities, this street, it appears, assumes a significance for segments of the Negro population exceeding that of other streets within the segregated community or of similar ones in the larger community. It may be referred to variously by those who are its habitués as the "Avenue," the "Street," or, in a more limited sense, the "Block." An important intersection of the main street may have an even more special connotation as the "Corner."¹ Again, it is not uncommon to hear the local vernacular designating such areas by names that seem unrelated to anything specific. Thus the street might be "Out East," or "Down in Hayti," or over on the "Flats."

¹. No special attempt is made to isolate the "corner" as an area of special investigation. To the extent that "corner" behavior falls under general street or block observation, it is included. "Street," "block," and "street area," however, are used interchangeably. For an analysis of the organization of "corner" groups in an area of Chicago, see William Foote White, "Corner Boys: A Study in Clique Behavior," American Journal of Sociology, March, 1941, pp. 647-54.
Stated as a problem, the questions the present study seeks to answer are essentially these: What are the characteristics of the main street in the Negro urban community with respect to types of institutions, interpersonal relations, and social types found there? What meaning does the street have for its habitues, and how does the street serve as a mechanism of adjustment on the part of the Negro minority to the restrictions and exclusions defined in its relationships to the dominant larger community?

Basic to the problem as conceived is the assumption that the Negro population, though functionally not completely isolated from the larger community, has, in its reaction to a policy of segregation and exclusion in various areas of social and economic participation, developed a set of attitudes, interests, and behavior patterns which, superficially supported by the fact of racial identification, set it apart as a cultural phenomenon. Thus the street, in this sense, is viewed as one aspect of the total accommodative configuration evidenced by the physical and social fact of the Negro community as such.

Stated as a purpose, this study seeks to contribute to an understanding of the factor of intra-minority group
contact in the southern urban situation and of the nature and problem of adjustment as seen in the phenomenon of the Negro street.
CHAPTER II

THE COMMUNITIES AND THE METHOD OF RESEARCH

The two communities in which the research was conducted are North Carolina's second and third cities in population. Both are manufacturing and industrial centers and in many essentials are typical of other urban communities of similar size throughout the South.

Winston-Salem, the second largest city, spreads over an area of 15.05 square miles of the Piedmont Plateau and rises from 850 to 1,000 feet above sea level. Of its 79,815 people, 99.55 per cent are American born, and 36,018 or 45.1 per cent are Negroes.¹

Although the city has more than 100 diversified industries and ranks second among all cities south of Baltimore and east of the Mississippi River in the value of manufactured products, it is predominantly a tobacco center - the world's largest. As the stranger approaches the down-town districts, his nostrils are filled with the scent of tobacco, for within short walking distance is an

¹ Sixteenth Census of the United States (1940), Population, Second Series, Characteristics of the Population, North Carolina, Table 31, p. 137.
imposing group of factories that process the "leaf" into cigarettes, pipe and chewing tobacco, and snuff. Notwithstanding the fact that the town is figuratively "built on smoke," the visitor soon finds that Winston-Salem prides itself also on being the world's largest center for the manufacture of men's and boy's underwear and women's circular-knit hosiery.¹

As its name suggests, Winston-Salem is a twin city. Salem, the older half, was founded in 1766 by a group of Moravians, members of an old Protestant denomination of Bohemian origin, seeking religious freedom. Winston was founded about seventy-five years later. In 1913 the two towns were consolidated by popular vote into Winston-Salem - "A City Founded Upon Cooperation." Located in the northwestern part of the state, some forty miles below the Virginia State line, the city has a mild climate with an average of 232 clear days per year and a mean annual temperature of 58.2 degrees Fahrenheit. The minimum growing season is 180 days. It is kept in daily contact with points within and outside of the state through the

¹ City Map and Visitors' Guide, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Published by Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce, Inc.
services of three railroads, five bus lines, and one of the nation's largest airlines. ¹

The North and South sides of Winston-Salem proper are separated by East and West Fifth Streets, while Main, extending northward into Patterson Avenue, makes the East and West divisions. The major part of the Negro community lies on the East side, extending from Columbia Heights in the southeast to North Winston. There are, however, smaller concentrations in the south central section and in an area of the northeast portion. Located almost "dead center" of the city, about two blocks south of the main business district, is a square block consisting of Third-Church-Fourth and Chestnut streets. This, together with an arm of Patterson avenue extending from E. 5th to 9th street and separated from the square by railroad tracks and a block of tobacco factories, constitutes the main street area of the Negro community. It was here that one-half of the investigation of Negro Street Society was focused.

Approximately ninety miles to the east and slightly south of Winston-Salem, in the north central part of the state, is Durham, North Carolina's third city. Centrally

¹ *Ibid.*,
located on the 250 mile span between the Blue Ridge Mountains on the West and the Atlantic Seaboard on the East, this seat of Durham County comprises an area of 12.8 square miles of rolling terrain that rises 408 feet above the sea level and has a population of 60,196, of which 99.3 per cent are native born. There are 23,347 Negroes in the city of Durham.¹ This represents 38.8 per cent of the total population.

A hustling and bustling community, the atmosphere of Durham, like that of Winston-Salem, has the aroma of tobacco. It boasts the manufacture of twenty per cent of the nation's cigarettes. During the tobacco season it is literally "jammed" with trucks, wagons, and other conveyances bearing the farmers who come in to translate their crops into cash and into various goods and services. It is not only a center for the processing and manufacturing of tobacco products; it is the center of what is perhaps the world's largest tobacco growing area.

The town has a moderate climate with a mean annual temperature of 59.6 degrees Fahrenheit, which effects a

growing season of from 190 to 200 days per year.¹
Five railroads, operating seven lines with twelve pas-
senger trains daily combine with seven bus and three
air lines to afford easy accessibility and outlet.²

Running diagonally across the city, connecting the
northwest and southeast corners, are the Southern and
Seaboard railroad tracks. Somewhat west and south of
these tracks, bordering Fayetteville and Pettigrew
streets, which join to form the main stem of the Negro
community, is the largest concentration of the Negro
population. The area which is immediately centered
around the point of intersection of these two streets
is designated in the vernacular of the Negro community
as "Hayti." It was here that the other half of the in-
vestigation of Negro Street Society was made.

Being cities within a Southern state, the structure
of minority-majority (Negro-white) relations in Durham
and Winston-Salem follows in general the Southern pattern.

¹. The geographical descriptions of Durham and
Winston-Salem follow the pattern used by the Lynds in
their study of "Middletown." (Cf. Robert S. and Helen
Merrell Lynd, Middletown. A Study in Contemporary American
pp. 8-9.

². "Durham, North Carolina," An Economic Summary
(Published by the Durham Chamber of Commerce), pp. 2-3.
State law combines with Southern customs, traditions and mores to delineate both the areas and the nature of inter-group contact. Although in isolated instances parts of the pattern may be tempered or altered by mutual consent of specific individuals or groups, such instances are not to be construed as being definitive of any change in the overall structure. Observations in similar areas throughout the South seem to support this generalization.¹

Thus in both towns one may hear many whites complaining about the "niggers" while others speak proudly of the "good race relations." Good race relations are often exemplified in interracial conferences or other special meetings, the inclusion of Negro representatives on various civic committees, and in other areas of special significance. Again the absence of any "trouble" involving Negroes and whites may be taken as a sign of good relations.

Where parts of the Negro community are adjacent to white residential areas, it is not uncommon to see playgroups comprised of children of both races. Similarly there are instances of open fraternization on the part of some adults. The latter is particularly true of the males.

Basically, however, the pattern is one of segregation and exclusion. One experiences little difficulty in discovering where the "Negroes live." Neither is he ignorant for long as to where they sit in the "shows," ride on the buses, go to school, amuse themselves, and how they generally go about the business of being "colored."

Within the segregated pattern, both Durham and Winston-Salem are considered good towns for Negroes. Each has a state-supported Negro college, seven Negroes on the police force, recreation facilities well above the state average for Negro citizens, and a relatively large number of Negro owned and operated businesses.\(^1\) Durham is the home office of one of the nation's largest Negro insurance companies,\(^2\) while Winston-Salem prides itself in having perhaps the largest Negro city bus lines in the South. This company gives service to the entire Negro community.

There is a relatively high degree of political consciousness in both towns. In 1947 a Negro was elected to the Board of Aldermen in Winston-Salem. This was the first

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\(^1\) A recent vacancy has reduced the Negro police personnel in Winston-Salem to six. A seventh is to be added sometime in the near future, however.

\(^2\) Located, as is the Negro bank, in the heart of the central business district.
time since "Reconstruction" that a Negro was included in the governing body of a North Carolina Municipality. In 1949 a Negro ran but was defeated for a seat on the City Council of Durham.

The mass of gainfully employed Negroes in both communities are either factory workers or are in domestic and personal service jobs. The base of the professional class is made up of teachers, principals, and supervisors. Many of this group are employed in the county schools, but live in the city. A few doctors, lawyers, and ministers round out the bulk of this class. Negro doctors in Durham as well as Winston-Salem have the advantages of privately endowed hospitals which administer almost exclusively to Negro patients.

With allowances for minor variations, it is suggested that the two communities selected as the sites of research for this study might well have been any two of scores of urban communities throughout the South.

The Method of Research: When the idea of a study of Negroes on the street first came to me, the question of method appeared to be an unusually difficult one. It gave me so much concern that I was tempted to drop the whole matter as being unfeasible as a subject for scientific
investigation. However, preliminary excursions through the Long and Mount Vernon street areas of Columbus, Ohio, together with past observations made in numerous other urban communities in various sections of the United States, were convincing enough that here was a social and cultural phenomenon that ought to receive the attention of sociology. This conviction was strengthened when friends and colleagues in the Department of Sociology at The Ohio State University, after "hanging out" on the street with the writer from dusk until dawn on several occasions, concurred that "you've got something there." Still there was the question of method. How was I to come to grips with the data? Was there something in the seemingly ceaseless mobility, the apparently uninhibited behavior, and the informality and spontaneity of contacts that could be subjected to quantitative analysis? Was it possible to collect data of this type in such a systematic way that other investigators could come along and obtain substantially the same findings?

1. It is necessary at this point to confess my indebtedness to Dr. John Dollard's Caste and Class in a Southern Town for ideas as well as a reference source. The use of the pronoun "I" in describing the participation method seemed the least cumbersome way to relate what "I" tried to do. (Cf. Dollard, Op. cit., p. 2.)
An experiment in Columbus revealed very early the futility of seeking the sort of information desired by means of the formal interview and openly taking notes. Suspicions were immediately aroused, and a tendency on the part of the people to "freeze up" was observed. Likewise, the limitations of the questionnaire as a means of collecting data of this type were obvious.

Since the material with which I had to deal was of such nature that it could not be fitted to any particular method, the only avenue left was to adapt method to material. The type of questions I wanted answered, the conversations I wanted to hear, the intimacies and contacts I wanted to share, the fears, anxieties, and tensions I wanted revealed, and the situations of sociability and aggression I wanted to observe, suggested the basic method of participating and sharing in the life of the street.¹ This meant engaging in such activities as were

¹. Participant-observation is a well established technique of social investigation. It has long been used to special advantage by the social anthropologists and by many sociologists and social psychologists. F.R. Kluckhohn's description of a Navaho village, John Dollard's investigation of caste and class in a southern community, St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's work on the Southside Negro community in Chicago, and William Foote Whyte's study of clique behavior on Chicago's Northside are a few examples of outstanding contributions employing this method. See F. R. Kluckhohn, "The Participant-Observable Technique in Small Communities," *American Journal of Sociology*, November, 1940, pp. 331-43. Also see J. D. Lohman, "Participant-Observation in Community Studies," *American Sociological Review*, II (1937), pp. 890-98.
definitive of the area. In addition, the plan was to interview informally as many of the street habitue's as possible, owners of street enterprises, policemen, and an assortment of people from every stratum within the Negro community.

Facing the investigator using the participant observer technique is the problem of what should or should not be included in the observations. His attention is called to many interesting events. As he becomes "known," he finds it increasingly difficult to follow his own plan of action at all times. In the case of the street, the scene changes swiftly, with something attractive of one's attention happening all the time. Lest the observer be swept away with it all, it is necessary that a carefully tested schedule of observation be followed. Through preliminary observations in Columbus as well as in Durham and Winston-Salem, a schedule was devised which contained items thought to be important to the testing of the working hypothesis. Answers to questions such as the following were sought: What types of enterprises dominate the street area? To what socio-economic class do the majority of the habitues belong? What are the evidences of organized group life? What are the evidences of "shady" or "fringe" or "abnormal" behavior? To what extent does such behavior, if it exists, seem uninhibited? How free is the area from police interference? What do the habitues talk
about? Over what types of issues do conflict situations arise? How are they settled? What are the devices for getting and maintaining status? How do the habitues express themselves in reference to the larger community?

To get the answers to some of these questions I interviewed over two hundred people ostensibly not on the street for purposes of trading and shopping in the usual sense. The majority of them had been seen on the streets often enough to be classified or considered as habitues. In addition I talked to practically every owner of a street enterprise, saw and talked to many of the policemen, including the Chiefs of Police of both communities and the Chief of Detectives in one. Interviews were also made with a hundred or more persons in the larger communities.

Notes of the interviews were taken on 5 x 8 cards. Two schedules were constructed for recording socio-economic background data and for analysis of conversations. Preliminary observations had indicated the types of subjects most frequently discussed on the curbs and corners.

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1. Of a total of 220 interviewed, 111, or 50.4 per cent were in Durham, while 109 or 49.6 per cent were in Winston-Salem.

2. The diary was found rather useful in that it revealed the matter of continuity and consistency of various activities from one day to the next.
and in various places where habitués fraternized. These subjects were placed on cards so that they could be easily checked. The number of checks would indicate both the range of subjects and the number of times each recur within any conversation group. The initial and final size of any group was indicated by drawing a circle around numbers at the top of the card. There were sections on the card for checking both sociable and aggressive behavior as well as the sex composition of the conversing groups.

Of the hundreds of conversations overheard, a total of 176 were recorded on the schedule. To keep an account of the number and types of activities engaged in during the course of the day or night, a tally sheet was used. At the end of each day my experiences and my impressions were recorded in the form of a diary.¹

The problem of where to record my observations was not easily solved. In one community, I was successful in securing two "retreats," and an automobile served as a third. A room in a local Negro college was donated by its president, and a friend shared his home with me on occasions. The automobile, however, always parked in an area some distance from that investigated - often in a downtown

¹. The diary was found rather useful in that it revealed the matter of continuity and consistency of various activities from one day to the next.
section - afforded the most convenient "office space." In the other community I had a room at the home of a friend and, on occasions, a small "cubby hole" in a cheap boarding house located on an alley a stone's throw from the "street." Where the situation demanded, I was not averse to pressing into service telephone booths, comfort stations, and any other closed space in which a quick note could be jotted down or a necessary check made.

Preliminary observations of the street in Columbus, Ohio had forewarned me of the probability of being caught in dangerous situations and ones which might occasion brushes with the law. Again, I was made aware of the lack of immunity of person if and when, as a full-fledged member of the society, I unwittingly violated the mores or incurred the wrath of one or more of the less inhibited members because of some real or imaginary affrontery. The necessary precautions were taken, therefore, to relieve myself of any fear of the law. As for personal safety, however, it was just a case of looking out for myself the best way possible. A letter from the Chairman of the Department of Sociology at The Ohio State University to the Chiefs of Police of both cities gained immediate official endorsement of the investigation. Both manifested quick interest in the project and assured the cooperation of
their departments. In one city I was introduced by the Chief to all policemen patrolling the street area, and a radio patrol of two officers was detailed to give me a tour of the city and to contribute in every way possible to my orientation. After this initial tour of duty with the officers, however, all conversation with them occurred at the police department.

The period of investigation was approximately four and a half months, beginning the first week in January and ending the third week in May. The time was divided between the two communities. The usual procedure was to alternate by weeks. Unanticipated events and, on occasions, promises to be at certain places at certain times, however, forced changes in this routine.

The presentation of the material that follows is a combination of both the literary and scientific method of reporting. While using the conceptual framework of sociology and social psychology for purposes of analysis, the actual portrayal of the life of the street as I saw and experienced it is, in the main, literary. In regard to such a method of reporting certain aspects of social life Thomas Minehan has this to say:

"While it may be true that the literary method of portraying new and strange aspects of social life is superior in certain respects to the scientific, it has its limitations. Not every observer will report the same things."
Emotion may enter and color some details. Unconscious propaganda and prejudice may be present. Still, I insist, it is the only acceptable method of ascertaining a complete and true picture in many fields.... It would be essential, however, that the observer collect facts in systematic and orderly fashion and subordinate the artistic impulse to the preponderance of scientific fact.... We need a new technique in sociology, one which will unite the training and methods of science with the tools of literature and produce a picture that will give a better understanding of society than we now have. ¹

At no point in this study has scientific accuracy been consciously sacrificed for literary expediency. Of course in any investigation of this nature, it is necessary to conceal identities of persons whenever possible, whether they be objects of observation or sources of information.² Further it is incumbent upon the writer to use moderate language - often so inadequate in description of many conditions actually experienced. This must be done in the interest of propriety, the insistence upon


² Except where there are significant differences in findings, the two communities observed in this study will be reported as one.
complete objectivity to the contrary notwithstanding.\footnote{1}

The researcher, however, for all the limitations of whatever method of reporting he may employ, is indebted first and last to his material. This, then, is the "Street" as I observed it, participated in, and recorded its life.

\footnote{1. It is necessary, where verbal exchanges between street habitue's are made, to report as far as possible — and yet keep within the bounds of decency — the actual language used. This must be done, because one encounters a universe of discourse on the street that is significant in terms of responsive behavior. Street habitue's do not have any moral interpretation of many words which, in various other circles, might be considered as profane and indecent. Where the more or less violent type of profanity is used, however, initials will be used instead of the word itself.}
CHAPTER III

ON THE BLOCK - A PROFILE OF THE STREET AND ITS HABITUÉS

The man got off the bus, brushed his brow with a handkerchief that showed signs of having been continuously used on a sweaty and grimy face. From all appearances he had made a pretty long trip - and a hot one. He said "goodbye" to three other men who, apparently, had been traveling with him, and entered the side of the bus station marked "Colored Waiting Room." Some minutes later he reappeared sporting a shoeshine, clean shave, and a fresh shirt.

This was a strange town - this community in which he had found it necessary to make an undesirable lay-over in order to make connections with the "Express" which would take him farther North. As far as he could recall, he had neither relatives nor friends in the place. Neither did the address book in his side coat pocket contain the name of a single reference.

Several taxis came by soliciting his fare, but he ignored them all. It was difficult for him to make up his mind whether to stick around the bus station or try his hand at "digging" the "burg." Since the station was a
mere block away from the central business section, the
decision was to take a short walk and see what the place
was like.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and the
walks were jammed with people of all descriptions—men,
boys, women and girls. Although the majority of people
were white, there seemed a rather liberal admixture of
people of color—mostly Negroes. Members of both groups
went their particular ways apparently unaware of differ-
ences. For the tremendous crowd of people there was rel-
atively little noise. What there was came mostly from
the hum of automobile engines, horns of impatient motor-
ists, and the shrills of the whistle of the ubiquitous
policemen.

Since there was quite some time before the next bus,
the newcomer decided to do a bit of shopping, and take a
real look at the town. He found the usual places—the
banks, office buildings, post office, library, five and
ten cent stores, men's and women's shops, kiddies' stores,
furniture, hardware and jewelry stores. There were also
the large department stores, drug and sundry shops, res-
taurants and big hotels.

Absorbed in window shopping and giving the town the
general "once over," the visitor completely forgot the
time. A hasty look at his watch, however, told the sad
story of the missed bus in the strange town. It was now
after six o'clock, and the stores were either closed or
closing. Of course the sundry shops, some drug stores,
restaurants and the places of amusement were still open.
He remembered at once, however, that he was in a south-
ern town and would not be permitted entrance into any
but the drug stores. It struck him rather forcibly that
until this moment he had been unaware of the significance
of his racial identity, although for over two hours he
had roamed freely through the business center of a bet-
ter than average size Southern town.

After pondering for a moment over the direction of
his next move, he turned to a passerby and inquired as
to the whereabouts of the "colored section."

"One block down and two to the right," he was told.

After one block down and only one to the right he
knew he had received the right directions, even though
he actually had not come within sight of the area. His
director had not sent him to the Negro community as such,
rather, he had directed him to its main thoroughfare.
He had sent him to the "street." That the visitor was
well aware of the street before he actually saw it, was
indicated in the quickening of his steps. There were cer-
tain familiar and unmistakable sounds that presaged the
street's presence. Where before there had been merely
Fig. 1—Map Showing Negro Main Street Area (Hayti), Durham, N.C., 1949
horns and motors and whistles and that indescribable rustling that is peculiar to large aggregations of people and mechanical traffic, here there was all this and something else. There were laughter and highly pitched voices, which seemed to want the world to know where they came from and cared not what its judgment would be of what they spoke and how they spoke it.

One block more and he was "on the block." There they were in full view - "Shorty's Grill," "Jack's Sport Shop," the "Fish Market," "Joe's Sport Shop," the "Hot Record Shop," the "Ritz Theatre," and "Grand Rooms." There were all the "spots." Of course there were also the pressing shops, barber shops, beauty parlors, shining parlors and drug stores. Here and there were the signs of the lawyer, the doctor, the bondsman, the dentist and the pawnbroker.

On the street the large crowd grew larger. Taxicabs darted in and out of the dark, narrow streets and alleys that extended from the "main stem." From all directions the people literally poured into the street. They came - men and women - but mostly men,\(^1\) well-pressed suits and

\[\begin{align*}
1. \text{Although women play a conspicuous role, the street is by and large a man's world. Out of the 111 persons interviewed in Durham, only 21 or 18.0 per cent were women. Of the 109 interviewed in Winston-Salem a total of 17 or 15.6 per cent were females.}
\end{align*}\]
gleaming shoes mingled with "brogans," overalls and "jumpers." Into the lobby of the hotel went two conspicuously dressed young men leaving a trail of strongly scented perfume, but nobody was particularly concerned. A middle-aged lady dressed in white from head to foot paraded from one corner to the next shouting "Glory Hallelujah, praise His blessed name." Under a tent pitched in a vacant space between two buildings an old man sang the "Songs of Zion" accompanied by the loud strains of a guitar. A well-dressed man of "business bearing" pushed his way through the throng and entered one of the more "respectable" restaurants. A lone woman came down the street. She was stopped by one man, but she moved on. Farther down another spoke to her in rather low tones. The two disappeared. She later came back - alone. A police car cruised by but did not stop. Such assertions as the following indicated pretty well the "motif" of the street - the moods of its people:

"I don't care if the sun don't shine."
"I'll kill an S.O.B. in a minute."
"Let's go pitch a party til the wee hours."
"The cats are jumping."
"Let's drink some mash and talk some trash."
"I don't care who sees it and don't give a damn who knows it."
"Let's go kill a chicken."

"Put out the lights and call the law."

"I'd rather be sloppy drunk than anything I know."

Parties joined on the street and moved on to adjacent areas. Sometimes they came back; sometimes they did not. Anyway - nobody "gave a damn."

Our visitor had traveled a distance of three blocks, yet he seemed to be in another world. Was he? Or, was all this just an illusion - a trick of the mind? Suppose we depart from him momentarily and examine the street scene more closely.

The Fact About the Block

This world into which the stranger had suddenly entered variously called the street, the block and the corner by its people, was at once the hub and the main thoroughfare of the Negro community. It was a public world characterized by informal contacts, quick and easy conversation, and almost continuous mobility. It was a world in which nobody gave or asked for quarter, a world in which both laughter and anger came easily, and in an open and direct manner. In the main this world was

one of the lower class — people who received their income from washing dishes and clothes, working as laborers in the factories, doing the menial jobs around the homes and estates of middle and upper class white families in the town's suburban residential districts, and from sweeping the sidewalks and washing the show-windows of the downtown stores. There were cement mixers and hod carriers and janitors and "odd job men." There were also men who never worked but depended on their "old ladies" for the bare necessities of life. It was also a world of "pimps" and "strumpets" and bootleggers and "con" men and flashily dressed "cats" who earned their money the hard way and put most of it on their backs.¹ Then it was a refuge of scions of better class families who found it difficult to adjust to the austere life of their mothers and fathers.

The area is by no means confined exclusively to lower class participation. Actually, people from every stratum of the Negro community converge at some time or other on the block. Indeed, one can take a position at the center of the area, hold it long enough, and he will probably see a cross-section of the Negro population. For the

¹. Of a total of 220 persons interviewed in the two communities, 99 or 40.4 per cent were laborers and domestic and personal service workers. A total of 65 or 29.5 per cent had no occupation. This group included some who were taken care of by "old ladies," and others who made a living in various types of illegal activities. In both communities, the professional people were the least conspicuous.
block is not only an area of amusement and recreation for its habitues, but also the main thoroughfare of the Negro community.

There is no other area which caters exclusively to the wants, either in terms of amusement and recreation, or in goods and services, of the middle and upper class groups. Practically everything is located on the block, the respectable and the places of "ill-repute" often being adjacent to each other.\(^1\)

Though a variety of proprietorship enterprises may be found on the block, it is in the main an area of concentration for the types of businesses from which Negroes are excluded, or in which their patronage is unsolicited in the downtown shopping district. Thus restaurants, sundry shops, sport shops, shining parlors, wine and beer taverns, and pool rooms are characteristic enterprises. A few grocery and meat markets cater to the food needs of the lower class families - for the most part those

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1. This is not to say that there are no neighborhood cafes and similar enterprises. Such may be found at junctions of secondary but important street. Most of them, however, cater to lower class groups. Very few Negroes of the upper classes eat in the restaurants. This situation may not be typical of northern areas where members of all classes frequently dine out. Observations in Columbus, Ohio gave a different picture.
occupying the slum area immediately surrounding the block. Most of the middle and upper class families do their marketing in the supermarkets located in or near the central business area.

*Behind The Block:* The living conditions of the majority of street habitues impel them, in addition to seeking the street for amusement and recreation, to look to it for "parlor, bedroom and sink." The areas in which they live are characterized by overcrowded living conditions, lack of running water and sewage disposal, and poor heating facilities. Houses are shabby, unpainted, and many have leaking roofs. Numerous surveys of living conditions of Negroes in southern urban communities have pointed out the same facts.¹ Not atypical of the conditions are the observations made in the abode of one street friend who lived less than one hundred yards away from its center. The house was an unpainted two-story structure that sat at such an angle that one would suspect that any brisk wind would blow it over. There were five rooms upstairs and five down. There was no running water and no toilet. Though the house was wired for electric lights, no lighting fixtures were visible. The walls were of plaster, but most of it had crumbled to

the floor baring the laths. Dogs and cats and mice were about as conspicuous as the more than forty people who at some time during the day or night called it home. A visit to the room shared by the friend with eight other people revealed three men slumped in a corner apparently dead-drunk, another man in trousers, undershirt and socks, propped up on a broken-down bed with quilts that were dingy and foul-smelling through prolonged use by an infinite number of people, without being laundered. While leaning against a pillow made of a ball of old clothes, his "old lady" - sitting on the side of the bed - frequently poured generous droughts of cheap synthetic wine down his gullet. The smoke of an oil stove near the door, mixed with the aroma of the wine, gave the room a pungent, almost unbearable odor. Apparently disgusted because there was nowhere to sit, lie or stand, the friend, followed by the observer, went back to the street - to a pool room.

The Ubiquitous Pool Room: Perhaps the greatest center of attraction for a large group of habitués is the pool room.¹ These palaces of Street "kings," sometimes called

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¹ These places are frowned upon by most middle and upper class Negroes. They scoff at them as places for recreation. The pool room is considered a place of iniquity. In Durham, they are called Sport Shops.
recreation halls or sport shops, are found with relatively great frequency and constitute one of the most competitive of street enterprises. In addition to providing tables where the men can exhibit their skill with the cue stick, they afford plenty of seats for both spectators and loiterers. Usually, the number of people who actually play is small in comparison with the number that look on, bet on the games, and argue about who will win the most games, who is the best player, and about the finer points of the game itself. Although no gambling is allowed, practically everybody who plays gambles. The "rack-house" is all over the place collecting the fees for the tables at the conclusion of each game, but somehow he manages "not to see" the passing and collecting of bets. Most of the places have little to sell other than the services of the tables. The commodities usually sold are cigars, cigarettes, chewing tobacco, beer, soft drinks, peanuts and "nickle nabs."

During the early part of the day the rooms are usually patronized by the unemployed and "occasional" workers - those who work long enough to get slightly "flushed" and then lay off until they are "down and out" again. Those who have regular jobs usually come in the late afternoon and night. On the week-ends the rooms are veritable bee-hives of activity all day long and until late at night.
About a large number of pool room boys one operator had this to say:

"This place for many is home. Most of them spend little or no money. What little they do spend is small compared with the benefits they receive. They come here first because their home conditions are bad. It is too cold in the winter and too hot in summer. The houses are overcrowded and the conditions are unbearable. They only go home to sleep - if they can find a vacant bed - and then it is late as hell."

Another who operated a pool room and cafe summed it up this way:

"They're nothing but 'wine benders.' They drink the stuff morning noon and night. They love it better than Peter loved the Lord. They wait for me to open up first thing in the morning and close with me at night. Every dime they can hustle, beg or steal goes for wine. They come here to do nothing but enjoy each other. They have a hell of a time doing nothing but just that. They like to sit out when it is warm and inside when it is cold. They play checkers, dominoes and bid whist occasionally. Police never bother them. Of course some of the boys hang out to 'play the block.' They are the smart ones."

That there is little fear of being apprehended by the police for loitering around the pool room and other places
on the block is indicated in the arrest figures for that offense, in one of the two communities investigated, from January 1947 to December 1948.\(^1\) During this period a total of thirty-two Negroes were arrested for loitering, and not a single one of the arrests was made on the block. This is indicative of a certain amount of permission on the part of the police as well as an unwillingness of proprietors to report such cases, though they look upon them with some disapproval.\(^2\)

**The Restaurant and Tavern:** Perhaps one of the best indices to the fact that most of the habitues are from the lower class is the bill of fare of the majority of the eating establishments. Chitterlings (intestines of a hog), hog maws (stomach of the hog), beans, fish sandwiches, stews, and the omnipresent barbecue are standard fare.\(^3\) With the exception of the "respectable" restaurants, definitely in the minority, a balanced meal is not to be found, 

\(^{1}\) Compiled from files of the police department of the City of Durham.


\(^{3}\) Some of these dishes are considered delicacies by many southerners regardless of race or class affiliation. Where many will not be seen eating them in public, they are served with great frequency in the home in "season."
and even those places are rather long on short orders. It is not to be construed, of course, that there is anything exclusive about the "respectable" restaurant and tavern. In these as in all other places on the block frequented by the upper strata, blue denim and calico compete for space with the best creations of downtown tailor shops. Contacts in such places cut sharply across class lines.¹ There is a tendency for lower class Negroes to look upon all other Negroes as just other "niggers." This attitude is reinforced in all instances in which they observe members of these groups in the accommodative role where there is majority-minority contact. The following exchange by two men when a well-groomed young lady of high educational attainment passed by is a case in point:

"Look at that bitch walking with her head up in the damn air. Who the hell do she think she is? Hell, I knew her mammy "when" and her pappy never was worth a damn. She's just another 'spook' gal whether she knows it or not," one ventured.

Responded the other:

"Yea. There's a lot of bitches like her around this man's town, but all of 'em go when the wagon comes. Spooks ain't nothing but spooks. Cute little bitch though, ain't she?"

Although there is space on the block for all comers, it is a place in which the habitues feel pretty much at home, and they show it in the freedom of movement, "Air of independence," and in the general disdain for any "outsider" who by act or inference reveals that he feels different. You're a "bitch" if you're "right," that is, if you are one of them or if you are sympathetic with their ways. You "ain't from nothing" when you are not.

The Block As An Ecological Phenomenon

Even though the Negro community as a residential area is, in most instances, an outcome of segregation, the types of institutions which constitute the structural and functional aspects of the block as an area within the segregated community, may be thought of as being only indirectly a result of such a process. The types of business enterprises which tend to dominate the area, and the symbiotic relationships which exist among the people whose lives have been organized around them, suggest the block as a natural area produced primarily through competition.¹

Enterprises in the main business district of the larger community are in direct competition with Negro entrepreneurs in the distribution of certain types of goods and services. The amount of competition the Negro is capable of offering in most instances is very little. Inability to marshall large amounts of capital and insufficient business training and background combine with the handicaps and restrictions attendant to a subordinate position in the social system to place him on the losing end of the struggle. However, there are certain areas in which, due to the segregation law and local mores, he has no competition from the majority group.¹ There are others in which competition is present but in which certain differences must be made to the segregated pattern. Where the Negro's patronage is solicited in the latter instance,

¹ "... Negro preachers, teachers, professionals, and business men have had to build their whole economic and social existence on the basis of segregation of their people, in response to the dictates of the white society. To state the situation bluntly; these upper class Negroes are left free to earn their living and their reputation in the backwater of discrimination, but they are not free to go into the main current of the river itself. On the one hand, they are kept fully aware of the wide range of opportunities from which they are excluded by segregation and discrimination. On the other hand, they know equally well how they are sheltered by the monopoly left to them in their little world apart...." (Gunnar Myrdal, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 29).
it carries the proviso that such patronage accept the
conditions which accompany minority group membership.
Thus, the downtown theater admits him, but with the pro-
vision that he enter from a side street or alley and that
he occupy the balcony. To sit where he chooses, therefore,
he must patronize the theater on the block. Often these
theaters are operated by majority group members, and in
most cases they show second and third class pictures.¹

It is in such places as restaurants, hotels, wine
and beer taverns, and in those where there is commercial-
ized recreation of a participating nature that there is
total exclusion of Negroes. Thus competition in some
trade categories is characterized by odds on the side
of the majority group due to conditions inherent in the
segregated system. This fact, together with the total
lack of competition in other categories of trade, a con-
dition similarly defined by the social system, results
in the concentration of institutions of a specific nature
in the block area.²

1. These movie houses are often referred to as
"ranches." This means that they show a large number of
western or "shoot em up" pictures. They are well patron-
ized and draw, on weekends, large numbers of people from
surrounding rural areas.

The general practice of members of the upper stratum of the Negro population is to eat, drink, and otherwise amuse themselves at home and, when traveling, to seek board and lodging in private homes. This operates indirectly toward lower class patronage of such institutions. One cafe operator expressed in regard to this phenomenon:

If I had to depend on lawyers, doctors, school teachers and other people of the same standing for trade, I would be out of business in less than two weeks. Some of that kind come in here occasionally, but my cash register would rust if I had to wait for the times they do come in. I can't keep the sort of stuff on hand they want to eat. Most of it would spoil, and I would be left holding the bag.

The manager of a small hotel and restaurant observed:

My business depends on the boys and girls who don't have much money to spend, but what they do have they spend it freely having a good time. I mean having a good time with each other, in case you missed the point. They don't want a lot of niceties and a whole lot of service either. All they want is a room and a bed. They will take any kind of room and any kind of bed. Not too particular about the sheets. And they don't take all day to use one. My money depends on volume. It depends on transients, people who make their contacts on the outside and want a place to hole up then and there. These so-called best people come here occasionally, but every damn one of them, barring mighty few, is scared as hell of being seen by somebody. They want to stay all night and half the day and want the best of service and hate to pay for it. Hell, if a man wants to have a good time, he ought to expect to pay for it. It ain't respectability I want for my place, its cold cash. You can't live off respectability. The poor boys out there on
street are my customers, and I wouldn't trade them for the whole she-bang of the other crowd. When they are flush (street boys), they are dam good timers. Sometimes I give them a break when they are broke. They usually come back and give me more than they were supposed to. That's just how they are about things.

An editorial in the Negro weekly paper of one of the communities made the following indictment of the Negro hotel:

The average Negro hotel now operating in this country and especially in the South, is about the biggest joke we know. Just why some of these hold-up joints are allowed to carry (on) their nefarious practice of robbing the Negro traveling public is beyond any answer we are able to give to this most important question.

Here in North Carolina we know of only one where a Negro can get a decent night's lodging and the ordinary things that go with a mediocre hotel....

The average Negro hotel manager in the South has no conception of what is meant by hotel service. If he does, he deliberately is out to rob and cheat the average, helpless Negro guest who happens to get trapped under the roof of the building he is supposed to be operating as a hotel.

The average Negro hotel in the South will charge anywhere from $2.50 to $7.50 per night for sleeping. The manager finds out the rates of the leading white hotel in the city and proceeds to make his price the same, even though he seldom or (even) tries to make his services the same.

Dirty bed linen, no bell service, no hot and cold running water, no bath facilities, no towels, no soap, to say nothing about private bath and telephone in your room, are some of the rotten conditions that exist in many so-called Negro hotels in the South and for which the Negro is being robbed.
If there happens to be a bellboy he is usually so dirty that a person who knows anything about sanitation would be afraid for him to bring him a pitcher of water. Usually the help shows absolutely no sign of courtesy and looks at the guests with an air of contempt as if he or she is doing a favor to wait on them.

After you have paid your perfectly good money, retired to your room you suddenly discover that the hotel has decided to furnish you and the rest of the guests some music from a juke box or radio, turned on loud enough to be heard four or five blocks away. To add fury to the flames there is usually loud talking, cursing, walking and maybe a fight or two in front of your room during the night for good measure.

Such conditions are going to continue to exist until the Negro traveling public begins to put up a howl. The howl must be so loud that it will be heard in the police courts, the health departments and other places of law and order ....

About Negroes and hotels an outstanding sociologist makes this general statement:

No Negroes are accommodated in any hotel in the South that receives white patronage. As a rule there are no hotels for Negroes in small towns, but Negroes seeking lodging may find a Negro boarding house where rooms of a sort are available. In the cities there are usually several but questionable hotels for Negroes, but nowhere in the South is the segregation pattern relaxed, except perhaps in the instance of a white person stopping at a Negro hotel.

Whether as a cause or as a result of meager and unsatisfactory hotel accommodations available, most Negroes who travel in the South stop in private homes. On one social level private homes regularly accept a few transient lodgers and may rely on them as a chief source of income, but these are not always safe places because they have little or no supervision.... On another level there is a mutual understanding of the problem of hotel accommodations, and when one has to visit a city, any friend or acquaintance in that city readily accepts the person as a guest; or he may be accommodated by a friend of a friend. Negro schools with eating and sleeping arrangements will usually accommodate a few visitors, whether their visit has to do with the school or not.1

The following remark by a Negro of high social standing in one community pretty well sums up the views that a good many middle class Negroes there hold about the general street situation:

Those Negroes down there (the block) raise hell day and night. You can't get by them when you walk down the sidewalk most of the time. On Friday and Saturday evenings the situation is impossible. They gab and yell and shout and carry on shenanigans with each other, and then they beat each other up. A lot of them just stand around and stare as if they are lost. They take over the restaurants, the A.B.C. store (Alcoholic Beverage Control), the hotel, the theaters, and all the space in front of them. Of course, they have nothing else to do and certainly nowhere

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else to go. It's their life and they seem to get a kick out of it in their own way. Most of the time I drive my car a half mile out of the way just to avoid the noise and congregation.

In the other community an educator put the matter this way:

My friend, it is the greatest show on earth when the block is really jumping. Many times I go down just to see them perform. You can't beat old 'Sam.' He catches more hell than all the white people and a great many other Negroes, but turn him loose on... (the street) and he is in heaven. Ringling Brothers' don't have a thing on them, and they have one more ring than Ringling Brothers.' They have a four ring circus.

The tendency toward homogeneity of population in respect to race and class, and consequent similarity of interests and behavior may be considered as resulting from both segregation and social selection. The latter, however, particularly in the Southern situation, cannot be divorced from the former. The selective process operates on the level of intergroup, i.e., majority-minority and intragroup-minority—competition. The one forces the concentration of certain types of institutions within the segregated Negro community, while the other sifts out

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1. Such names as Sam, Mose, Home, etc., are frequently used by some Negroes to designate the lower class group. They are stereotypes common to much of the fiction on Negro life. See Appendix II.
elements of the Negro population and shapes the social structure which gives them their special character.¹

To get a more detailed picture of the social function of the block area, it is necessary to observe its habitues in their interpersonal relations. Thus we rejoin our visitor who is still orienting himself to the ways of the street.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIABILITY AND AGGRESSION IN INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION

Club, Corner, and Curb Conversation

Four men stood in the doorway of Mike's Sport Shop. That they were engaged in rather animated conversation could be seen from some distance away. The maker of a good statement or "point" would frequently add emphasis to the fact by such overt acts as slapping the back and "mussing up" the hair of the immediate opponent. If the others agreed that the point was "well taken," they would join in the act. Other ways in which victory in conversation was emphasized included falling away for short distances and running back and jumping up and down with much laughter. Such antics drew the attention of other men inside the sport shop as well as some who happened to be passing the spot at the particular time. Soon the original number of four men had increased to twelve and the "session" was on in "dead earnest." The conversation was built around the theme of baseball with the original issue being the relative merits of Cleveland's Larry Doby and Brooklyn's Jackie Robinson as big league ball players.
In such conversations, however, the issues change with great frequency although the general theme may remain the same. The following exchange reenacts substantially the Sport Shop Drama:

George - That Jackie is a bearcat. He's the fastest man in the National League. Steals home any damn time he gets ready. Pitcher better not bat his eye 'cause that son-of-gun will go down for sure.

Jim - Yea, he can play for my money any day. He keeps the pitcher worried all the time. When he went to Montreal, a lot of colored sports writers swore he wouldn't make the grade 'cause he couldn't hit big time pitching. Well he belted that old apple in every park in the International League, and he's raising plenty hell with the Dodgers. Look at the batting averages. You don't have to take my word for it.

Jack - Aw hell, man, Jackie can't hold a light for Doby. He couldn't get away with all that stealing in the American League. They got tougher pitchers in Doby's league and bigger parks. Hell, Doby's pop flies are longer than anything Jackie Robinson ever hit.

George - What do you mean the American League is tougher than the National? Look at the pennant race in the National League. Hotter than a horse's collar. None of that walk-away stuff like the American League.
Zip - If old Josh Gibson could have broken into
the big leagues, he would have smashed all the records.
Greatest long ball hitter that ever lived.

Jack - Where in hell did you come from man? What
do you know about baseball? Josh Gibson! Sure he could
hit, but did you ever see Buck Leonard play?

The shifting of issues went on for over an hour -
who are the best catchers; who has hit the longest home
run; who will win the pennant; who won which game of which
world series; which is the best league - all eventually
shared the center of attention with "who is the best ball
player, Larry Doby or Jackie Robinson." Nobody left
really convinced that he had settled anything. Nobody
really cared.

The points made in such conversations are often
very trivial when viewed objectively, but, to them, they
are of great moment. In many instances the fellow with
the biggest and loudest voice - the one who is unusually
self-assertive and presses his points with crowd-pleasing
gestures - walks away with great satisfaction that he has
won the plaudits of his fellows whether he has actually
won the debate or not. To illustrate this point:

Two of the boys were trying to prove to each other
and to the ever-present audience that each had the better
"bossman." Both of them "worked for" two of the "biggest"
white men in the city. One of the fellows, "E.B.," was quite a colorful character. He was about six feet tall and carried an enormous amount of surplus weight around his midsection. He kept his hair shaved so closely that he always appeared bald. He was gifted with a great sense of humor, and when he laughed, which was quite frequently, he seemed to laugh all over. His booming voice was legend on the street, and everybody for miles around knew him. The other, "J.T.," was a mite of a fellow with a voice so strong it stood in great contrast to his size. He was not given to laughter and always his expression was one of great sincerity. This is the gist of their debate:

E.B. - Man, what my boss gives his kids for spending change would look like a fortune to yours. Hell, one of his boys rides to school every morning in a Buick as long as from here to the damn corner. He's a bitch my friend. He's a bitch in every sense of the word. (laughter from the audience).

J.T. - What's all that got to do with how good a bossman he is? Every Christmas and Thanksgiving my old man gives me the day off, and always on Christmas I get

1. Such conversations reveal classics in hyperbole.
no less than a fifty dollar bonus. Can you match that?

E. B. - Fifty dollar bonus. Hear that boys? His boss gives him a fifty dollar bonus. Hell, Mr. Charlie lights his cigars with little old bills like that. Keeps waste paper baskets all around the house to put tens, twenties, and fifties in when his maids sweep them up with the rest of the trash. You see his children leave those things all over the floor. They play store and bank with trash like that. (audience goes wild)

J. T. - You're trying to be funny. Look how much good my boss has done the colored folks in this town. He helps the churches, helps a lot of the boys when they get in trouble, and does a lot of other things. Folks around here swear by him too. What has your man ever done for anybody?

E. B. - You ought to see that fine layout the boss has at his home. Got a bar with more good whiskey than you ever saw in your life. Every now and then I hit him for some of his best stuff, and he can't miss it, 'cause he has so much of it. He lives man. He lives I tell you. If you ever get a little hungry, drop by the place sometimes. Hell, we throw out enough chicken and steak and stuff everyday to feed every man in this gang. Say, man, you're a little thin around the belt and you look a little
peaked in the face. You hungry boy? Come on over and see me. I'll give you a good meal.

This breaks up the debate, because hilarity reigns after E. B's jibes. It was not so much what he said but the way he said it. This, of course, makes E. B. quite proud of himself and spurs him on to more talk. The fact that he had made not a single point in favor of his employer as a good bassman did not matter. J. T.'s insistence on sticking to the subject and trying to defend his man became overshadowed by the entirely irrelevant remarks of his opponent. Everybody had a good time at his expense, although objectively he was putting up the better defense.

Conversations are a large part of the interpersonal relations of the street habitues. Groups of all sizes - in most instances men - gather in restaurants, taverns, drug stores, pressing shops, pool rooms, and on the curbs and corners "airing their views" on a wide range of subjects. For the most part, however, they center around sex, gambling and the racket, sports, drinking, problems connected with employment, clothes, other Negroes, white "folks," and orchestras. Personalities on the political scene also come in for some discussion.

**Sex Subjects:** As is often heard around the corners - "Set a trap and bait it with a gal, and you will catch him
every time." One need not search too long in order to verify such a statement. Not only is the street a place for making sex contacts, it is in large measure a public forum for its debate, and no detail is left unexamined. A partial breakdown of the subject would reveal the following popular topics: (1) types of women who make the best sex partners, (2) comparative prowess and skill in performing the sex act, (3) number and types of women who have been sex partners, (4) ways and means of "making" a girl, i.e., attracting attention and inducing compliance to sex wishes, (5) types of women who can evoke the best response in men, (6) places to go (pads) that provide relative security from police interference, (7) which women make the surest bet and which it is wisest to avoid, and (8) ways and means of dealing with cases in which women are "knocked up," i.e., pregnant.

In most instances, every man has something to say on these topics, and each considers himself something of an authority in his own right. The following observation of one habitue on the general subject is pertinent:

Women will get you into a hell of a lot of trouble, but I wouldn't take nothing for them. I been messing around ever since I was knee-high to a duck, and what I don't know about
them ain't in the books. Got three or four younguns scattered around somewhere and had the claps more times than a little. Pretty hard to say how many different women I have had in my lifetime. Couldn't remember them all if I tried. Hell, I can't remember them all for the past month. In my whole life I know it has been way over a hundred. Hell, I've had up to four in one night. Don't make too much difference with me what one looks like. I'll take on most of them. Women is women anyhow.1

The free flow of words on the subject of sex wherever men are found congregated on the block is in no small way indicative of the atmosphere of freedom in regard to sex matters that characterizes the area. It is assumed that women who come to the block alone and hang around are available as sex partners. They may expect to be "propositioned" at most any time, whether they are acquainted with the men or not. It is not assumed that every woman who comes to the street is a prostitute, but most of them are generally thought of as looking for a "good time." The moral aspects of sex life seldom, if ever, constitute an issue. Questions of the right and wrong of it rarely enter the conversations, and

1. The question as to whether there is any actual difference in women from the purely sexual angle is one that is debated endlessly. One body of opinion holds that it is all mental. The other argues that there is actual difference in the quality of sex regardless of outward appearances.
the semi-public character of sex behavior is illustrative of the lack of any real moral conscience in this respect. When the "Jacks and Jills" of the block are really out for a good time, they "don't give a damn who sees it or care who knows it."

**Fighting Language:** The sociable character of conversation as well as other forms of interpersonal relations cannot always be separated from the aggressive. For instance, many conversations which are purely sociable at first may develop into heated argument, which may be followed by overt aggression. Conversation may be (1) wholly sociable, (2) sociable and argumentative, (3) wholly argumentative, (4) sociable and argumentative with aggressive acts, and (5) argumentative with aggressive acts. The following incident indicates something of the range in conversation:

Three men were standing on the corner "chewing the fat" about "things in general and nothing in particular" when a very attractive young lady cruised by in a blue convertible. One of them commented on the beauty of the car while another was more articulate on the matter of the girl. Much sociable conversation followed on the subject of beautiful cars and women. Eventually, however, women completely eliminated the automobiles, and all three
exchanged views on the respective merits of girls they had "gone with" in the past. It so happened that two of the men had at one time been interested in the same girl, and in time she became the focus of the conversation. One accused the other of having used unscrupulous methods in taking the girl away from him, and a rather hot argument developed between them - with the third party viewing the debate with relish. As in most of the arguments on the street, a great deal of profanity was used. When one called the other a "black S. O. B.," a fight ensued. In this particular case the third party, assisted by two other acquaintances who were nearby, succeeded in stopping the fight before either was seriously injured. Though each went on his way threatening to "get" the other, a few days later both were seen in a poolroom, apparently having forgotten the incident altogether.

A group may stand on a corner or congregate in some place of amusement and converse or "argue" with each other in such violent language that a passerby, unaccustomed to such scenes, would get the impression that a small riot was about to take place. They call each other "bastards," "S. O. B.'s," "mother lovers," "old ignorant niggers," "damned liars" and a variety of other disparaging and derogatory names. Such aggressive language, however, may not
elicit any response on the part of the persons to whom they are directed - other than a return in kind. The following may be considered a mild illustration of such exchanges:

(A) Say you black bastard - why in hell didn't you tell me you were going over to Mamie's to a party last night?

(B) To hell with you nigger - what the goddamn hell you think I am - your personal valet or something? You must think I ain't got a goddamn thing to do but look after your black---.

(A) Aw' kiss my ---, mother lover. You didn't have to tell me. You'll want me to do you a favor sometimes, but I'll see your little sawed-off--- in hell before I do. Nigger you ain't worth a good goddamn.

(B) Ain't no wings on your back - you big, black bare-footed, bear-bellied bastard.¹

As in many other conversations, the original subject or issue is forgotten here, and the verbal exchange is a matter of taking each other's measure. To be labeled the "cuss-ingest S.O.B" around is to receive great honor and the admiration of one's fellows. The struggle for ascendancy often drives them to great heights in the art of profane

¹ Other examples are "square-headed, sawed-off, blue-footed, s---o---b---", "tongue-tied, mush-mouthed, snaggle-tooth coon," and "red-eyed, pidgeon-toed, bow-legged, pot-bellied, sap-sucker."
expression. When speaking directly to each other, the actual name of the person may never be used. Thus one is usually a bastard, mother lover, bitch and a sapsucker. Indirectly as well as directly they may refer to each other as animals such as "coons," "snakes," "cats," and "monkeys," or by less classifiable names such as "spooks," "homes," "zigaboos," "spades," and "gigs."  

It is seldom that such name-calling, per se, precipitates direct aggression. Where intense feelings of hostility are present, however, to call a man "out of his name" is to invite a fight.

Another form of sociable-aggressive conversation is "playing the dozens." In this type of exchange there is the tendency to "dig" the other fellow by making shady and uncomplimentary remarks about some person or persons dear to him. Usually they are his mother, father, brothers and sisters, or other persons in the immediate family. However, such remarks may refer to a girl friend. Playing the dozens is a sort of sadistic exchange in which each person receives pleasure out of making the other "suffer."

1. Additional names for men are: blue Jesus, smoke, husk mo', tar-baby, dusty, chocolate, black boy, native son, red, snowball, ace, and jet. They may refer to girls as "clinker tops," "drags," "watts," "tacks," "after-hours," "night-fighters," and "mamma tans."

The fact that such suffering may be more imaginary than real gives the conversation its sociable character. However, where actual "suffering" results or when one's "goat is gotten," a conflict situation arises in which actual combat may take place.¹ "Hoo-rahing," as this is sometimes called, often occurs between parties who are separated by relatively great physical space. Exchanges may come from persons, for instance, who are standing on opposite sides of the street. Again, the relationship may be established between two persons who are preoccupied with other activities, such as pool or checkers or cards. Frequently a man in one group may intermittently play the dozens with one in another group. Most any question or statement may precipitate the "dozens." For example:

A. B. - Where were you last night when the game was going on?

E. D. - With your mammy - what the hell do you think?

A. B. - Don't know - I figured you were at home looking after your sister after what I did to her yesterday.

¹. Playing the dozens was not frequently found among the relatively few females observed. Women, regardless of class, seem much more sensitive about such matters. In most instances where name-calling was found among women, it meant more serious business.
There is no rule to follow as to when the dozens might be injected into a "session." Any untoward remark, gesture, or other overt act by a member of the group may occasion such a dialogue. Example: While the group is talking one of the members continues to walk to the window as if looking for someone. Another member may ask whom he is looking for. The answer might be: "looking for your maw - want to see her about some of them little half-brothers you ain't heard about yet." He may get in return: "You want to play, huh? Well, I am going to tell the boys something about your mammy, your pappy, and your little sister. Your mammy don't wear no drawers, your pappy's got the claps, and little sister is a whore who looks like a witch. Paid her fifteen cents last night."

Such a dialogue usually ends when one runs out of something to say. There is no foretelling, however, the depths to which the dozens may go. One may become angered if other members of the group indicate by too much laughter that he is playing the losing game. If the other members are in a mood for trouble they may "agitate" by making leading statements to the apparent victor such as "Tell him what you told me last night about his old lady" or to the vanquished such queries as "You didn't hear the last thing he said, did you man?" Usually such prodding
magnifies the issue and jeopardizes the status of one while enhancing that of the other. The latter, sensing that his mates are enjoying his advantage as much as he, may then go to further extremes. If the one having the disadvantage is unable to meet the new challenge, every one has a good time at his expense. Not infrequently the loser "can't take it" and resorts to more direct forms of aggression - usually fisticuffs. Such a fight may continue until one has had enough or until there is intervention by other members of the group. If the affray is on the street, there may be intervention by non-participants or policemen. 1

Conflict Situations And Acts of Aggression

A "fight" or an affray, as it is officially labeled, is a thing of common occurrence on the street. In a great many instances, it may go on unnoticed by all save the ones who happen to be near and those who have some special

1. In the majority of street brawls observed, police never came on the scene. Seldom in such cases does someone summon them. In the few instances in which there was police intervention, there were only three in which arrests were made. Usually they dispersed the whole group or ordered the offenders away. Should the police be spotted before they arrive on the scene, somebody usually warns the persons to "break it up - the law."
interest in the outcome: Where there is much "fussing" and "squabbling" before actual physical engagements, however, a big crowd tends to form. As is frequently heard, "they will fight at the drop of a hat."

Many fights among the men occur over small, unpaid debts, whiskey, and women. A "friendly argument" over any issue may also end in affray. Also many brawls start over such seemingly trivial matters as "who ordered a hot dog first," "why in hell did you knock over my beer," "get off my damn hat," and "who contributed the most money to yesterday's fifth."¹ Challenges over "what somebody said you said about me" likewise lead to antagonistic behavior. Occasionally these affrays assume rather serious proportions, particularly when deadly weapons are used.² Though such affairs do occur on the street, most of them happen in the dark alleys, flophouses, and in the private or semi-private confines of the homes. The greater difficulty of "getting away" with a "knifing," "shooting," or assault with some other deadly weapon undoubtedly acts as a deterrent when on the street proper. In both

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1. A bottle of liquor.

2. In one community, less than one block away from the main street, it was not uncommon to either see or hear of the "western style" of gun battle. Of the total of 14 arrests for assault with a deadly weapon in this community from January to December, 1948, 13 involved Negroes and one white.
communities, however, the street extended into areas into which this type of aggression was relatively frequent. It is impossible to separate the main street from these "extensions," since there is a great deal of movement between the two.

The following cases are illustrative of some of the conflict situations observed, as well as the nature and direction of the actual conflict:

Willie and Sam

Willie and Sam were pals of long standing. They had known each other for a number of years and lived in the same neighborhood. Both were in the late thirties. Willie had been married once, but he and his wife had long since been separated. Sam had never been married, but he always kept an "old lady." Both Willie and Sam were frequently seen around the block. They drank together, played pool together, and gambled together. One Saturday the two got "tanked up" on one "fifth" of wine and bought another to "slp" on while they played each other head and head black jack. They had much fun joking and "woofing" at each other until Willie lost fifty cents — all he had. After much insistence, he succeeded in "soaking" his cigarette lighter to Sam for the fifty cents back. In time, Willie lost this money, whereupon he asked Sam for the return of his lighter. Sam's refusal to give Willie back his lighter started an argument. In the course of the heated exchange, each "cussed" the other one "out." Finally, Willie left, but with the promise he was going to "get" Sam for the way he "treated" him. Sam was quite unimpressed by Willie's threat, because he knew him from "way back" and was accustomed to such behavior. However, Willie soon returned and demanded both his cigarette lighter and his fifty cents. When Sam refused, he drew a gun out of his pocket and shot him in the stomach. Willie was arrested for "assault with intent to kill." Sam was taken to the hospital. He did not die.
My Man and My Woman

The "joint was jumping." The juke box had a good selection of "slow drags" as well as jitterbug pieces, and everybody was good and "lit" off the "stump hole" and Pepsi Cola highballs that had just been "served" around at "Maggie's." Although everybody got "on the dime" when the slow drags played, Ludie — whom everybody knew was Jeff's "old lady," really "laid it on strong." In fact Ludie could "lay it" so well that all the men scrambled to dance with her every time a slow drag was played. When Jeff, who had been detained, "showed up," Ludie really was "doing her number." As soon as the recording ended, Ludie walked over to Jeff and asked him where he had been "so damn long." She accused him of "laying up" with some "old black bitch" and told him she was going to send them both "to hell." Jeff then accused her of being a "whore" and not being worth a damn, and he told her he was going to "kill" her before the night was over. Minutes later when Jeff, himself, was "grinding away" on the dime, Ludie walked up and tore off a part of his shirt. He retaliated by knocking her down three or four times and kicking her. She ran out of the place and later came back with a knife, but Jeff had gone. She went out looking for him saying she was going to "cut his damn throat." Days later they were seen in the same "joint" dancing on the same "dime," but this time they danced together.

Pay Me Now or Else

Everybody was coming out of the theater after the last show. It was a Saturday night, and the block was full of people. When J. T. came out, one of the first persons he saw was A. L., who had been out of town and had not been seen around the block for some time. One often heard, however, that he had been doing "all right for himself" while he was away. J. T. greeted him and expressed his delight at seeing him around again. After joking together about experiences both had had since being apart, J. T. brought up the question of a little money A. L. had borrowed from him before leaving town. When A. L. told him that he would catch him later, he replied that he wanted his money then and there, that he knew he did not come back broke and was only trying to get our of paying him his money. When A. L. started
walking off, J. T. caught him by the shoulder and told him if he didn't pay his money right then and there he was going to beat his "brains out." A big crowd formed a semi-circle around the two, and here and there one could hear persons "agitating" them to mix it up. When A. L., who apparently wanted no fight, attempted to pull away, J. T. pushed him off the curb and into a parked automobile. He then jerked out his "switch blade" and rushed A. L. The sight of the knife so cowered A. L. that he made no effort to fight back. J. T. stood there holding him with one hand, and with the blade of the knife turned backward in the other hand, rained blows on A.L. until he sank to the pavement. At this point, two of the boys came over and pulled J. T. away. The crowd dispersed as if nothing had happened. Both men were around the street hours later. There were no evidences that A. L. had reported the incident to the police.

A Fight At The Drop of A Hat

One afternoon several men were standing on a corner talking about "everything in general and nothing in particular" when a colleague, who had just been to a baseball game, came up with "news" about what went on at the game. Among other things he ventured that a fellow named Evans on the local team was good enough for the "majors." One of the boys immediately agreed with him, but another challenged that Evans couldn't make a good minor league team. The fellow who had brought the "news" went on up the street, but the argument about Evans continued. In time the two men were "squaring off." No serious damage was done by either, since the sight of a police car brought an abrupt end to the fight.

These cases indicate something of the swiftness with which situations of sociability become ones of conflict, the pettiness of issues over which conflict situations arise, and the apparent lack of restraint due either to the presence of other people or to any personal inhibitions. The tendency is to settle disputes then and there, regardless of their nature and of the circumstances.
Such recourses define both the frequency and spontaneity of the aggressive and violent behavior in the street area.

Aggressive behavior among lower class Negroes has been given considerable attention by a number of students of the Negro. About violent behavior among Negroes in a rural Alabama county, one of them made this observation:

There is a tradition of violence which seems to mark personal relations to a high degree. Although strictly speaking not a matter of health, reference to the setting in which these violent deaths take place is important as a phase of social life as well as the mortality... The violence of life was an inescapable fact in a large number of families of the county. In another connection reference has been made to the violence attending jealousy in sex relations, but violence is not confined to love affairs. The large amount resulting in death in this group of 612 families may be considered simply another index to its cultural status. A woman who was asked about sleeping with her windows opened replied that 'people do's so much killin' round here, I'se scared to leave 'em open. Another, referring to their recreation, explained why they stopped attending the dances: 'Dere's so much cutting and killing going on'..."1

Many earlier students of the problem viewed aggression within the Negro group as an expression of race traits. Typical of such an approach is the following observation:

A further analysis of the negro's anger indicates that a very great part has its origin in jealousy over persons. This is not only true of the women, who fight and quarrel because of jealousy and envy, but it is also true of the men, and it would appear that at least eighty per cent of the fights and personal encounters among the negroes are ordinarily caused by the woman in the case. And just as jealousy leads to intensity of the animal passion peculiarly in the case of the negroes, so with this emotion go laughter, shrieking, singing and various expressions of wanton recklessness and morbid pleasure in the pouring-out of the animal passion. 1

Professor Frazier has pointed out the tendency toward aggression among lower class Negro youth in two cities on the North-South border:

As indicated by their overt behavior, the youth in the lower-class families included in our investigation were, on the whole, accommodated to the inferior status of the Negro in the community. But the outward accommodations often concealed latent conflicts between their wishes and conceptions of themselves on the one hand, and the status assigned them by the white community on the other. These conflicts were revealed in their expressions of resentment toward subordination to whites, in the sporadic outbursts of aggression, and in their sullen and mean dispositions, which reflect their humiliations and frustrations. 2

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However students of the problem account for the high incidence of in-group aggression among Negroes in general, there is one factor which cannot be overlooked when analyzing the problem as it exists in the South, and that is the attitude of the police and the courts.

**The Thin Shadow of the Law:** There is little police interference with the interpersonal relations of the street habitues. The officers who patrol the street areas know most of them, and they are familiar with the policemen. Making noise, "showing off," and "raising hell" are things to be tolerated.¹ Although, as indicated, most any sociable situation may develop into one of conflict in which immediate settlement is the rule, there is not much of a tendency on the part of the law enforcement officers to anticipate the latter. Thus the somewhat negative attitude of policemen toward the public character of street sociability is, in one sense, a sanction for the aggressive behavior which is both part of and result of sociable interaction. As one policeman put it:

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¹ No officer was willing to make an outright admission of this fact, but that such is the case is obvious in their indifference except in extreme conditions.
If we run every fellow in that blew his top on the street as well as those who raise Cain in other areas, we wouldn't have anywhere in jail to put them. Most of them don't mean any harm in their tussles and squabbles. Ninety per cent of those cases produce no real harm. They sometimes kid a little too strong, and before you know it somebody can't take it and starts something. In most cases like that somebody in the gang breaks it up. Usually, when we come on the scene they stop anyway. We know the boys get too loud and raise too much hell at times, but what do we do? Put a muzzle on them, and there might be an explosion somewhere. It seems they have a lot of steam to blow off. And down here on these corners are the places they select to do it. Since nobody complains, we don't run them in for being a nuisance. Most of our arrests around here are for being drunk and making a nuisance. There is a difference in being a drunken nuisance and just being loud. When a fellow gets so drunk that he makes himself a public nuisance, we have to run him in. You see a man like that doesn't care who he bothers. Even the most regular fellows turn thumbs down on that type. Most of the drunks we run in are fellows who have already been warned. In many instances we put them in cabs and send them home if they have the money. Occasionally we take them home ourselves. But you see we are not supposed to be hauling drunks home. When they get in the squad cars they are supposed to be on their way to jail.

Asking if putting men like these in jail helped, the officer replied: "Not much. You see this sort of thing is life to them. They do it every day. They don't seem to be able to do anything else. Actually, they are not bad fellows, but they will raise hell from time to time. Thirty days in jail or on the road, and they are right back where they left off."
The habitues themselves seldom think of their conduct in terms of the prohibitions of the law. Action comes first, and concern, if any, comes last. The point cannot be over-emphasized that what to the outsider may appear bad conduct or misbehavior, may not be considered such on the street. What to persons unaccustomed to the ways of the street might be conflict situations would actually be ones of sociability. Again, one might erroneously conclude from observation of, say, numerous instances of hostility in the interpersonal relations of street habitues, that they come to the street with "chips on their shoulders" and are consciously seeking some person or object upon which to give vent to pent-up emotions and tensions. That such tensions are often present, this is not to deny. However, it is undoubtedly true that many persons come to the street with little if any sense of frustration or feeling of tension. Certainly they are not aware of such conditions, if they do exist. The street constitutes something of a "free" area; it is one in which lack of rigid law enforcement and concern on the part of the larger community, both negative factors, contribute to a social climate of special permission. Thus, where the
person may not come to the street for specific purpose of making aggressions of a sort, he does not refrain from doing so if there is sufficient provocation.  

Many of the street habitués have little fear of the consequences of their aggressions - even if they should be apprehended by the police.

Where there have been no serious consequences of aggressive acts, such as death or permanent injury, the tendency is for the courts to be rather lenient in cases involving Negroes only. 2 Those habitués who had had a great deal of contact with the courts - there were many - were quite aware of this leniency and exploited it to a

1. Some persons seem to need more provocation than others.

2. A case in point is that of the Negro reputed to have been picked up in the vicinity of the main street in the Negro community and jailed on the charge of indecent exposure. When he came before the judge, he was asked if he lived in town. He answered that he was from another state and was just stopping through until he could get back on his feet. Then the judge asked him if he didn't know it was against the law for going around in public with the person exposed. He answered (using the appropriate gestures) that somebody had swiped his clothes and that he was anxious to get some more so he could show folks how he could really be somebody. He said "Judge, you ought to see this old nigger when he's got his Sunday-go-to-meetings on." He "swore" to the judge that he would never in life be caught like that again. The judge, somewhat amused at it all, asked him if he were to let him go if he would catch the next train out of town. The Negro replied: "Judge, if you let me go, I swear I will catch the train that jest left." Case was dismissed.
very great degree. In talks with those who have repeatedly been before the court as well as in observations of trials involving Negroes, one got the impression that by being "good-natured" and comical they could often get off with lighter penalties for their misconduct than those who are matter-of-fact or "uppity."

It is a great pastime of street habitues to "make the courts." Many of them exhibit amazing knowledge of court procedure. They know all the lawyers, judges, and other persons of importance connected with the courts; they understand legal terminology and when conversing about trials use the terms with as much ease as the more frequently used street "lingo." They know what not to say
and what to say when before certain judges. They know
the temperaments and habits of almost all the people
with whom they have to deal when running afoul the law.
This does not exclude the policemen themselves.

Many of the habitues are personally acquainted with
what they call the "Great White Fathers" of the town.
Those who do not know such persons directly, usually know
persons who do know them. It is not uncommon to hear one
boast on the street that if anything happens to him he
will not have to worry about a thing, because he has the
"right contacts." Usually these right contacts are no
more than influential white citizens of the community.
One word from these persons often gets a Negro out of
trouble. In many instances, their cases never come to
trial. In other instances, when a Negro is picked up
by a policeman - particularly if he is white - he may
be released immediately if he can prove that he is an
employee of some established or influential white citi-
zen either in a domestic capacity or otherwise.

Take the case of "Old Folks," for example. "Folks,"
as he was sometimes called for "short," was typical of
what one author has called the "local color Negro."¹ He

¹ Cf. Sterling Brown, "Negro Characters As Seen
By White Authors." The Journal of Negro Education
180-201.
was as much a part of the town as the old County Court House. "Folks" was known by about as many white people as he was by Negroes. This was true particularly of those who owned automobiles and had them washed and "simo- nized" in the town's service stations. There was hardly, to be true, a service station in the community at which "Folks" had not worked at some time or other. Although he shifted jobs often, he never lost the good will of previous employers. As a matter of fact, he got his "reputation" for being a worker who was never expected to show up "two Mondays in succession." It is doubtful that Old Folks could have maintained his popularity had he suddenly reformed and showed some penchant for staying on the job. Now "Folks" knew that he could get away with "murder" around the town. He carried a long list of white "references" around "in his head" and was not opposed to using them whenever necessary. He never worried about what would happen if he were caught on a "spree" or gambling or doing something else which would be termed a minor violation of the law. He had a perfect formula for getting out of trouble, and most of the time it worked. As he often
put it - "Mr. Billy, you know, is a powerful man."¹

Not all Negroes who receive protection from benevolent "white fathers" are of "Old Folks" type. Getting too drunk on occasion, losing his way home, gambling and loitering were the chief causes of his brushes with the law. There are Negroes who boast on the street that they can beat even the serious cases. In one "session" in which there were "reflections on violence," a Negro from a neighboring community gave a rather vivid account of one of his "fights" and later "brush with the law." According to his story he and three other men were playing a game of stud poker. They had been playing practically all night, and he was "way out front," but he stayed there in order to let some of the boys get "even." However, the longer he stayed the better his luck got until finally he broke up the game. As he started to rake in his last pot, the houseman, a big man almost twice his size, told him not to "touch the damn money," that the

¹ This tendency to refer to members of the white group as Mr. Billy or some other such name is not solely a practice of lower class Negroes. It may, on occasions, be used by some members of the upper classes. In one sense, to refer to a white person as Mr. Billy is to recognize the dominant, super-ordinate position he holds in the community. In another sense it represents the tendency to worship the power of the white man as manifested by his greater material wealth and achievements. Mr. Billy "builds the skyscrapers, automobiles, planes, steamships, and highways. He runs the town. He is a 'bitch' in every sense of the word."
"house" was taking that over. When he insisted that the house had had its cut and was due no more, he got "cussed out" and was told to get out of the house. When he returned the profanity, the big man hit him so hard that he fell to his knees, but while on his knees he pulled out his "blade" and stabbed him in the leg. As the big man fell over in pain, he then cut him "all over until he was bleeding like a hog." Finishing his story: "When his old lady heard us fighting, she came in with a butcher knife to get me, but I beat her to it and cut her down my size."

"How many times did you cut her?", someone cut in.

"I don't know, but I remember they had to take sixteen stitches," he replied.

"What about the man?"

"I cut that cat in over forty places. He was so bloody they had to wrap him up in a sheet to get him to the doctor."

He made his escape from the house and went to a white man he had worked for a number of years. According to his story, his white friend told him not to worry, but not to get into any more trouble. It seems that the case did not come to trial until several months later. Neither the man nor the woman died, but both had close calls. When the case was finally tried, he received a road sentence, suspended
on good behavior, and was ordered to pay the doctor bill. He boasted that his behavior was far from good and that the doctor bill was never paid out of his pocket. He said he always carried a knife, but would never use it again unless he "had to."

Commenting on the double standards of justice for Negroes and whites in "Southerntown," Dollard said:

It is impossible to see the more violent patterns of Negro behavior in the right prospective unless one understands that there are two different standards of justice for the two castes. White persons are held much more strictly to the formal legal code; Negroes are dealt with much more indulgently. It is not a question of different formal codes for Negroes and whites, but rather of differences in severity and rigor of application of the code that does exist. This is true only under one condition, however - when Negro crimes are committed on Negroes; when they are done on whites, the penalties assessed may rather be excessively strict. The result is that the individual Negro, is to a considerable degree, outside the protection of white law, and must shift for himself...

It is clear that this differential application of the law amounts to a condoning of Negro violence and gives immunity to Negroes to commit small or large crimes so long as they are on Negroes. It may be indulgent in the case of any given Negro, but its effect upon the Negro group as a whole is dangerous and destructive...1

Young has made the following general observations on the question of law observance by Negroes and attitudes of law enforcement agents:

With the exception of a limited number of crimes, especially those involving white people or their property, public officials, usually white, have never shown an interest in Negro offenders as intense as that in white violators of the law. Negroes will have their gin. They cannot be stopped from overstepping legal bounds in sex relations. Petty thieving can be only slightly checked, for it is in their blood and does no serious harm. So runs the defense of their indifference. When the solution of a crime involves no great effort, or when a white person is wronged, the forces of law and order spring into action, but the lesson of indifference and security from the police interference has already been learned too thoroughly to be obliterated by these restricted zones of police activity and prejudiced prosecution. Freedom from legal restraint in some criminal activities, even though partly counterbalanced by official diligence in regard to others, may be expected to lead to greater group criminality.¹

The matter of court discrimination in the South brought special attention from Myrdal. He said:

In criminal cases the discrimination does not always run against a Negro defendant. It is part of the Southern Tradition to assume that Negroes are disorderly and lack of elementary morals, and to show great indulgence toward Negro violence and disorderliness when they

¹ Donald Young, op. cit., pp. 235-36.
are among themselves.' They should, however, not act it out in the presence of whites, 'not right out on the street.' As long as only Negroes are concerned and no whites are disturbed, great leniency will be shown in most cases. This is particularly true in minor cases which are often treated in humorous and disdainful manner. The sentences for even major crimes are ordinarily reduced when the victim is another Negro. Attorneys are heard to plead in the juries: 'their code of ethics is a different one from ours.' To the patriarchal traditions belong also the undue importance given white "character witnesses" in favor of Negro offenders. The South is full of stories of how Negroes have been acquitted or given ridiculously mild sentences upon recommendation of their white employers with whom they have good standing.\(^1\)

It is inescapable that freedom of aggression on the street as elsewhere in the Negro community is closely related to the differential treatment accorded them in the courts as well as in other areas of contact with the law. Then there is the factor of reaction, rightly or wrongly, to the conclusion that white people regard all Negroes as "just niggers." It is expected that "niggers will be niggers." Differential treatment, a function of any segregated pattern, produces differential and segregated

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attitudes which, in turn, produce the pattern and the treatment. This vicious circle defines the nature of white-Negro as well as intra-Negro relations in the southern situation. Attitudes, which are the products of the system, thus rationalize and justify its existence. Since the system is one, the patterns of Negro-white attitudes are essentially one. It is expected that the Negroes on the street will "raise hell," and they go there "expecting" to do just that.

This pattern of expectation as regards the behavior of Negroes on the street is not, therefore, exclusively white. It is shared by many members of the Negro community. Thus they may regard a special group of Negroes much in the same way many members of the majority group regard all Negroes. Related to this pattern of expectation is that of permission. To "expect no better" is to permit. Thus the street becomes an area of unlimited sociability and a high degree of freedom of aggression - having relatively little interference either from the majority group, which has

1. It is the position here that like other social attitudes, majority-minority group attitudes are the function of a total situation. Thus Negro attitudes towards white as well as toward other Negroes represent the complex of race attitudes appropriate to the superordinate position of the white population.
little contact with it, or from other Negroes who, while frequently frowning on and deploiring the condition among themselves, otherwise offer no protest. Sociability and aggression, then, as exhibited by the street habitue's become forms of adjustment growing out of both inter-group and intra-group relationships. It is unconscious adjustment to the extent that it functions in an atmosphere of permission rather than restraint.
CHAPTER V

PLAYING THE BLOCK - MAKING A LIVING AND DODGING THE LAW

Three men were shooting pool for rather high stakes. Although each one won an occasional game, it was quite obvious to any interested observer that one of them won more consistently than the others. Closer observation revealed a pattern of side betting which seemed to have been geared rather closely to the fortunes of the most consistent winner. When one of the players had lost all he had, he made a hasty exit with the promise that he would be right back with more stakes. Following his movements after leaving the game table, the observer noticed that he walked up to a man standing nonchalantly by a fire hydrant. After a rather hasty exchange, the second man ran his hand into his pocket, pulled out a wad of bills bound with a rubber band, peeled off two "fives" and gave it to the other. He then pulled out a pad, made a hasty note, and resumed his position by the hydrant. The first man returned to the pool room and got back into the game.

A car pulled up to the curb. Inside were two men and two women. One man got out. He went into a barber shop,
but he did not stay long. He went into three other places—apparently looking for some particular person. In each place he got a line on the person's whereabouts. Eventually he saw the man he was looking for across the street "bulling" with a group of men. He went over, called him aside, and whispered something into his ear. Then he returned to his car and waited. Minutes later the man whom he had spoken returned to the parked automobile and slipped a package inside. The car moved off. The man who brought the package went back to the group and took up the conversation.

Three women got out of a taxi near the theater. They did not, however, go to the movies. They went instead to the restaurant and bar a few doors up the street. They took a booth and ordered a round of beer. A man who happened to walk by said something to one of them. He was offered a seat. In a few minutes two other men joined them. More beer was ordered. Sometime later one couple went out the back door. It was not long afterwards before the other two couples left. None of them returned to the restaurant and bar. Later that night two of the women were seen farther up the street having another round of beer. They did not have their former male companions with them. Still later, however, all three women were seen on the street talking to three other men. After a few minutes all six
walked away - down the railroad. They were not seen again on the street - not that night.

A week-old husband came to the block. He wanted to know if anybody had seen "Ed." Someone told him that Ed was more than likely down to Bill's place that time of evening. The newly-wed went to Bill's place and, as expected, found "Ed." there. He and "Ed" talked for some time after which he left, reminding "Ed" that he was "counting on him" to "look out" for him. The next day, a certain week-old bride received a lovely new "sofa." A few days later other items of furniture were added to her household. "Ed" delivered it all personally.

A couple of well-dressed, slick-haired men stood in the doorway of the hotel. They seemed especially interested in the men who passed by. Presently they attracted the attention of two men who were less conspicuously dressed than they and who carried themselves in quite a different manner. Eavesdropping on the conversation revealed that the former were coaxing the latter to accompany them to a party with the promise that they would "take care of everything." Although they were unsuccessful in getting the acceptance of these two, later on they were able to get a couple of escorts. The four went off in a taxi - directed by one of the slick-haired boys with
the conspicuous dress.¹

"Playing the block" means different things to different people, but underlying most of the activity in that direction is the motive of personal gain at the other fellow's expense. Sometimes such gains are purely social; most often they are of an economic nature. The basic assumption of the man or woman who plays the block is that there is always a "sucker" around who can be maneuvered into a relationship in which he will give more than he takes. Whether the exchange is one of "goods" or "services" someone stands to lose on the deal. The loser need not be, however, either of the parties immediately concerned in the deal.² People who play the block usually

¹ Although effeminate men - variously known as "pansies," "fairies," "little sisters," "freaks," "sissies," etc., were in evidence in both communities, they were not as open and as conspicuous in their activities as they were along Mount Vernon Avenue and Long Street in Columbus, Ohio. Observations in Columbus indicated a greater degree of tolerance for such deviant personalities. The greater number of night clubs where "freaks" are often top-billed entertainment may account for the greater indifference in this case. The sexual pervert moved cautiously on the block in both of the southern communities. In no instance was one observed in a celebrated capacity as was often the case in Columbus. General observations indicate that there is greater freedom of expression for such types in the North as a whole than in the South.

² He may be as will be indicated later, a third unsuspecting party who may supply "unknowingly" the goods and the services.
work alone or in very small groups which may organize on the spot in order to pursue some immediate advantage. Seldom, however, does such organization function beyond the obtaining of the particular objective.¹ Any of a large number of "right" people or people in the "know" may become a part of a "play" if they happen to be around at the opportune time.

Included in the assortment of underworld and semi-underworld characters who look to the street as a source of personal gain are the gambling "sharks," amateur prostitutes, "hot goods" merchants, pimps, homosexuals, confidence men, dope peddlers, petty bootleggers, and "bums" of various and sundry descriptions. In addition there are the plain old "horse-sense" and "street-wise" guys who know their way around the block from years of experience and who know how to take advantage of a "good thing" if and when they see one.

There was "Sippy" Taylor, for instance. He was one of those persons who really knew his way around. There was hardly a city in the United States of any size or consequence about which, according to his own story, he had

¹. This excludes the "Numbers" racket, which was the only one encountered on the street which evidenced large scale organization and operation.
no first hand knowledge. He boasted of having ridden the "blinds" into the country's largest railroad centers. New York, Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Denver, St. Louis, Memphis — Sippy knew them all. His was the informal school of experience, for, like so many of the street habitues, he had only an elementary school education. Sippy was mild-mannered and suave, and he spoke in such an earnest and direct way that the listener tended not only to "hang on" to his every word but to believe it. It was not unusual for those who knew him to beg him to "talk about something." It didn't matter what he talked about. People just "loved to hear Sippy talk." By no means was he unaware of his "gift of gab," for it gained him the reputation of being the shrewdest "con" man on the block. Sippy and others of his kind directed their "plays" at a variety of people — usually those who were experiencing some difficulty or maladjustment. The lonesome old maid — off on "maid's night" with nothing to do and "change" in her purse; the greenhorn or "country boy" — unused to the ways of the city, but willing to learn at any price; the "I'll-try-anything-once" individuals who are always seeking a new and different thrill — all are fair game for the "con" man. He is not averse to capitalizing on the "good of heart" — people who are ready to listen to, sympathize
with and lend a "helping hand" to any person who impresses
them as being in trouble. "Pickings" for the confidence
man are easiest on the week-ends when the block population
is increased by the hundreds of rural people who come into
the county seat to do their shopping and drop down on the
block to fraternize and "see the sights." Easy to draw
into conversation, many of these "week-end habitues" fall
victim to the boys who "play the block" in the confidence
role.

Sippy was one of those "con" men who meant different
things to different people. To the fervently religious
he was the Bible enthusiast who had been "called to preach,"
but needed a little money to complete the necessary educa-
tion. Sippy could not count the number of little rural
churches all over the country that he had "preached in." He
knew a number of Bible stories and had the necessary
"jive" to make the "sisters shout" - the test of the good
sermon in many of the churches and the prerequisite to a
good "collection" for the guest minister.

Any ambitious young man or woman who wanted to sing
or dance with a big "name band" or wanted to crash some
of the exclusive clubs and spots "up the way"\(^1\) could find

\(^1\) "Up the Way" generally means the North. When
heard along the South Atlantic Seaboard, it most specifi-
cally refers to cities from Washington, D.C. on up.
in Sippy just the man who had the right contacts. According to his story, he was a personal friend of all the big shots in the world of stage, screen, and radio, and for fees of varying sizes—depending on the vulnerability of the "confidencee"—Sippy promised to make the initial contacts with the "right people." He operated on the assumption that most people were "suckers" in one way or the other. His success as a confidence man depended upon discovering through conversation what a person's principal interests were and then upon his ability to convince him that he had something to contribute in that respect. Sippy, of course, is only one example of several persons who play the block in this way. Most of them, however, operate small scale—content to stand on the corner or "drape" themselves over a bar to give any "sucker" who comes along an "uneven break."

The "Black" Market: To have the "right" contacts on the block is to be exposed to a vast amount of illicit traffic in goods and services of practically every conceivable type. As janitors, cooks, porters, delivery men, and as menial workers around the homes and business

1. Southern Negroes, according to this "con" man, are not as anxious about futures in the entertainment world as those in the North and West. With a few exceptions he had been unable to work this line successfully in the southern towns.
establishments of the larger community, many lower class Negroes are presented tempting opportunities to steal various goods which they can easily dispose of at greatly reduced prices but still at considerable profit for themselves. There is no way of estimating just how much of this is done, but observations in both communities indicated a rather large circulation of stolen goods. If one is successful in making the right contacts, he may purchase the winter's coal, furnish his house, replenish his wardrobe, and buy the meat for his Sunday dinner, in many instances, at considerably less expense than the prevailing prices. As a rule goods that come in large stocks have highest circulation and lowest prices in relation to retail list prices. Thus an expensive pair of shoes may be relatively cheaper than a cheap but odd table lamp or the winter's coal cheaper than an expensive handbag. As in the case of most "shady economic activities" along the block, the traffic in "hot" goods showed no signs of being an organized racket. Most of the persons operated on their own, although it was common knowledge among street habitues just who could be contacted for what things and where.

Activities of this sort could be carried on with relatively little fear of being "turned up," because the tendency was to sympathize with the man trying to "make it." Bits of conversation among better class Negroes indicated
that many of this group made occasional "deals" with the boys distributing stolen goods. One got the impression that many Negroes, regardless of class, had no sense of wrong-doing or guilt in this respect. As one person in good standing in one community put it: "Trouble with so many Negroes is that they are too good about things. The white people have been taking from Negroes ever since they have been in this country. Most jobs that Negroes have around this town pay starvation wages. Some of them have to take a few things on the side in order to make ends meet. To tell you the truth, I believe a lot of white people employing Negroes are on to such little rackets, but they don't say or do anything about them, because they know at that Negroes are not getting what they are worth."

A similar opinion was expressed by a business man:

Well, when a man's in business he figures on a certain amount of loss for reasons he can't account for, but I don't see how some of these places stay in business the way some of the boys hit them. It all goes to show how much profit there is in real big business. I don't know about the white fellows who have jobs that don't pay anything, but I know many Negroes who work for practically nothing but make it up one way or the other if they get the chance. And I don't blame them. You know the average white man thinks a Negro can live off nothing. Just because he gets along somehow, he thinks that what he pays him is enough. They are always talking about how Negroes will steal and how
they can't be trusted. If many of them didn't steal they would starve. As long as they don't overdo that sort of thing, I would say that in a way there is nothing wrong with it.

A schoolteacher viewed the situation in terms of job interest:

I don't think a Negro porter or truck or stockroom man or a Negro working in some other such capacity, particularly in the South, cares too much about what happens to the business that employs him as long as it operates and continues to give him work. He has no real stake in the business, because he can't work up to anything. All such jobs for Negroes are blind alley jobs. If they take a few things occasionally either for their own use or to sell to somebody, I would place the blame on the employer. Give them a chance to work up and to earn more pay if they merit it, and things like that wouldn't happen anymore among them than other persons. Of course, most of these stores are robbing the customers, so what do they expect? I admit I have bought a few 'hot' things in my life. I am a schoolteacher you know, and that should be enough said.

A middle class Negro who had bought two winters' supply of coal for the price of one observed:

I got wind of the fact that I could get a ton of coal pretty cheap if I contacted certain fellows around here. My coal bill had been running pretty high because of a faulty furnace that I have been unable to get fixed, so I thought I would try getting it a little cheaper. All I had to do was drop by a certain poolroom one evening, and I found my man. The next day he started delivering my coal in the regular coal truck - a real good grade too. I have really been asleep. He told me that he could have furnished me my coal last winter if
I had contacted him. I don't mind helping those fellows out, for they certainly help me out. I hope they don't get caught at it. Apparently the coal company doesn't miss it. The way I look at it is that the little money those guys make on the side selling the coal only makes up for what they should have been paid anyway.

All types of jokes circulate around the block about this or that "branch" of this or that "company." It was often said that one of the fellows who hauled coal for a particular company always delivered one ton to his "yard" for every two delivered to a buyer.

In matters such as this the "power and glory" which the white employer symbolizes to the lower class Negro works to the former's disadvantage. It is reasoned that since the "great white father" has so much, he cannot miss the little bit "I take." The rationalization: "I am really doing nothing wrong, because I am being exploited anyway and what I take is really due me. Furthermore, it doesn't matter how good I am or how hard I work, I won't get much further than I am now. After all a man is entitled to something for his work."

One man who had worked for a wholesale company for over a period of ten years said matter-of-factly that he couldn't count the cases of canned goods that he had dumped off the truck. Although he had no family of his own, he
said he was glad to let some of his "folks" have the food at small price.¹ In this way he said he picked up enough extra money to "buy a pair of shoes every now and then."

He considered himself a good Christian, law-abiding citizen and never thought of his behavior as being criminal in any form.

Such attitudes on the part of many of the Negroes who handle hot goods and those who buy them lend a certain respectability to the practice. Only the law defines it as illegal behavior. To those who take and receive them, it is just a matter of "Negroes getting by somehow" in a "white man's world."

Many songs and anecdotes have portrayed the "folk" Negro as one gifted in the art of taking that which did not belong to him. Some of them pose subtle questions as to whether a Negro is "really stealing" when he takes things that are not his own. Take for example the following ditty which gives the stereotype of the Negro who steals those things which are satisfying of the hunger urge:

Some folks say that a nigger won't steal
But I caught two in my corn field
One had a middlin' and one had a ham
If that ain't stealing well I'll be damn

¹. It is not infrequent that some Negroes refer to all other Negroes as my "folks" instead of my "people."
It is a question as to how much the white employer "allows" the Negro to "get by" with because he "expects" him to "get by." It is also a question as to the extent that the Negro conforms to the stereotype role because of the license it gives him to "get by." To conform to the stereotype is to be in the Negro's "place" — even when it means breaking the law. At such points the laws of the white South actually conflict with the mores. "Getting by" for the Negro is in this sense an exploitation of this conflict.

Negro officers in both communities indicated that they were quite aware of deals in stolen goods made on the street as in other areas where Negroes lived, but all of them recognized the futility of trying to prevent them. The consensus was that such operations were too small scale and unorganized to plan and effect any worthwhile investigation. Then there was always the difficulty

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of getting any type of cooperation from Negroes themselves. One of them summed the matter up this way:

Sure we know that almost every guy who hangs out around here has some small racket of his own or helps the other fellow keep going. Most of the things they do, however, are strictly small scale and nobody is hurt too much. At any rate we have few complaints in this respect. You can't do too much about the stolen goods racket unless there is a complaint from the persons from whom the stuff is taken. Usually the cases we get like that involve breaking and entering. In such cases we usually get those who are guilty. There is no way in the world to tell how much stuff gets out the backdoors of hotels, restaurants, clothing stores, furniture stores and the like around this town or any other for that matter. Some of it circulates under our noses, but we can't be chasing around to find out about such things unless there is a complaint. It is doubtful if we could do much even then, for nobody is going to tell you too much. The boys that play the game on the street are plenty slick and though all of them are after the same things, they will help each other out when it comes to the law.¹

There seemed little question that as long as no large scale operations developed and as long as the shady operators, even as competitors, were solid in their resolve to

¹. Although none of the officers would say as much, it was obvious that they did not go out of their way to arrest Negroes on the street. One had to make a great spectacle out of his behavior to gain their attention. Of course where there is general "hell raising," it is hard to pick out a particular case. As one man put it: "It is hard to tell who really is a crook around here, because just every one is and thinks every one else is."
keep the nose of the law out of the activities whatever the individual cost, various goods would continue to find their way out of the stores and warehouses of the larger community and into the street's black market. But such operations were only a small part of the shady economic life of the block. As has been stated, "playing the block" took a variety of forms.

**Gambling:** It does not require a great deal of time for a visitor to the street to learn that illegal activity is all around him, for the atmosphere literally buzzes with news in that respect. Since gambling and various rackets of a sort are so directly tied up with their ideas of making a living, habitues pass away much of their time discussing them. There is hardly any kind of game of chance that one can mention which is unfamiliar to most of them. Last night's poker or dice or black jack game, the last number "out" and who "hit," and the results of the last race at Pimlico are openly discussed subjects. Discussions of the numbers game reveal a tremendous amount of participation both on the part of the street habitues themselves and a large segment of the general Negro population. Big "hits" occasion much comment, and the news of who made the "hit," how much it was for, and on what writer's book it was made travels
fast and far. The very great publicity given the big hits operate to the ultimate advantage of the backers of the racket, for it stimulates additional participation as well as the tendency on the part of those who play to increase the amount of money put on the number for the next day.¹ It is an open secret that the racket is going on. Information regarding the number for the day can be received in almost any enterprise along the block. In a barber shop in one community the number was indicated by circles around the dates on the calendar. In spite of the heavy odds on the side of the banker, the consensus is that playing the numbers is good for the morale if nothing else. A restaurant owner observed:

"After all some of them can hope to hit the numbers every once in a while if they can't hope for anything else in life. Just one hit sends the spirits of a man a mile high. Taking a chance is a daily habit with most of these people. Playing the numbers sort of fits in with their kind of life. They are not by themselves though. Negroes all over this town play the game. White people too. I can't see a thing wrong with it either. Might as well gamble"

¹ For an exceptional commentary on the organization of the numbers racket and the various methods used by participants in arriving at decisions on what numbers to play, see St. Claire Drake and Horace R. Cayton, op. cit., pp. 470-94. Also see Hugh H. Smythe, Playing the Numbers: A Study in Social Behavior (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Atlanta University, 1937).
one way or the other. Life is just a gamble you know.

A schoolteacher said:

I have never played the numbers myself, but I don't see that it is too wrong for those who play to do so if they want to. Besides giving a lot of the men jobs as number writers, it affords an outlet for hundreds of people, particularly of the lower class. They play numbers all over the United States as well as several other games of chance. What is the difference between gambling on a number and gambling on a horse, for instance? Why every time there is a prize fight the papers are full of information about the odds on this or that fighter. Seems that in some things gambling is publicly condoned while in others it is condemned. There are no race tracks down here, and there are no boxing matches, but they do have the numbers. I wouldn't be a sucker for any kind of game where the odds against winning are so great, but if the Negroes want to play why should I object?

As with other illegal activities, law enforcement officers are quite aware of the widespread practice of number playing as well as the futility of trying to break it up. A Negro policeman in one community put it this way:

One of our biggest problems is how to stop the numbers game. They don't write numbers until dark when it's hard to see anything. Then, too, so many people from all walks of life play the numbers until it is hard to get a lead from anybody. Even those who don't play refuse to give tips. Some of these fellows on the street write as much as a hundred and fifty dollars worth a week. That is clear money for themselves, I mean. Then they get a ten per cent cut on the hits. Why, they have the factory workers organized into numbers groups. They don't have to
get out and hustle their plays. They have regular customers, you see. There are to my knowledge seven bankers in this town. Don't know who they are. Got regular lawyers and bondsmen in case of trouble. You can't beat the set-up they have. The game keeps a lot of suckers happy though. The odds are about 99 to 1. The boys in the racket really clean up.

A Law enforcement officer in the other community had this to say:

The numbers racket around here is the people's racket. To beat it you've got to beat everybody. Sure we know the boys are writing numbers, and we know a lot of people who play. But knowing about it is one thing and stopping it is another. Who is going to give you a lead. The people who play? They like to play the game whether they hit or not. The game is like a religion to them. The number runners and writers? They make a living out of it, and some of them really get well. I know a lot of boys who used to hang around here placing nickle bets and picking up what they could out of the suckers. Some of these boys are now riding around here every day in some of the best automobiles in town. They have money to spend and are really big shots. All the little bobby soxers are crazy about them. Of course they are exceptions, but every washwoman, bootblack, and what have you in town who bets on the numbers figures on being an exception. To tell you the truth I flinch at what would happen if we really arrested every person that we know is playing the numbers or writing them or who is gambling in general. I could point out a hundred places right now where
the boys are gambling and doing a lot of other things at this very minute."

A striking feature about the general practice of gambling, on which the officer made incidental mention, is the spontaneity with which a game gets in operation. Most of the habituees will bet their last nickel on almost anything. A frequent remark is "I'll bet the damn sun won't shine" or an equal exaggeration - "The sky is the limit and there ain't no sky." All that is necessary to get a game started is to make the suggestion. Many of the games are of the "sociable" type, having only a few nickels and dimes, but some of them are really big and often last all day and night, particularly, on the week ends. Many such games are often the result of design on the part of the "slickers" who have "spotted" a "cat" who has just got his week's pay or some fellow who has hit the numbers or in some other way has got "flushed" and comes to the block ready to "ball." His roll is placed in double jeopardy if

1. In an initial tour of one of the communities with a patrol car, the most famous gambling spots were pointed out to me. For my benefit the officers staged a mock raid on one of the joints but did not arrest anyone. They pretended looking for a Negro who had a pretty bad reputation around the street. There was plenty of evidence of "shady doings," but they pretended not to notice. Officers don't ordinarily raid these places unless a complaint is filed, which is seldom done by people who hang around the street.
he isn't "right" or one of the boys. People who become a part of the life of the street are well known, and unless the outsider is given the nod of approval by some one of the "boys," he is fair game for the "kill." The following incident illustrates what may happen to a "sucker" under given conditions:

The bar and restaurant section of the favored block hotel was crammed to every nook and corner with people of every description. Men and women were at the bar three and four deep shrieking and shouting and yelling for more beer.\(^1\) Tables and booths were occupied by double the number of persons originally intended; groups of men were spotted all over the place "propositioning" the always outnumbered women; detached but nonetheless "interested" people were milling about in the center of the floor. Clouds of cigarette smoke, so dense they obscured much of the scene, gave the place, in spite of its very evident life, a ghostly appearance. The voice on the juke box was singing "tell me pretty mamma..."\(^2\)

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1. The laws of the State do not permit the sale of wine and whiskey over the bars. All "legitimate" bars serve beer only.

2. These descriptions are not figments of the imagination. The "spots" almost always have such appearances. They are characterized by overcrowded conditions, loud music, and great liberty on the part of the people. Whatever their exclusive claims," most of them are "joints" in every sense of the word.
A man walked - half staggered into the place and, waving a twenty dollar bill, demanded two bottles of beer. He also informed the bartender to give anybody else a bottle that wanted one. Not one of the "boys," he had unknowingly committed the cardinal sin, for a couple of the "boys" had spotted the "fatted calf."¹ A well-staged argument between the two as to who had the most money, as expected, gained the unsuspecting "quarry's " attention. He quickly made the wanted move when he offered the bet that he could "cover" both of them together. A third party - one of the boys - made a timely entrance and set the group up with a round of beer. This was followed by other rounds mostly at the expense of the intended "victim." Someone presently suggested a game. The four made their way up the stairs. About six or seven saw them and followed. The game was on. It was an all-night affair.²

1. This does not mean to say that any strange customer is a target for the slickers. They don't as a rule bother people who seem to know their way around the street. They will, however, "jump" anybody who appears to be a "sucker."

2. Incidents of similar nature occurred frequently. There was little evidence, however, of an organized underworld, with the exception of the number racket.
And so it goes - night and day - in the taverns, in the poolrooms, in the hotel, in the alleys behind the street, wherever a man makes a bet somebody will "call" - somebody will "fade." Money changes hands many times in many illegal ways on the street and many men risk their last pennies to get something for nothing. But gambling, in its many forms, is more than just taking a chance with street habitues. It is a cult, having its special rites and ceremonies. Although many of them depend on the game to "keep them eating," it means much more to them than that. Gambling, like drinking, is a part of their life scheme.

Prostitutes and Pimp's: There is little evidence of institutionalized prostitution on the block in either community. Any of several spots served as "pads" for sex activity either for "play" or "pay." Restaurants, theaters, beauty parlors, and other spots along the way as well as the open street serve as "contact" places for men on the "make" and women willing "to take." Much of the prostitution, however, is of the incidental variety. The women are on the street to have a "good time," and

1. Institutionalized prostitution here refers to the operation of brothels or other emporia for that exclusive purpose.
if they can make a little "on the side," they are not averse to doing it. Not a small number of them make "sex settlements" for a bottle of beer, a drink of whiskey, or, perhaps, a sandwich. A popular saying in reference to this practice is: "If you can't say it with words, say it with whiskey, a language any "alley bat" can understand. Thus, when the boys go to the block to make the "great play" one of the prime essentials is to either have a "fifth" on hand or have access to one.

The incessant movement of the same people from one end of the street to the other makes for frequent, though often involuntary contacts. Thus in the course of an evening a visitor on the street may find himself face to face with the same person or persons on several occasions.

This makes for greater familiarity and provides a social climate in which one may assume relatively great liberty of expression in interpersonal relations. It gives license, so to speak, to make unsolicited advances on the other person without fear of reprisal. Thus the prostitute, whether professional or amateur, may "play" most any man on the block or may be "played" by most any man. Sex advances are common and often direct with minimum of the preliminary "subtleties." Some women play the block so long and often that they receive fabulous and legendary characterization. Many of them are given
"nicknames" by which they are known by the male habitués. Much time is whiled away by men who discuss the feats that some of these "angels of the alleys" or "pleasure peddlers" accomplish. One such character was known as the "snuff-dipper." It was rumored that she would "take on anybody, anywhere, for whatever he could spare."¹ Women of this type enjoy a certain kind of popularity in that everybody knows them and "picks on" them. Usually they are loud and boisterous and walk with what appears to be a studied rhythm designed to capture the attention of the men.

Most of the streetwalkers play a "lone wolf" game and depend almost entirely upon their own ingenuity in getting the attention of cash customers. However, some women carry on "wildcat" operations - using the services of "pimps" in soliciting men and also depending upon them for room facilities. Again, these operations are small - evidencing nothing of the type of organization found in large-scale prostitution. As in practically all "illicit" or shady practices found along the street, the idea was to

¹. Block opinion was that the "Snuff-dipper" had a "white liver" - meaning that she had an inordinate and unsatisfiable sex desire that stemmed from natural causes. It was generally agreed that she had "fun" making her dimes and quarters.
"make a living," with no apparent end-view of developing any big time racket.

The petty character of these quasi-underworld activities, together with the fact that so many street habitués participate in them in one form or the other, offer a part of the explanation of the lack of any organized attempt to stamp them out. It is generally conceded that these people must get along somehow, and if they can do it by harming none other than themselves, the tendency is to "let them." Thus a certain amount of freedom to engage in illegal activities adds up to a rather effective technique of social control. Many adjustments that the Negro street habitué makes by virtue of freedom to a limited amount or degree of illegal behavior within the circumscribed street area are, in a large sense, adjustments to the total situation as regards economic conflict between majority and minority groups. The competition for jobs on the lower class levels is actually more restricted than on others, since the segregated system does not produce for the Negro lower class a vested job interest as it does for the middle and upper class groups. Although the segregation of the races theoretically restricts the competition of Negro schoolteachers, ministers, doctors, and lawyers, for example, it at the same time operates toward the end of a monopoly for this
group and thus a vested interest.¹ It becomes advantageous for this group, therefore, to maintain the status quo.² Potential conflict in this instance hinges more around the matter of equal facilities than job opportunities. Job competition is, in the main, intra-racially defined. However, lower class Negroes, particularly those who are unskilled laborers - the majority - must compete with both Negroes and whites for jobs. The freedom of competition, of course, depends upon the variable of discrimination. To the extent that the factor of discrimination is constant, competition is restricted and job status is fixed.³ Occupationally, therefore, there is an ever present conflict situation involving lower class Negroes and lower class whites. The situation intensifies when jobs are scarce and the discriminatory practices become pronounced. In such instances Negroes are usually the first to be laid off or to have wage reductions.

¹ This is true to a much less extent for the Negro lawyer than the others named. It is taken for granted that a white lawyer in the South has a far better chance of winning a criminal case for a Negro client than a Negro lawyer.


³ For a discussion of "free competition versus fixed status" as a conceptual device for studying the economic conditions of Negroes in a Northern city, see St. Claire Drake and Horace R. Cayton, op. cit., pp. 757-60. See also Gunnar Myrdal, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 1079-80.
On the other hand, many voluntarily leave the job—preferring to "hustle" rather than work for below-subsistence pay. Limited job opportunities often operate against any adjustment within the larger economy. Having no legal recourse and lacking the support that comes through organized labor membership, many Negroes seek adjustment within the Negro community.¹ Much of the loitering, loafing, and "lollagagging," as well as the "hustling" in its varied forms and shades of meaning, may be considered adjustment devices rather than manifestations of lower class Negro or even "folk" Negro behavior per se.² The purely individualistic character of most of these activities seems to support such a contention. It is significant in this respect that Negroes of higher occupational qualifications, but having difficulties in finding satisfactory

1. Tobacco factory workers in both communities have in recent years been organized by the C.I.O. However, a great majority of Negro laborers do not have the benefit of the labor organization.

2. There is a tendency for some observers to write off such behavior as "nigger doings" or "nigger life," thus hanging on it the race traits label. This obviates any attempt to examine the phenomenon in terms of social causation.
job adjustments, find their way to the street and become a part of its shady machinations.\(^1\) These activities, though small scale, highly individualized, and for the most part unorganized, assume large proportions when analyzed in terms of the frequency of direct and indirect participation. The outsider is immediately inclined to view the street as an underworld. Observations of the quickness with which tempers flare, conflict situations develop, and aggressive acts occur, tend to strengthen such inclination. When the outsider becomes more conversant with the situation, however, he learns that what to him had been illegal, illicit, and immoral behavior is to a large number of the habitues just a matter of "making a living," "keeping alive," and "getting along somehow."

Playing the block involves the business of avoiding the arm of the law. Theoretically, it is risque behavior. The fact that the arm of the law is frequently too short

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1. Drake and Cayton discuss in great detail the operation of the "job ceiling" in Chicago in reference to Negro job opportunity. However, it was not uncommon for the ceiling to be crashed in certain instances in this Northern community. In the Southern community the ceiling is more rigid and resistant to crash. Custom, tradition, and the law operate to the disadvantage of the Negro. Thus the Negro business graduate, to use one example, unable to get a job in a local high school or college or with a Negro insurance company, finds himself with little hope of employment in his specialty. Not only is there a ceiling, there is exclusion.
has more real than apparent significance for the economic adjustment for a segment of the Negro population in the Southern urban situation. The fact that the arm of the law does not reach as far as it could or as far as it might reduces the probability of apprehension and thus redefines the behavior. Consequently, playing the block becomes a part of the general pattern of permissive behavior characteristic of the street area.
CHAPTER VI

STREET AND STATUS

Although men and women from all strata in the class structure of the Negro community may be found among the habitual street population, the standards of conduct and the criteria by which the worth of the individual in any given social situation or relationship is adjudged, have a definite lower class patterning.\(^1\) Moreover, this patterning is ordered toward the lower end of this class and embraces something of the value organization of the Negro "folk" as well as the social category often referred to as the "underworld."\(^2\)

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2. No hard and fast line, it appears, can be drawn between the "folk:" Negro, "underworld" Negro, and lower-class Negroes as observed in the two communities. As a matter of fact, it is seldom that one sees, except in isolated instances, examples of the old "slavery-time" Negro. Apparently he has just about disappeared from the urban scene. Undoubtedly this is not equally true of the rural areas, however.
The values and life organization of the street habitues are closely interrelated with the bare necessity of living—of surviving. Thus they are oriented more toward present demands and exigencies than to future prospects and expectations. "Here today and gone tomorrow" is more than a "catchy" phrase; it is a life theme, the meaning of which is implicated daily in the uncertain and thus insecure positions held in reference to members of their own as well as other groups. Thus there is a tendency to "catch as catch can" and to value the "bird in the hand" more than the "two in the bush." Out of this struggle to "live while there is yet life," emerges a set of values and meanings which are at great variance with those of the larger dominant society. Such middle class virtues as "respectability," "decency," and "refinement" become useless abstractions, since they cannot be applied with practicable benefits to the struggle. In determining the desirability or undesirability of any special behavior, answers to questions such as these are sought: Will it add up to more dollars and cents in my pocket? Will it put more food on my table? Does it mean more and better clothes on my back? Will it repair the leaks in my roof? What immediate material gains are there for me? Success is viewed in terms of money and the things that money can buy. Standards of
conduct have meaning only when they have tangible relationships with such ends. Since there is no penalty, in this respect, for what to the larger community constitutes "bad" or objectionable behavior, and no reward for what comprises "good" or desirable behavior, the tendency is to favor the former. Being "bad" at least means freedom to "raise hell" and to "have a good time."

As has been indicated, "raising hell" and "having a good time" constitute for the habitue's a wide range of sociable and aggressive behavior. Promenading, joking, arguing, drinking, bantering, being "loud," gambling, fighting, "making love," and just "messing around doing nothing in particular and everything in general," round

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1. "... It is only when a system of cultural values extols, virtually above all else, certain common symbols of success for the population at large while its social structure rigorously restricts or completely eliminates access to approved modes of acquiring these symbols for a considerable part of the same population, that anti-social behavior ensues on a considerable scale. In other words, our egalitarian ideology denies by implication the existence of non-competing groups and individuals in the pursuit of pecuniary success. The same body of success symbols is held to be desirable for all. These goals are held to transcend class lines, not to be bounded by them, yet the actual social organization is such that there exists class differentials in the accessibility of these common success-symbols..." Robert K. Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie," in Logan Wilson and William L. Kolb, Sociological Analysis (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), p. 778. See footnote 17 (Ibid) in which the role of the Negro is considered of theoretical interest in this respect. See also Joseph D. Lohman, "The Participant Observer in Community Studies," American Sociological Review, 1937, Vol. 2, pp. 890-98.
out the greater part of the pattern. Within this pattern, however, the habitué struggles for self-assertion, while at the same time he attempts to conform to the habits and customs which gain the approval of his fellows. The effort for self-assertion undoubtedly explains much of the noise, "fuss," and boisterousness that characterize even the smallest groupings.\(^1\) The strain on the part of each individual to ascend over the other is an observable factor in their conversations, in their joking relationships, in gambling, and in other sociable relations as well as in aggressive types of interpersonal interaction such as "arguing," playing the dozens, "fussing" and "razzing."

The Dynamics of Street Status: The criteria by which the "measure of the man" is determined in street society are defined in terms of what he does and his ability to do it at the particular time. One derives his status on the basis of actual and not potential performance.\(^2\) Moreover,

\(^1\) Negroes who are quiet and submissive and who "fumble" for words when in contact with white persons may become amazingly loud, self-assertive, and loquacious when in the company of other Negroes.

he maintains it only by continued performance. It is not important, for example, how much education one has, rather, how smart he is and how well he can translate his knowledge at the moment into practicable benefits for himself and others. Likewise, the fact of one's occupation, of his family background, and of other factors which carry arbitrary weight in the larger society, mean little in the street habitus's evaluation of the individual's worth. Honors, labels, citations and other paraphernalia indicative of personal merit have meaning only to the extent they are implemented by the proper behavior.

On the street the "axes of life"1 - compounded in the general pattern of "raising hell" and "having a good time" - make up the "reference points" for the achievement of status. Within this pattern every individual competes with every other individual, and to the extent that any one is able to demonstrate his superiority, he is accorded

1. This term was used by Samuel M. Strong to portray the principal interests of the Negroes of Chicago's Bronzeville. It was used for the same purpose, with some modifications by St. Claire Drake and Horace R. Cayton in their descriptions of the same community. (Cf. Samuel M. Strong, "The Social Type Method: Social Types in the Negro Community of Chicago," unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1940) referred to in Drake and Cayton, op. cit., p. 385.
all the rights and privileges pertaining to his achieved position. It matters little what one does or how one does it as long as there is superlative performance.¹

A "King in His Own Right": It is important for status to be "known to do" something, regardless of the thing that one does. Thus the individual in one way or the other finds himself a "king in his own right," and he defends his position continuously by attempting to "live up" to what others expect of him and to what, in time, he comes to expect of himself.

One can select at random any number of cases illustrative of this phenomenon. There is the case of "Big Mack," for instance. He had the reputation of being one of the "baddest" men not only on the block but in town. It was common knowledge that Big Mack would fight at the "drop of a hat" and that he would "kill a bastard in a minute." More than one man and woman had felt either the

¹. This is not to suggest that there is no limit to what is tolerated in the individual's behavior. While it is considered desirable, for instance, that a man drink his whiskey "straight" and in large quantities, to get drunk is to gain the stigma of not being able to "hold his liquor." This is significant for one's status in the "whiskey-drinking relationship." However, getting drunk and "falling out" may gain one considerable recognition and for the individual there may be a false sense of status.
point of his "blade" or the weight of his fists or, perhaps, both at the same time.¹ The number of times Big Mack had been "on the road" was only mildly indicative of the number of people he had "beat up" or "cut up" at one time or the other. In spite of his destructive tendencies, however, Big Mack enjoyed considerable prestige and had the admiration as well as "respect" of many of the "better class" of people in the community. Furthermore, a person of higher class status found it to his advantage to "know and to be known by" men like Big Mack if he were given to frequent "excursions" of a shady nature into the street area. To have a man like him say "he's all right" was to have a protection better than law enforcement.

¹ "Ask any Chambers County nigger about Wade Finley and he will keep his mouth shut unless he knows and trusts you. If you can get him to talk, he will tell you that Wade Finley is a bad nigger. Ask any white man and he will tell you Wade is the best nigger in the county - a real white man's nigger - the highest compliment he can bestow upon him... "It is a long time since Wade Finley killed his first nigger, and no one seems to know just what it was about. He said it was in self defense, and old man Huckaby and a lot of his friends testified that Wade was a good hard working boy, so the judge let him go. Chambers County niggers were afraid of him after that and he had and still has a great power over them." Carl Carmer, Stars Fell On Alabama (New York, 1934) quoted in John Dollard, op. cit., p. 283.
agents could ever give.\footnote{1} What is important for the status of men like Big Mack, however, is not the fact that they have been "bad niggers," rather, that they are "bad niggers." Thus there is the drive to do those things which tend to reinforce and strengthen the position they temporarily hold, which, in this case, means continuously and deliberately inviting trouble and encouraging situations in which they exhibit their physical prowess.\footnote{2}

Jail, road, and penitentiary records have little or no effects on the status of the "bad nigger." As a

\footnote{1. There seemed little inclination on the part of the so-called "bad niggers" to become leaders. Although they have many potential followers, they are for the most part lone wolf operators.}

\footnote{2. The exploits of the "bad nigger" can be followed to some extent in the arrest record as reported in the daily press. Such characters usually have a "nickname" and are referred to by such in the report. Negroes arrested are distinguished from whites in all reports. Over a period of time one becomes used to seeing certain names repeated in the arrests list. Not only does this illustrate recidivism in criminal behavior, but it is indicative of the leniency on the part of the courts with certain kinds of behavior among Negroes. The fact that the "bad nigger" is around so often is proof enough of the license he has to follow his trade. The "bad nigger" must be distinguished from the "bluff." The latter type seldom goes to the extreme forms of aggression. He blows off a lot and puts up a "bad front" which pays off where the other fellow is weak and easily given to fear.}
matter of fact, reference is made to one's having such a sentence as though it were no more than a short vacation to a pleasure resort. However, upon his return, he must be prepared to resume his old ways or forfeit the position held on their bases. In some instances "parties" are "pitched" by friends of the man or woman who has returned from the road or from prison. Such "hero" welcomes are characterized by a great deal of drinking and "swapping" of jail experiences. It is difficult to find an individual in groups of this type who have not spent some time in jail for one thing or another. News spreads quickly that "so and so" is "out," and his return to the old haunts and habits is taken as a matter of course.

"Drinking Mash and Talking Trash: In addition to such anti-social behavior as is characteristic of the "bad nigger" type, status on the street is sought through excessive drinking, sex exploits, and most any type of overt behavior which is attractive of considerable attention.

In "status drinking" the objective is to gain the reputation of being able to "kill" large quantities of
alcohol\(^1\) without showing too many ill effects. Thus it is a source of pride for one to know that others regard him or her as a "whiskey-drinking-son-of-a gun." In fact, how much alcohol a particular person consumes in the course of a drinking session is a frequent subject of corner conversation and may often be the cause of much debate as to who can drink the most in that particular group. In many such instances a "collection" is ultimately taken,\(^2\) and enough whiskey or other types of alcoholic drinks are purchased to test the relative drinking abilities. When somebody "pitches" a party for the "gang," the success of it is invariably measured in terms of the number of "pints" or "fifths" or "jars" of "juice" on hand. On the participant level, a good time is had if one got "good and tight."

The problem of drinking among the street habitues may, in one sense, be viewed as a part of the general

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1. Alcohol, like the proverbial gold, is "where you find it." Some find it in beer and wine and whiskey and gin. Others are content, if need be, with shoe polish, bay rum, and canned heat. Of course, time, place, circumstances, and financial condition - as well as special tastes, are selective factors.

2. "Chipping in" to "get one" is the usual procedure when funds are short.
American drinking "problem." This is particularly true when approached from the standpoint of individual consumption. It is generally conceded that a large part of the American public, in addition to drinking for purposes of having a "good time" - at least there is this delusion - also drink for purposes of escape. Such escape may be from the rigors of the day's work, the frustrations resulting from the inability to solve some personal difficulty, or from other conditions peculiar to the individual's particular life organization.1 Drinking among Negro street habitues, in addition to these and the status factor considered, suggests a sort of escape of people en masse from a common problem - one which is both determined and defined by the same social conditions which have selected them as a special category. Not being able to conceptualize the common problem and give it verbal expression, prerequisites for the analysis and formulation of a program of action toward the end of eliminating the difficulty, they seek escape in drinking without knowing that they are escaping or, if they do, why they are escaping. Thus drinking becomes more

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or less continuous behavior and becomes integrated into the life scheme of the people.

Sex and Status: Not all sex activity along the street is traceable to biological or pecuniary motives. Much of it is undoubtedly motivated by the desire for status. Many women who frequent the street would seldom, if ever, get the attention of the men were it not for their reputation as being "easy virtue." They become reputable characters on the basis of their sex prowess. Most of this type are proud of their attainments in the art of sex performance and, on occasions, are extremely articulate on the matter. One woman, who was of the highest priced prostitutes in the community, remarked once that she "gave away a thousand dollars in sex" before she knew now "valuable" she was. Although not all women have such high regard for their sexual worth, many of them are aware of the fact that it is what they "have" that begets the male, and it is upon this "redeeming" feature that they place their hopes for his companionship. Possessing few of the external
"desirables" such as "good hair,"1 "light complexions,"
and general good looks which so often stimulates the
initial advance in men, these women compensate by making
sexy capers, using loud and profane language, dressing
in an ostentatious manner, and generally behaving in ways
suggestive of the fact they are "hot mamas."2 Women
in this category may be seen walking down the street
"hugged up" with the men, and, in most respects, they en-
joy the type of sex freedom which, in the larger culture,

1. By "good hair" is usually meant straight or cur-
ly hair that doesn't need the constant attention of the
"hairdresser." Bluntly put, it is hair which more ap-
proaches what they call "white folk's hair." This is an-
other instance which points to the single standard of
Negro-white race attitudes in the American culture. If
placed on a continuum, on one extremity would be white-
ness and the "desirable traits" related to it, while on
the other end would be darkness and the "undesirable
traits" so associated. The importance of these distinc-
tions are not nearly so great for the Negro man as for
the Negro women when in reference to self-appraisal, but
they are of equal or greater importance in appraising
the opposite sex. For a summary of Negro attitudes to-
ward color as revealed in a series of studies conducted
and prepared for the American Youth Commission, see
(Robert L. Sutherland, op. cit., pp. 61-64)

2. "The outward markings and physical manifestations
of the positive self-feeling have been indicated: Hold-
ing the head high, stepping high, throwing back the head
and shoulders, strutting, or on the other hand, walking
in a wanton, reckless swagger, and general bumptiousness;
gesticulating, being puffed up with conceit, attempts to
attract attention - bluff in all its forms." (Howard
Odum, op. cit., pp. 580-61.)
is considered the exclusive prerogative of the male.

The drive for status through sex exploits is not a trait peculiar to the woman, however. Many of the men, who otherwise seem to have little to offer, enjoy considerable prestige because of their "power with the women." They are the idols of women and the envy of other men because of their "known" abilities as sex partners. "Ability" as a sex partner in the majority of references means the matter of "staying power" or quality of endurance on the part of the male.¹ Sex aggression on the part of these men is direct with a minimum of "preliminaries." Among women who take their sex life as they take the other essentials of living there is no place for men who are concerned with the "non-essential and trifling" details of the "pet" and the "work-up." The "Casanova" of the more "respectable" elements of the society would undoubtedly find it difficult to interest such women and, no doubt, would be the

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¹ Repeated observations of sex conversation emphasized this factor, which is in contradiction to many of the early and heavily biased accounts of sex prowess among Negro males. These accounts emphasized the inequate size of the genitalia and attributed to the Negro almost supernatural power in the sex relation. Among this class of people, however, sex life is hard and "raw." Emphasis is placed on the physical act and relatively little attention given to the ceremonies and rituals that precede and accompany more "sophisticated" relations.
loser in any competition with men of comparable sex attitudes.

Other Status-Getting Devices: Perhaps one of the first things that attracts the attention of even the most casual street observer is the open and rather flamboyant character of the salutatory behavior. There is a tendency for every person to greet every other person that he knows, and oftentimes those that he does not know, as though he is a long lost friend and as if he is so happy to see him that "die he would." The fact that considerable physical space may separate the parties in question has little or no bearing on the greeting, either in language or gesture. The behavior takes on the aspects of "clowning," and though undoubtedly it is a form of sociability, it is at the same time a device for attracting attention.\(^1\) Some of the habitues call it "noting." A great deal of the noise and fanfare so definitive of the street may be attributed to the excessive amount of salutatory conversation.

Then there are the "cats" who either stand on the corners and curbs and "signify" by making subtle and

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\(^1\) "Clowning" is not used here in the sense used when referring to the Negro in a similar role in the presence of some white people. In this respect it is a form of accommodation, since it reduces the probability of a conflict situation.
suggestive remarks to and about persons passing by or parade up and down the street in automobiles which usually have excessive ornamentation or some other feature which is designed to make them more "attractive." Racing or "gunning" the motors, making fast "get-offs" with open exhaust, skidding around the corners, braking on a "dime," and "tooting" the horns are some of the mechanisms employed for attention.¹ These are the "sharpies" of the street - individuals who put great stress on their dress and who go around with that "important look."²

There are, of course, a great number of "characters" of various descriptions who cannot be placed in any particular category. Many of them are "deviants" - cases that perhaps should be committed to some mental institution. Although their behavior is attractive of attention,

¹. Drake and Cayton comment about lower class Negroes trying to be mobile "in their overt behavior" and indicate the possibility of studying such behavior in order to arrive at the meaning of 'middle-classness' to lower class people. (Black Metropolis, p. 789)

². "... They have a bearing of their whole body, a way of looking cheeky and talking coolly, and a general recklessness about their own and others' personal security and property, which gives one a feeling that carelessness, asociality, and fear have reached their zenith. In some cities they are known in the Negro community by the appropriate epithet 'cats.' (Gunnar Myrdal, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 763). See also Donald Young, op. cit., pp. 272-73.
it is doubtful whether such attention has meaning for them. In all probability they would continue their ways if there were no audience. Notable among this group are the religious zealots who sing and pray and preach on the corners. Rounding out the picture are the various types of sexual perverts, and other "queer" folk who find their way to the street where they discover, in time, a permissive atmosphere in which they can, so to speak, "take the lid off" impulses which otherwise must be inhibited. Although doubtful of the extent of toleration on the part of other and different persons on the street, such types have an affinity for one another. In their own way, these individuals seek their self-assurance, and, in doing so, they compete with all other habitues for status and prestige.

One cannot divorce the external and generally extrovertive character of the Negro's behavior on the street from the feelings of inadequacy and resultant frustrations which develop out of the uneven competition and losing struggle for security in the larger culture.¹ The psychic pain which internal fears and worries and anxieties engender, becomes alleviated through the reckless abandon,

¹. This is not to suggest that only the Negro is frustrated in the competition for security. In addition to other minority groups, such frustrations cut across class lines. In this instance there is no respect of race.
which the larger society tolerates and passively encourages, as long as it is confined within predetermined socio-physical limits.

Escape for the street habitué, in time, becomes organized into specific patterns of behavior which, as has been indicated, tends to fall within the general pattern of "raising hell" and "having a good time." Characteristic of the interpersonal interaction within these behavior categories is continuous competition for status and for self-assertion. Implicit in such continuity is much of the definition of the dynamics of Negro street life in general.

1. "...Frustration and thwarted aspiration lead to the search for avenues of escape from a culturally induced intolerable situation; or unrelieved ambition may eventuate in illicit attempts to acquire the dominant values. The American stress on pecuniary success and ambitiousness for all thus invites exaggerated anxieties, hostilities, neuroses, and anti-social behavior." (Robert K. Merton, op. cit., p. 778.

2. It is to this factor that must be attributed much of the antagonism and violence that frequently develops from originally cooperative efforts for sociable intercourse.
CHAPTER VII

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT - A CONCLUSION

The institutional structure of the Negro main streets of both Winston-Salem and Durham reflect very largely the nature and direction of restrictive policies in regard to the participation of Negroes in the social and economic life of the main street areas of the larger dominant communities. Thus there is a preponderance of those business enterprises and other institutions from which the Negro is either totally excluded in the larger community or in which his patronage or participation carries certain reservations defined by his subordinate status in the social system.\(^1\) It is significant for the behavior characteristic of the Negro street that those enterprises within the larger community, in which the most rigid policies of exclusion and discrimination are practiced, are those which have to do with eating, drinking, sleeping, amusement and recreation, and with certain special personal

\(^1\) See Appendix IV, pp. 169.
services.1

When the Negro shopper goes "to town"—that is, to the central business district of the larger community—he experiences little difficulty in buying most of the commodities he desires. In the dispensation of goods, as well as services of the less personal type, the majority of enterprises in the larger main business section make little distinction because of color.2 Thus by competing for the patronage of the Negro shopper in certain areas, on the one hand, and excluding and restricting it, on the other hand, the dominant business section fosters the growth of a separate business district in the Negro community and at the same time helps define the nature of its dominant institutions.

Whether in Durham or Winston-Salem, therefore, when the Negro goes to the main Negro street he finds himself surrounded by such enterprises as restaurants, wine and

1. Reference is made here to such personal service institutions as barber shops, beauty salons, and shining parlors.

2. This is not to say that the Negro gets all the courtesies given majority group patronage. Neither does it mean that all of the enterprises are solicitous of Negro business. The point is that he can find places from which he can buy most of the commodities needed.
beer taverns, poolrooms, movie houses, small hotels and 
rooming houses, barber shops and beauty parlors, drug 
and sundry shops, and various other similar establish-
ments. These institutions constitute the matrix around 
which much of the sociable activity of the Negro commun-
ity is organized and define to a very great degree its 
public character.

The quality and range of goods and the organization 
of services and facilities provided in the great majority 
of the institutions are oriented to the value system of 
the lower class; and although class lines are not sharply 
drawn in the matter of patronage and participation, it 
is this class that provides the bulk of the participat-
ing population.

Whatever may be said in the way of explanation of 
the special significance that the street has for its 
habitués, the conclusion is unavoidable that it envelops 
a way of life defined not so much by those who participate 
in and share it, as by those who do not. The tendency on 
the part of the law enforcement agencies to permit a wide 
range of shady and illegal social and economic activity, 
the leniency on the part of the courts in disposing of 
many petty criminal cases involving Negroes only, and 
the more or less apathetic and indifferent attitudes of 
the larger, as well as a part of the Negro community,
help determine and define it. These factors designate
the street area, in effect, as one of special permission.
Within this environment - relatively free from the restric-
tions and taboos of the dominant moral order - the habitue'
gets a sense of belonging and a greater feeling of person-
al worth. This is evident in the self-assertiveness that
characterizes much of his behavior. On the street, he is
ready to laugh, play, and have fun. He is equally prepared
to feud, fuss, and fight. This tendency to run the emo-
tional gauntlet from sociability to aggression is defini-
tive of many interpersonal relationships. For a part of
the solution to the paradox of the feelings of security
as indicated in sociability and those of insecurity as
indicated in aggressive behavior, it seems necessary to
examine the relationship between the Negro and the major-
ity community. Undoubtedly much of the aggressive behavior
typical of the lower class Negro in the Southern urban en-
vironment is conditioned by the nature of contact with
whites in the superordinate-subordinate relationship in
which he is forced into the accommodative role. Whether
he likes it or not, he must accept and respect the au-
thoritative position of the majority group members who
determine most of the conditions under which he must
work and who make and enforce the laws. But there is al-
most immediate hostility toward any and all expressions
of authority where the dominant white factor is no longer present. In another sense, the informality of the Negro's behavior toward other Negroes may be regarded as an expression of resentment of the formality and the etiquette required in his relations with members of the majority group.

Another consideration in connection with the paradox of conviviality and camaraderie, on the one hand, and hostility and aggression, on the other hand, so extant in Negro street life, is the fact that every Negro tends to regard every other Negro as "just another Negro." The implication is that when it come to the judgement of the majority group, which holds the power, there is no significant distinction made. Thus on the street every Negro tends to regard himself as the equal of every other Negro. Where superiority is accepted in any case, it must be perpetually proved; it is never taken for granted. This is indicated by the ease with which any Negro can become a part of the life of the street if he accepts its standards and wants to participate. It is also indicated in the tendency of individuals, when conflict situations arise, to disregard completely any superficial claim to personal inviolability.

Within the street area each individual tends to be unconcerned with public opinion and sets the limitations and boundaries of his own behavior. Inside his ego-centered
world he finds little time either to be concerned with what the other fellow is doing or to worry about the social consequences of his own acts. Insofar as these individual worlds find common points of endeavor and interest, situations of sociability develop; to the extent that the definition of interest and endeavor of any one individual contradicts that of another, situations of conflict arise. In the latter instances, aggressive behavior is facilitated, even encouraged, by the relative absence of legal rules and regulations which induce restraint in one's behavior and which coerce conformity to accepted standards of conduct. Whatever their personal differences, however, the Negroes are, where the majority community is concerned, both jealous and protective of the sort of freedom thus permitted. There is cooperation and mutual assistance in practically all matters pertaining to the preservation of this singular advantage.

Thus if one would seek something of the answer to the mystery of how many Negroes in the urban South adjust to many of the frustrating circumstances that are the inevitable result of the limited participation in the social and economic life of the larger community, it is suggested that a good part of that answer can be found in a close examination of the phenomenon of the street. There the Negro finds music and laughter and free, relaxed conversation;
there he puts his foot on the rail of a bar, places a bet, and finds a sex partner. If his living conditions at home are unbearable, or, if he has no home, on the street he discovers a suitable parlor, bedroom and sink. If he is "broke and hungry" or "down and out," there he makes a "contact," pulls a "deal," and makes a "great play." If, as he often summarizes, he wants a place to "have a good time" and "raise hell," the street affords that also, and significant for the behavior involved in the process is the knowledge on his part that nobody really "gives a damn."

It is significant for the status and condition of the race relations in Durham and Winston-Salem in particular and, it is suggested, in the urban South generally, that the majority group recognizes the fact that much of the behavior characteristic of the Negro main street is accommodative. It is an effort, often unconscious, by a segment of the Negro population to make adjustment to conditions greatly resulting from the restrictions and penalties the social system imposes on them. It is important in this connection that the street be viewed as

1. The point is to be emphasized that much of the sex activity on the street, particularly in respect to women, involves considerations of status and prestige as well as those of a biological and economic nature.
a cultural and not a racial phenomenon. On the one hand, the public character of the life of Negroes on the street encourages the type of categorical thinking—race thinking in this case—which supports policies that restrict and exclude them from equal participation in the larger culture. On the other hand, these policies force the conditions which define the street as a significant phenomenon.

Within this public world, as much the creation of the majority which lives outside of it as the minority which shares it, the nature of the adjustment that the Negro makes depends very largely on the extent, at any particular time, that the larger controls are applied. To the degree there are no controls, the Negro "problem" turns inward and race relations are accordingly "good." The street in this sense exhibits a sort of "organized disorganization" in which the Negro finds expression and adjustment and into which the majority group "unloads" a potential "problem." "No control" for the one group thus becomes a form of social control for the other. This undoubtedly explains something of the delusion of many white southerners that there is no "Negro problem."

It is suggested, then, that were the larger community to invoke the full weight of the legal and moral codes by which it governs its own conduct, without at the same time
permitting the Negro a wider range and greater intensity of participation within the social and economic life of the community, the "problem" would accordingly turn outward, and race relations would in proportion become "bad."

Neither in Durham nor Winston-Salem are there any great changes indicated in the above respect. Thus an element of the Negro population will continue to seek the street, and it will persist as a significant phenomenon in their lives.

How long it will persist appears more a matter of decision for the majority than for the minority group.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX I

FAMOUS NEGRO STREETS AND CORNERS IN
TWENTY-FOUR SELECTED URBAN COMMUNITIES

1. Atlanta, Ga., Auburn Avenue
2. Atlantic City, New Jersey, Kentucky and Arctic Avenues
3. Baltimore, Md., Pennsylvania Avenue
4. Chattanooga, Tenn., Ninth Street
5. Charleston, West Va., Court Street
6. Charlotte, North Carolina, First and McDowell
7. Chicago, Ill., 47th and South Parkway
8. Columbus, Ohio, Mount Vernon Avenue
9. Dayton, Ohio, West Fifth Street
10. Durham, North Carolina, Fayetteville-Pettigrew Streets
11. Kansas City, Mo., 18th and Vine
12. Little Rock, Ark., Ninth Street
13. Los Angeles, Calif., Central Avenue
14. Louisville, Ky., Sixth and Walnut Streets
15. Memphis, Tenn., Beale Street
16. New Orleans, La., Basin - Ramparts Streets
17. New York, N.Y., St. Nicholas Avenue
18. Norfolk, Va., Church Street
19. Philadelphia, Pa., South Street
20. Pittsburgh, Pa., Wylie Avenue
21. Richmond, Va., Second Street
22. Tulsa, Okla., Greenwood Avenue.
23. Washington, D.C., "U" Street
24. Wilson, North Carolina, Nash Street
APPENDIX II

A GLOSSARY OF THE STREET

General References to Other Negroes

homes  ziggs  zighaboos
jigs   smokes  terrapins
colored people  niggers  my people
colored folks  your people  neds
shines  native sons  coons
Sam     spades    boots
       Old Mose

Special References to Negro Men

blue Jesus  husk mo'  tarbaby
red         chocolate  black boy
dusty       ace      jet
snow ball   blue juice shine
snake       blue     red-eye
            monkey

Special References to Negro Women

clinker top  brittle head  drag
 tack         after hours  night fighter
mamma tan    watt        snow and blow
alley bat    yaller gal  brown
              thousand watt

Significant Meanings of Women's Names

watt - light colored girl
thousand watt - very fair girl
snow and blow - light skinned girl with straight hair
mamma tan - light brown skinned woman
clinker top, tack, brittle head - nappy headed women
alley bat, night fighter, after hours - loose and carefree
woman of the street
drag - ugly, sorry looking, not much to offer
flush - money in the pocket
getting (his or her) kicks - having fun; getting personal satisfaction out of a particular act.

great play - the move or act that is designed to bring about a greatly anticipated effect. It may be a great effort to win a girl, a pot of money, a pool game, or some other object.

handkerchief head - an Uncle Tom Negro; a timid Negro, one who is afraid of or worships white people.

illigit - illegal

jiving - subtle and interesting, yet nonetheless untruthful sayings calculated to win someone over to a particular point of view; telling white lies.

jonah - a nemesis; one who brings bad luck

jumping - heightened activity at a dance, club, party or some other place where an effort is being made to have a good time.

knocking one - consuming the entire contents of a bottle of whiskey or wine or some other alcoholic beverage.

laying it - doing a good job.

lollagagging - loafing; hanging around; doing nothing.

noting - attracting attention to one's self by devious ways of looking and acting.

old lady - a wife; a girl friend; a woman who lives with a man illegally.

on the dime - on the spot; in a small space, usually referred to when dancing slowly and close together in one place.

on the make - attempting to interest the man or woman in one's ideas, usually of a sexual nature.

on the water wagon - a temporary cessation of alcohol consumption; a period of varying length when the person refuses a drink of any sort.

pads - places to go for illegal sex activity.
pitching a bitch - having a good time; accomplishing one's purpose.

pleasure peddler - a woman of easy virtue.

propositioning - the logic by which a man attempts to gain consent of a potential sex partner.

ranch - a movie house that specializes in cowboy pictures.

right - a person who has the approval of the group.

rolling - working.

rug cutting - dancing.

rubber - an automobile.

sapsucker - a man.

shooter - a drink of whiskey; a swig; a cutter.

signifying - subtle and suggestive ways of acting and looking, and talking in reference to another person designed to put him on the spot or to make him self-conscious; attracting attention to one's self; noting.

stump hole - green and illegal white whiskey, usually made with molasses and under unsanitary conditions.

the figure - the number in the total receipts of some metropolitan race track which determines whether a person playing the number has won or made a hit.

the law - the police.

thirty-eight and two - inebriated; feeling the effects of alcohol; high; tipsy; almost drunk.

To "git" one - to purchase a bottle of liquor.

To swear by - to stamp as of good quality; approving; verifying as being all right.

up the country - in the North; up North; North of Washington, D.C.

weeds - marijuana cigarettes; reefer.
white light'ning - white whiskey of more than a hundred proof and usually having less than a month of age; stump hole.

wine bender - a person who has an inordinate desire for wine, usually of the cheap, synthetic variety; a wine-head.
APPENDIX III

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THE STREET IN OTHER COMMUNITIES

Rocky Mount, N. C.

"The name of the street in Rocky Mount where the colored people hang out is Edgecomb and Thomas. The corner is known as Douglass Corner. Negroes hang out there because they have more freedom. They can drink and carry on with ease, because in that section the police is not too strict. Also most of the colored 'joints' are on that street. I think the two colored theaters on that street draw a large crowd."

Kansas City, Kans.

"The big street in my town is North 15th. Because of a theater, pool halls, taverns, etc., the majority of the "boots" in K. C. K. (Kansas City, Kansas) hang around this street. Those loitering around at all times are seeking some activity in which they can pass the time away. Here we find everything from shoplifters to murderers. Not only do we find petty thieves but also middle class Negroes. At all times the street is patrolled by uniformed and plain-clothes policemen who really earn their money. Nightly someone is either murdered or put in the hospital. You take it from here."

Greensboro, N. C.

"In my town the street of streets is East Market. I think the people hang out on this street because that is the main street for Negroes to have fun as they call it by getting drunk, fighting, using profane language. If they should go to the main street down town, they are on their best behavior. Then, too, people hang out on Market because of wine stores, gambling houses, number racket, and drinking white whiskey, because of no whiskey stores in the county."
New Rochelle, New York

"The street in which you find a large number of Negroes hanging around is named Lincoln Avenue. In my opinion the persons who congregate on Lincoln Avenue are not doing so for the same reason that they would be if they were on Main Street. Barber shops, drug stores, whiskey stores, taxi stands, saloons, grocery stores, beauty parlors, poolrooms and 'fronts' constitute the major institutions of the street. In the working hours you may find all classes of people on the Avenue. Some of them are on missions of a business nature, and some of them are awaiting the number return, while others are just loafing. At night you usually find the young jitterbugs, be-boppers, wine benders, dope fiends and, of course, middle class persons. The prostitutes may be found in the saloons, and the dope peddlers may be found in the poolhalls. These persons could not act as they do if they were on Main Street.

Whiteville, N. C.

"Mill Street is a street of juke joints, cafes, poolrooms, barber shops, and a few homes where one can always find a crowd of Negroes. They seem to feel free to express themselves in any way they wish with profanity, vulgarity, etc. The women are those who are sloppily dressed, hair disarranged, and are mostly the loud, dirty, alcoholic type. They dance in a more savage manner than the usual conventional way. They become intoxicated, and everyone seems to be having a good time in this state. There you will find pickpockets, bootleggers, prostitutes, etc. The street is always crowded, and persons will not move if you should try to drive a car through if they do not wish to. There are always knife fights, killings, etc. The police uses the let alone theory more or less. They do not bother them except in case of murder, etc."
Clarksville, Va.

"The street where most of the Negroes assemble is Commerce Street. I think most of the Negroes get together to have a good time. On such occasions they meet to indulge in drinking, gambling and talking over the problems existing in the town. I don't think this would take place so frequently on the main street for fear of the police force. The police do not go around this street too often, but when they do they usually arrest a number of people for misbehavior such as above, including fighting.

Atlanta, Georgia

"... I made a tour of the night clubs along Atlanta's Auburn Avenue, operated by Negroes with the connivance of the white police. They were dismal and foul-smelling and undoubtedly contributed to juvenile delinquency - but they were doing a jumping business, because in spite of Atlanta's Blue Laws, they were allowed to sell whiskey. I saw four unescorted girls in one, not more than fourteen years of age, with a quart of corn on their table, imbibing until they were limp with drunkenness, and every man who passed fondled them salaciously. The place is considered Atlanta's smartest Negro night club.

"I visited one operated on a shabby second floor loft. Before you could climb the stairs to the club proper, a white doorman met you at the street entrance - in this case he was a lieutenant of Atlanta's police. This white gentleman was wearing his uniform and badge - but clearly he was there to protect the club's business interests. He frisked every Negro patron who entered the niterary, searching for guns, knives and whiskey. But once you were upstairs, you were compelled to buy the house whiskey, which incidentally was vile stuff. The place, I learned from a performer who had to go to City Hall to get his pay-checks, was owned by a white policeman, who incidentally tossed back some of his profits to the Negro community by maintaining a slant-eyed colored mistress." (Roi Ottley, "There's New Hope For The South," Negro Digest, August, 1939, Vol. VII, p. 12)
Raleigh, N. C.

"Hargett Street is the street where most Negroes go in my home town. They do not go on the street necessarily to trade or shop, because the majority of the people, which are primarily men, are just standing in groups talking or watching people pass. Probably the drug store, pool room, printing office, movies, photo shops and the few businesses run by colored on this street draw the crowd. Actually it isn't a shopping center. However, some goods are purchased from the businesses on this street. It is more a center of attraction which has a tendency to draw people.

Memphis, Tennessee

"Perhaps one of the most moving indications of how Beale Streeters feel about these increasingly 'panicky times' is the gist of a recent conversation during which a curbstone 'economist' found himself a comfortable spot in Handy's Park, and proceeded to diagnose the ills of the country.

"He was a more or less typical Beale street 'character.'" That is, he obviously formed hard and fast opinions ... which he loudly proclaimed to all comers. All he used to form his views was what he read in the newspapers, heard over the radio, and remembered from the Bible. And that made him an authority.... the techniques of scientific research and intensive formal training, notwithstanding. You've seen the type no doubt." (Nat D. Williams, "Down On Beale," The Pittsburgh Courier, Saturday, July 23, 1949. p. 17.)
APPENDIX IV

STATISTICAL TABLES

Table I

Classification of Main Negro Street Front Commercial Enterprises, Durham, N. C.

January, 1949

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Enterprise</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants and Taverns</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery and Meat Markets</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty Shops</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barber Shops</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning and Pressing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe Repair Shops</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pool Rooms</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shining Parlors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels and Rooms</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Stores</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Stations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theaters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record Shops</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture Stores</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total                          | 96     | 99.9     |

1. Limited to ground-floor establishments on Fayetteville and Pettigrew between Glen and Pine-Roxboro Streets.

a  Include Sundry Shops

b  Included as a feature of the "Sport Shop" in Durham
### Table II

Classification of Main Negro Street Front Commercial Enterprises, Winston-Salem, N.C.

February, 1949

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Enterprise</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants and Taverns</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty Shops</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barber Shops</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery and Meat Markets</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pool Rooms</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning and Pressing Shops</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe Repair Shops</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shining Parlors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Shops</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor Shops</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record Shops</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theaters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Stores</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Stations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan Shops</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total                           | 89     | 99.9     |

---

1. Limited to ground-floor establishments on the Church-Fourth-Chestnut-Third streets square and to Patterson Avenue between E. 5th and 9th streets.
Table III

Distribution of Persons\textsuperscript{a} Interviewed According To Age Groups\textsuperscript{b}

Durham and Winston-Salem, N. C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Durham</th>
<th>Winston-Salem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 - 19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 24</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 34</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 44</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 49</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 54</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 - 59</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 64</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 - 69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>220</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a} In Durham there were 21 women, while in Winston-Salem there were 17 included in the total interviews.

\textsuperscript{b} Some of the ages are estimated.
Table IV
Distribution of Persons Interviewed According to Socio-Economic Class, Durham and Winston-Salem, N. C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-Economic Class</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Durham</th>
<th>Winston-Salem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Skilled</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and Domestic</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total | 220 | 111 | 109

<sup>a</sup> This includes persons known to be engaged in illegal economic activity as well as the chronic loafers.
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY
I, Leonard Harrison Robinson, was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas, April 29, 1913. It was in the public schools of Fort Smith that I received my secondary school education. My undergraduate training was obtained at Knoxville College, Knoxville, Tennessee, where I spent the freshman year, and at Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio. I received the Bachelor of Science degree from Wilberforce in 1935. The following year I matriculated at Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia, and received the degree Master of Arts in 1937. The year 1938-39 was spent in residence at The Ohio State University. From 1939 to 1945 I taught in the Social Science Department at Fayetteville State Teachers College, Fayetteville, N. C. A General Education Board Fellowship made it possible for me to return to The Ohio State University for an additional year of study in 1945-46. After teaching at Fayetteville State Teachers College from 1946 to 1948, I returned to the University with the aid of a Student Assistantship in the Department of Sociology. I held this position for the time necessary for completing the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy.