Middle-Class Delinquency and the Social Structure

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This paper is an attempt to explain a fact whose existence has not yet been established, namely, the increase in middle-class delinquency rates. My evidence that middle-class delinquency rates have increased, and possibly contributed disproportionately to the overall increase in delinquency as measured by official delinquency statistics, is not the sort that will hold up in court. It consists entirely of the impressions of police, court workers, social workers and school authorities, but there is enough consensus among these people to create a strong presumption that such an increase has actually occurred. Pending research of a more conclusive nature, we shall assume that this is so and attempt to explain it. Parenthetically, it is noteworthy that, despite all that has been written on the causes of juvenile delinquency, there has been hardly any serious thought given, in recent years, to explaining changes in delinquency rates over time.

In the writer's book, *Delinquent Boys*, and elsewhere in the literature, it is suggested that the middle-class boy—and also the upwardly mobile working-class boy) who has elected what William Foote Whyte has called the "college-boy" way of life—has traditionally been insulated from delinquency by what has been referred to as the deferred gratification pattern: the subordination of present hedonic satisfactions and immediate impulse to the rational pursuit of long-run goals. A boy committed to such a deferred gratification pattern cannot afford to be a member of a delinquent group,

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because such groups make demands upon their members which are incompatible with middle-class goals and middle-class ways of striving for them. The delinquent gang demands loyalty, reciprocity, sharing and mutual aid, that is to say, the subordination of one's own long-run aspirations to the claims and the welfare of the group. Needless to say, it makes enormous demands upon the boy's time. The delinquent gang is notoriously street-centered: it "hangs around the corner"; it "fools around"; it "kills" and "wastes" time in the streets, in the alleys, in the candy store. Delinquent subcultures do more than provide a social support for delinquency; they provide a design for living, a way of life. And to the degree that one is committed to either way of life—the delinquent or the middle-class way—he is restrained from participating in the other.

Now this deferred gratification pattern used to be more than just a middle-class tradition. It was supported by a social structure in which achievement of middle-class goals was actually heavily dependent upon conformity to such a pattern. In a society of relative scarcity and one not so technologically advanced as present-day American society, there was a huge demand for relatively unskilled labor and great pressure to turn young people into the labor market at an early age. The schools were under no great pressure to cater to the unambitious and the dullards, and neither parents nor the state were willing or able to assume the continued tutelage and support of young people unless they showed special ambition, seriousness and promise. Adults could dictate the terms on which young people could remain in school and the "undeserving" were unsentimentally dumped on the labor market. Ambitious young people danced to the tune the adults played. Good grades and graduation went to those who were talented or hard working or both.

Recent social changes, however, have weakened the nexus between the deferred gratification pattern and the goals to which it was formerly instrumental. These changes have included: phenomenal increases in productivity of labor, an increased demand for labor in the higher status occupations, an increased ability of the government, through increased revenues, to assume new responsibilities, increased pressure to keep young people out of the labor market and a general improvement in family resources. In consequence, the functions of the schools have undergone change. They are now charged with the responsibility of keeping the children off the streets and out of the labor market—and "children" are increasingly defined as anybody up to the age of eighteen or nineteen. "Dropouts" from school under the age sixteen, regardless of their origins, ability or aspirations, are increasingly thought of as "failures" on the part of the school.

This means that the schools are no longer in a strong position to impose high standards of performance and achievement. Children can no longer be readily sloughed off if they fail to meet such standards. In fact, in order to avoid an intolerable accumulation of pupils in the lower grades, they must be promoted regularly regardless of performance. The schools are required to process vastly increased numbers of students, and these include large numbers of children who formerly have left school or been expelled because of lack of interest, incompetence, or behavior problems. The schools are faced with an unprecedented problem of maintaining order. Deprived of their principal sanctions—expulsion and refusal to promote to a higher grade—they must seek to make school a *pleasurable* experience rather than a *discipline*. Increasingly the adults in authority are forced—often with great reluctance—to take their cues from their charges, to find out what the children want to do and help them to do it. Status in the school is increasingly defined in terms of the standards and values of the adolescent peer groups, and the role of the adult becomes to create a benign atmosphere in which every child can integrate happily with some group. Modern philosophy and psychology of education have commended themselves and caught on, we suggest, because they rationalize and legitimize this situation, this *fait accompli*.

It is difficult for a school system like ours to maintain a double standard for children of lofty aspirations and high ability and children who are just marking time. Standards of academic performance tend to drop for all categories of children, and the child of just modest talents and middle-class aspirations can achieve at least his proximate goals of good grades, promotion and graduation with just a moderate investment of time and effort. Getting into college—the great gateway to middle-class occupations—also becomes easier, since many colleges require little more than graduation from

high school for entrance; and, in these times of full employment, and high prosperity, financial barriers to higher education are greatly reduced.

The general effect of all this is to produce, in the eyes of middle-class children with middle-class aspiration, a picture of the world in which the attainment of their future goals does not appear so contingent upon what they do *now* as it did to their predecessors of a generation or two ago. The structural props of the deferred gratification pattern have been greatly weakened. (It is too early to assess the effect of the impending crisis in the ability of the colleges to accommodate greatly increased numbers of students. Apparently colleges are beginning to become more selective, to tighten up their standards, and young people or at least their parents are becoming anxious about admission to college. This could result in an attitude of heightened seriousness in the high schools.)

To the extent to which these changes have occurred, there has resulted a weakening of one of the principal insulators against juvenile delinquency. It becomes possible to be middle-class in terms of aspirations and at the same time to "hang around the corner." Middle-class youth turn increasingly to hedonically oriented "youth cultures." These youth cultures are not necessarily delinquent but they are generally characterized by pleasure seeking and emancipation from adult controls. We have middle-class "corner-boys."

With respect to delinquency, however, the new situation is more than merely permissive. It also contains certain positive motivations to delinquent behavior. In the "old-fashioned" system, the subordination of consumption activities and temptations to sober, productive, "constructive" activities was a legitimate and recognized way of establishing and vindicating one's masculinity and maturity. It becomes a task of the youth cultures to provide a means for doing this same thing within their own hedonically oriented framework. The youth cultures tend to place a high value, therefore, on those traits and activities which, in our culture, are symbolic of masculinity or adulthood or both, but which do not require self-discipline, deferred gratification, sobriety and diligence. Recklessness, prowess and the courting of danger ("Chicken!") are safely masculine and may take the specific form of predatory and destructive behavior. The simulation and compulsive exaggeration of certain patterns which are

symbolically adult, especially those connected with liquor, sex and automobiles, also lend themselves to the requirements of the youth cultures and easily take a specifically delinquent form.

In conclusion, we want to emphasize that we have treated but one mechanism through which social changes have contributed to middle-class delinquency. Some of the same structural changes in American society, through their impact on family life, have contributed in other ways as well, but these matters fall outside the scope of this paper.

A Perspective on Middle-Class Delinquency

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Most literature on juvenile delinquency describes it as essentially a product of the lower socioeconomic classes. While there has been some speculation over the incidence and quality of middle-class delinquency, what evidence exists is largely impressionistic. Nevertheless, the prevailing view is that delinquency among middle-class youth has increased in recent years. The present paper seeks a sociological and theoretical perspective to help account for the dominant forms of juvenile delinquency among middle-class youth. It attempts also to explain the emergence and the particular qualities of middle-class delinquency as a consequence of structural changes taking place in the larger society.

Accounting for middle-class delinquency in North America

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requires an understanding of the dominant culture of middle-class youth. Structural changes in society over the last half-century have produced opportunities for extensive adolescent peer-group participation and the emergence of a mass youth culture. During the growth of this youth culture, in which the majority of middle-class teenagers participate, there have emerged, jointly, both delinquent and non-delinquent patterns of behavior. It is the thesis of this paper that the bulk of middle-class delinquency occurs in the course of *customary, non-delinquent* activities and falls within the limits of adolescent group norms. Moreover the knowledge of both delinquent and non-delinquent patterns in the youth culture is widely shared among middle-class teenagers. Thus, in order to account for middle-class delinquency one need not look for a separate "delinquent subculture."

Any explanation of the emergence and growth of the contemporary middle-class youth culture must first consider the changes which have occurred in society over the past seventy-five years. The social and economic structure has undergone vast transformation. The first half of the period was an era of rapid expansion, of untempered competition, with increasing opportunities for the accumulation of wealth, vertical mobility, and employment based on technical skills. The economy had an almost limitless capacity for absorbing unskilled and semi-skilled labour, and it was viewed as a mine of opportunities and rewards for men of "good character." David Riesman has suggested that the old middle class was ideologically equipped to exploit such opportunities.[1] Imbued with the importance of integrity, self-discipline, and hard work, and the conviction that what it was doing was morally right, it possessed the resiliency and enterprise necessary for confronting and overcoming the challenges of the economy. It can truthfully be said to have striven with self-reliant and dedicated individualism.

To inculcate the energy, determination, and moral fortitude to meet the widening frontier of economic and occupational opportunity, considerable attention was given in the home to the formal character training of children. It soon became an integral part of the education of the child, and parental demands for conformity at this time were for "characterological fitness and self-discipline." At the same time, because of their diligence and effort at work, fathers often cut themselves off from friends and family. Indeed the

middle-class father, instilled with industry and frugality, was preoccupied with production, self-help, and the "character-conditioned need to test and discipline himself." For these reasons he was largely incapable of casual relationships even with his own children. However, with the expansion of the occupational structure, the father's absorption in his work pointed up clear-cut goals for his children; thus they were not only motivated, but also shown the way to get ahead.

While parents emphasized the "building" of character and moral principles in the upbringing of their children, the formal educational system concentrated upon the teaching of ideas and the disciplined pursuit of learning. As Riesman writes, this procedure "affirms to the child that what matters is what he can *accomplish* and not how nice is his smile or how cooperative his attitude."[2] Formal education was prized and the significance of university training was reflected in hours of rigorous self-application. In school the teacher held undisputed authority, discipline was harsh, and scholarship was encouraged. The whole system neatly fitted the child for the emerging needs of a growing economy.

Home life precluded the development of extensive peer-group relationships. Parental emphasis upon ambition and achievement, and character-forming behaviour patterns such as "saving for college" and "working after school," modelled after parental patterns of "hard work and hard saving," served to keep middle-class youth occupied, indoors, and off the streets. Playmates were usually brothers and sisters. Peer-group associations were time-consuming and often costly, and middle-class youth were disinclined to waste either time or money.

It seems clear that on all fronts the middle-class boy was prevented from forming a "street-corner society." His diurnal round of activities, his duties in the home, his role as student and the expectations associated with it, besides the consumption of his time, all tended to divert him from peer-group affiliations. Such activities as "vandalism," gambling, widespread drinking, "partying," and sex activities on a large scale would have conflicted with his daily routine.

After the First World War the American economy underwent significant change. Of great importance was the growth of technology and technological efficiency. Coupled with a declining demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour was a decline in the number of proprietors, and the massive cen-

tralization of industry. More and more people were corralled into large-scale organizations. C. Wright Mills writes: "In 1939, 1 per cent of all firms in the country—27,000 giants—engaged over half of all the people working in business."[3] This structural upheaval severely restricted upward mobility for the lower-placed worker. With an increase in life expectancy and a decrease in the birth rate, the population pyramid soon showed an increase of persons in the productive years of life. Furthermore, the levelling of income and social resources favoured the mass production of educated and specialized personnel for the labour market. Concomitantly industry could afford to become highly selective in its choice of personnel[4] which meant that the criteria for recruitment and promotion underwent change, and factors other than technical expertise became crucial. William H. Whyte quotes excerpts from his research: "We used to look primarily for brilliance," said one president. "Now . . . we don't care if you're a Phi Beta Kappa or a Tau Beta Phi. We want a well-rounded person who can handle well-rounded people."[5] Thus conformity to the norms of the Protestant ethic became impracticable and gave way to the structurally generated social skills and social values of a new morality—the social ethic.

Under changing social and economic conditions there occurred, also, a gradual transformation in the make-up of the nuclear family, family patterns, and child-rearing practices. The traditional, patriarchically-controlled family soon gave way to the more "democratic" unit in which parents and children shared in the decision-making process. Standards guiding parent-child relationships became blurred, and the family atmosphere became increasingly "permissive." In contrast to the acquisition of technical skills and ethical values for the achievement of goals, the institutionalized means for "getting ahead" and for gaining prestige are, under such circumstances, elusive, subtle, and difficult to teach. "The loss of old certainties in the spheres of work and social relations is accompanied by doubt as to how to bring up children."[6] Under such circumstances parents can hardly be expected to instruct their offspring in the adolescent role. Thus, the definition of the adolescent role is vague, and standards of behaviour, moral prescriptions, and the traditional distinctions between right and wrong are necessarily soft-pedalled.[7]

The school, meanwhile, has not remained unchanged. The

new requirements of corporate business and industry have made themselves felt. The hallmarks of the modern educational process are "group adjustment," success, and controlled individuality. Moreover, there has been a shift in power from teachers to pupils, a move in the direction of adult deference to the inclinations and interests of the pupils.[8] Gradually, "the school . . . begins to parallel the career pattern of the adult, particularly that of the male, in that it now absorbs more and more of the personality of the child."[9] This change in focus of the school has been noted by Seeley in the study of Crestwood Heights: "The educational system of Crestwood Heights is becoming, to a greater and greater degree, responsible for the successful 'adjustment' of the child, as a person, to the culture in which he lives."[10] The school, in socializing the "whole" child, neatly prepares him to meet the newly developing requirements of large-scale business and industry. In emphasizing the "socially adjusted," effective personality, the contemporary school system satisfies the "Organization's" needs for a "well-rounded person who can handle well-rounded people."

Under such circumstances the school becomes noticeably more "permissive," fixed standards of performance are abandoned on the grounds that they "straitjacket the child," and the whole learning experience, slowly but ineluctably, becomes a "painless process."[11] With drastically relaxed academic expectations, schoolwork for the teenager becomes routine, and, since household chores have become minimal, the middle-class adolescent has little work to absorb his time throughout the day or evening. With leisure time, peers become available and the emergence of peer-groups possible. In fact, there gradually emerges a middle-class street-corner society. The teenager, reared witness to the daily significance of social standing and the peer-group mentality of the parents, is also peer-group oriented. Furthermore, parental emphasis on group-belonging soon becomes a moral imperative, and prevailing teaching encourages dependence on adolescent peer-group affiliation for social prestige and recognition.[12]

The adolescent conspicuously lacks an exact definition of the expectations and obligations attached to his role in society and he is left to define for himself what is "right" conduct. However, the peer-group begins to exercise an inexorable influence upon the teenager and to substitute for

the ambiguity in family relationships. But the peer-group cannot state explicitly what "ought to be," that is, what the content of the general normative system is, and each individual must learn to conform to whatever behaviour patterns happen to prevail. In contrast to an earlier era of individual initiative, there is now little justification for non-conformity, and the violation of group norms becomes a serious offence.

To understand the development and maintenance of the middle-class youth culture it is necessary to examine the functions of the contemporary high school. In a rapidly changing, highly industrialized society like ours, the high school has become the principal social setting for a system of informal relationships and a fabric of social norms which help knit teenagers together. Besides providing the opportunity for formal learning, the modern high school acts as a central agency in the socialization process, and in the informal distribution of satisfactions for the teenager. The setting apart of adolescents in schools (which constantly take on more functions, more extracurricular activities) for an ever-increasing period of training has a singular impact on a youth.[13] He is divorced from the remainder of society, and more or less compelled to carry out his whole social life with others of his own age, that is, within his peer-group.

It is within the peer-group that the teenager first feels his independence, tries out new ideas, and shares secret emotions. Here, for example, he can pry and probe with impunity into the much tabooed secrets of sex while the nagging, if uncertain, intervention of adults is absent. So important is the peer-group for the middle-class teenager that his success and failure in the classroom cannot be explained irrespective of his peer-group affiliations.[14] Conformity to peer-group norms is rigidly required, and the norms decry scholastic effort. Thus, nowadays, it is almost a commonplace that there is in the schoolroom restriction of scholastic output.[15] The old refrain, "I never crack a book," and the opprobrium attached to the "damned average raiser" are classic testimony to the informal system in operation.

It is abundantly clear that peer-group attachment confers social approbation on the teenager and gives notice (to peers and parents alike) that the teenager is socially adjusted. Thus Coleman writes, "even the rewards a child gains from his parents may help reinforce the values of the adolescent culture . . . because parents want their children to be successful and esteemed by their peers."[16] More significant, however, is the increase in social status derived from conformity to peer-group expectations. Peer-group membership offers the adolescent access to teenage parties, "high-ranking" girls, "big dates," the latest style, esteemed events, and other "social objects." Conversely the student who persists in conforming to other standards, through concern for studies and good grades, is seldom sought after by the opposite sex. In the contemporary high school it is the "active" student, the boy or girl who engages in social affairs, extracurricular activities, and athletics, who ranks highest within the adolescent culture and, often, among the teachers as well.

It is precisely because they symbolize membership and prestige in the peer groups that such events and activities as parties, dances, dates, and "socials" become especially instrumental for the middle-class teenager. In familiar fashion, an increase in prestige elicits greater social approval from the group which, in turn, evokes further status-rewarding opportunities, activities, and relationships within the youth culture. Moreover, because teenage participation in social activities is rewarded, conformity to peer-group expectations assures a stable group status. Under these conditions deviance becomes costly and cannot be tolerated since it might result in the loss of social honour and the downfall of the group. The maintenance of social status depends, therefore, upon the continuation of conformity to group norms and expectations.

MIDDLE-CLASS DELINQUENCY[17]

While adolescent conduct within the middle-class youth culture seems to be infinite in variety, dominant themes include "joy-riding," "drag-racing," "partying" (which means late hours), drinking, gambling, and variations of sex behaviour. Such activities usually involve both sexes and present adolescents with the opportunity for status gain and social success among their peers. If such behaviour were altogether unacceptable to the group, adolescents would be unlikely to participate for fear of lowering the group's status. In fact, however, teenagers who engage in these activities are neither rebuked for their acts nor especially condemned by the group.

Since conformity is the keynote within the youth culture,

the question of change and cultural variation arises. From our perspective delinquent behaviour evolves from such non-delinquent, legitimate activities as dating, parties, dances, and possession of an automobile, within the adolescent youth culture. We have already noted the gradual transformation—the democratization of family relations, the ambiguity in traditional distinctions between right and wrong, and the concomitant undermining of parental authority and teaching—in the make-up of the nuclear family. We have also suggested that parental behaviour indicates the need to acquire social skills and competence and the importance of the responses of others in determining one's behaviour. Under these circumstances "operating inventions"[18] (behavioural innovation) among adolescents become probable. Indeed the pursuit of scarce desired goals among adolescents makes innovation likely, since it is socially rewarded so long as it meets the expectations and demands of peer-group members. And it is precisely because peer-group expectations *are* middle-class that innovating behaviour must not transgress the adolescent, middle-class value system. Thus, whatever deviation emerges must not jeopardize group status, and is tolerated by group members only within the limits of socially acceptable youth culture activities. So we find that violence, armed robbery, and the carrying of lethal weapons fall outside the prescribed boundaries, but "joy-riding," drunkenness, and sexual intercourse are variations on conduct patterns which fall within the limits.

In the course of legitimate, everyday activities and relationships within the middle-class youth culture, "veiled competition" for status leads to varying efforts at innovation. Such innovation covers a wide range of exploratory acts and is likely to be tentative, uncertain, and ambiguous. Yet because there is "mutual exploration and joint elaboration" of behaviour among adolescents, such small, almost unobtrusive, acts gradually lead to unanticipated elaboration beyond the limits of legitimacy—into the realm of delinquency and the illegitimate. But since each succeeding exploratory act is so small an increment to the previously acceptable pattern, at no stage in the process need the behaviour be perceived as "delinquent."[19] Once these patterns develop and are socially rewarded they generate their own morality, norms, standards, and rewards. It is in this manner that delinquent behaviour gradually emerges from socially acceptable, non-delinquent,

activities among adolescents within the middle-class youth culture.

At this point we address ourselves to some of the socially acceptable activities among middle-class adolescents and attempt to show how delinquent behaviour arises from respectable behaviour.

In the larger middle-class society the party is a prominent, socially structured situation for learning particular attitudes and forms of behaviour. Similarly, within the youth culture the party is a group event where the learning and transmission of conduct patterns occur. Such behaviour habitually is first taught in the home where, at an early age, the child is introduced to the vignettes of culturally approved conduct. By acting as "junior host" and "helping out" at adult gatherings the youngster soon learns the appropriate behaviour, skills, and demeanour for such occasions. At the same time he also learns the "party games," and the "party drinks" which are served at such times. With the added significance given adolescent participation in social activities, the increase in adolescent prerogative, and the tacit approval given to "having a taste" or "spiking" the party punch, drinking becomes acceptable. The phrase, "a glass of beer won't hurt him," reflects the approval given by parents to teenage drinking in the home on special occasions. As the drinking pattern develops among adolescents it generates its own morality, its special game rules, standards, and its particular rewards. Among older adolescents, informal drinking bouts to test one's capacity for alcoholic beverages are certainly not alien to the youth culture. Indeed the approval given to the adolescent who can "hold his liquor" follows adult lines, and reflects such practices and games among middle-class teenagers. And adolescent intoxication is not altogether disapproved since it simply represents an unsuccessful attempt to conform to the rules of the game.

The possession of an automobile is one of the crowning symbols of distinction among teenagers. It is a core cultural element and gives meaning to social events and practices integral to the youth culture. "Without a car a boy must be chauffeured to movies, sports events, and—most embarrassing of all—to dates."[20] Highly visible, easily presented, the automobile is a unique means of self-distinction and an extension of one's self-image. Indeed the possession of a car is often the accolade of social status among both male and

female teenagers. While changes in clothing styles among adolescents often mirror changes in self-conception and the silent struggle for status,[21] so too, the presentation of car and its manipulation along the highway undergo change. Here behavioural innovation varies from the initial efforts at "dressing" the automobile to sporting "duals or Hollywood mufflers," "joy-riding,"[22] "drag-racing," and ultimately, to "playing chicken" at a hundred miles an hour. This form of marginal differentiation reflects the effort for prestige among such adolescents. While some of the practices are functionally related to the masculine, middle-class value of courage and "daring," others are linked to the equally important value of possessing a "social personality." Such conspicuous, yet limited, innovation is significant evidence of the "antagonistic co-operation" for social recognition among middle-class adolescents.

That dating is a socially rewarding activity in the middle-class youth culture cannot be gainsaid. Moreover, dating and varying degrees of "friendship" between sexes are encouraged by parents and teachers alike as respectable, "healthy," "normal" activities for adolescents. Furthermore, restricted forms of physical contact between sexes are approved. Thus, holding hands, dancing, good-night kisses and, under certain conditions such as "going steady," initial stages of "necking" are condoned as indications of "social maturity," and part of "growing up."

Delinquent sex behaviour among middle-class adolescents emerges from culturally approved activity, and can be explained as a variation on the encouraged patterns of dating. In this regard girls face a dilemma in having to use sex appeal and glamour as the chief way of attracting and holding the opposite sex, yet simultaneously endeavouring to maintain their reputation. In the absence of firmly established moral rules and clearly defined role patterns, rules and norms develop in the course of resolving the dilemma which help govern the sex game among adolescents. The value of these game rules is illuminated by Coleman's remarks: "In very early adolescence, before courtship has begun in earnest, kisses flow freely at party games. They have not yet become currency in the competition for status and control. Later, the girls who once played post office with abandon now dispense their kisses much more strategically."[23] No less than in other areas, innovating and exploratory behaviour emerges from

the dating relationship. Under these conditions it is likely that succeeding degrees of physical intimacy can be correlated with succeeding stages in the "romantic" attachment. For each stage there may come to exist a corresponding normative expectation of physical intimacy. If the good-night kiss is correlated with the "first date," "going steady" may be expected to result in efforts at sexual intercourse. Moreover, whatever factors tip the scales in favour or rejection of sexual intercourse among adolescents must also be normatively influenced. The give-and-take between sexes, the degree of intimacy, types of kissing, the extent of physical contact and, eventually, the sex act gradually become circumscribed by game rules.

While both boys and girls engage in the dominant behaviour patterns and activities in the youth culture, in the daily course of events there are recurrent situations in which only boys participate. Here rules and forms of social control applicable only to boys are likely to develop and different role-expectations and behavioural configurations emerge. Yet the veiled quest for social recognition is no less important. Here we should expect behavioural innovation to take another form, conceivably of less "sophisticated," more "masculine" quality. Thus, groups of boys "hanging about" at night, returning from a football match, or simply wasting time "rough-housing," often engage in acts of destruction such as "stomping" on the hoods and roofs of automobiles, letting air from tires, ripping antennae from automobiles, and breaking street-lights. However, "muggings," "rolling drunks," and "breaking and entering" rarely occur among middle-class boys. Such behaviour of a violent nature usually undertaken to steal money reflects values foreign to the middle-class culture. This type of activity is noticeably absent from the daily routine of middle-class teenagers, and roundly condemned within the middle-class youth culture.

The learning of delinquent behaviour is an insufficient condition to insure its performance. There must be an opportunity to carry out the learned activity. That is, the structure of opportunity—the particular form of social organization—must support the actual role performance.[24] In this case it is the opportunity structure for *legitimate* behaviour which is necessary for the performance of illegitimate, disapproved conduct.

If the daily round of activities of middle-class adolescents

includes delinquent patterns of behaviour, the more a middle-class adolescent is immersed in the youth culture the more likely he is to become involved in juvenile delinquency. Some adolescents will have greater opportunities for delinquency than others. The question now is: under what circumstances is the middle-class teenager most likely to become involved in delinquent behaviour?

One condition for delinquent conduct among middle-class adolescents is access to the requisite physical objects for participating in the teenage youth culture. We have suggested that prominent behaviour patterns among middle-class teenagers spotlight such "things" as the possession of a car, accessibility to teenage girls, alcoholic beverages, pocket money, the latest style, and so forth. Therefore, access to one or all of these "social objects" is extremely important for participation in the middle-class adolescent culture. Indeed it is difficult to conceive of an adolescent's becoming part of the middle-class teenage crowd if he has neither control over nor access to some of these "objects." For example, dating is a highly valued experience within the youth culture, and the possession of an automobile is a symbol of social rank; thus the youth who owns or has access to a car has an obvious advantage in dating. To the extent that the means of participation in teenage activities are not equally available to all, participation in the youth culture and involvement in juvenile delinquency will likely be unevenly distributed.

A second contingency is a receptive attitude towards youth cultural activities on the part of the individual adolescent. Since participation in the prevailing network of legitimate activities within the youth culture results in favourable responses from his peers, the adolescent will likely derive social and emotional satisfaction from it, and define it as "normal" or as "having fun." But what aspect of participation he stresses is important. Thus we find that some teenagers believe that "stirring up a little excitement"[25] is crucial for participation in the teenage crowd. Others accept the car as the only "right" way to be "in with the crowd." Physical attractiveness, "personality" characteristics, and athletics are also significant for success in the middle-class youth culture. So also, for others, are "sociability," or sex activity with girls, or money, or clothes, or a "flashy appeal." In brief, to the degree that an adolescent favours all or various combinations of such characteristics and activities as means of participating in the youth culture he is likely to become involved in delinquent behaviour.

The social organization and "cultural flavour" of the "big city" differ greatly from the semi-rural and "main street" atmosphere of the small town. The presence of night-clubs, jazz-dens, "bohemian" coffee-houses, bars, "artistic" restaurants, theatres and the like in a metropolis serve as organized opportunities for middle-class adolescents to engage in a wide variety of "sophisticated" and novel behaviour with members of the opposite sex. If a teenager resides in a rural area, his choice of activities will be restricted.

Finally, the price for non-participation in the contemporary youth culture is likely to be inordinately high for the average middle-class adolescent. Today it is not easy, if it is possible at all, to shrug off the responses of others and the judgements and respect of our peers and schoolmates. Hence Gordon tells us that "an 'isolate' views her lack of clique membership as the major failure of her high school career."[26] Is it any wonder, then, that the teenager who is in a social setting where he must engage in youth culture events or else lose access to desirable, satisfying experiences, will have little choice but to act in a delinquent manner if such opportunities arise in the *routine* course of events?

If we are correct, the opportunities which exist for the middle-class adolescent to engage in legitimate, approved activities will greatly influence the probability of his becoming involved in illegitimate, disapproved behaviour. Easy access to the means for participation in the youth culture, highly desirable physical and "personality" qualities, the appropriate psychological definition of youth culture activities, residence in or near a metropolitan area, and active participation in the middle-class youth culture—all are important conditions determining the opportunities for the individual adolescent to engage in middle-class delinquency.

INTEGRATION AND STABILITY OF THE YOUTH CULTURE

As the emerging network of contacts and relationships becomes established over time, culturally approved patterns of behaviour and norms arise, the youth culture takes shape, and tends to persist irrespective of the initial forces giving

rise to it. Although the variables "causing" its appearance remain and help maintain the cultural system in operation, other variables are recognizable which contribute to its stability.

By continuously pointing up the importance of internal group relations and morale, the adult community alerts the adolescent to the significance of peer-group membership and conformity to youth culture activities. The schools have been quick to underline conformity and adjustment to the peer-group as characteristics of adolescent growth. With heavy emphasis on the pragmatic and the social, the concept of "adjustment" soon becomes the over-arching criterion in evaluating the student's maturity. More specifically, profound parent-teacher concern over teenagers who do not "mix with the others" imposes on adolescents the moral obligation to engage in youth culture events. Under such circumstances, "the child who tends to be withdrawn is given special attention."[27] Furthermore, the deeply felt importance of sustaining "high morale" among "our children" underscores the necessity of peer-group association.

In a limited, yet significant, way the adult community creates structured opportunities for adolescents to engage in youth culture activities, that is, in "wholesome" recreation. Organized dances, high school "formals" and informal "hops," church "socials," and athletic events reflect this structural link between the youth culture and the adult community, and reveal especially cherished values and expectations sustained by adults.

The age-sex roles of adolescents are equally important for understanding the increasing stability and permanence of the middle-class youth culture. Adult expectations of middle-class teenage behaviour involve a growing concern for contact and interaction with members of the opposite sex. At a very early age a network of organized events begins to surround the child, activities *formerly* associated with an older age group. Dating, parties, dances, "socials," and kissing games begin at eleven or twelve years of age, and sometimes earlier. While parents might not always approve of all such activities, they are nevertheless "committed to the notion that both sexes should learn to adjust to each other by boy-girl participation" in social activities.[28] Indeed, in pre-teen years, steps are taken to develop in the child qualities which are considered prerequisite for social success later on. Once

adolescence has been reached, increased participation in dating and other social events involving both sexes and the use of "dad's car" are culturally recommended. With the increase in leisure time and the greater possibility of spending this time together, stable conduct patterns among adolescents become entrenched. In this way adolescent adaptation to structured, age-graded expectations is a major contributory link towards increased stability of the middle-class youth culture.

The conditions which give rise to the adolescent youth culture are typically urban and most teenagers in metropolitan areas are exposed to the youth culture. Merely by association with the multiplicity of cultural sources and social groups, middle-class youngsters, at an early age, become influenced by, sensitive to, and later recruited into the adolescent youth culture. For example, teenagers have become increasingly active consumers. The increased spending power of the teenager over the past fifty years or so is likely to govern the nature, organization and prosperity of certain types of small and large businesses. Furthermore, the teenage youth culture has contributed to the birth and popularity of a variety of new occupations and associations in society, such as counseling and guidance officers, recreation "leaders," "disc jockeys," and "Little League" sports. This widespread transformation has made the youth culture conspicuously important and a full-fledged institution of the society. It has become an approved and encouraged segment of the community and cannot escape the recognition of the mass media of communication. The popularity of the adolescent market, and the dissemination of information about the teenage youth culture, publicize its existence and call the attention of the adolescent community to the prominence and rewards of membership therein.

A major implication of this paper is that a special set of motives need not be recruited to explain delinquent behaviour within the middle-class youth culture. At no time does the middle-class teenager turn from legitimate to illegitimate means in order to attain his ends. In terms of a means-end schema, this can only make sense if there has been neither a rejection of cultural goals nor frustration in the employment of legitimate means. The seeds of middle-class delinquency reside in the prominent, culturally esteemed patterns themselves. Therefore, delinquent behaviour can best be

understood through knowledge of the structure and content of the *legitimate* youth culture and its structural connections to the community within the larger historical transformation taking place.

Social Mobility, Stratification Inconsistency and Middle Class Delinquency

ROBERT H. BOHLKE

Within the past few years a number of observers have taken the position that juvenile delinquency may be increasing among middle class youth.[1] Although the evidence is highly impressionistic[2] five explanations have been offered to account for this phenomenon. First, it is seen as the result of the diffusing of working class values and behavior patterns to middle class youth, a process greatly aided by the mass media.[3] Second, it is considered to be a product of a weakening of the deferred gratification pattern in middle class families,[4] which, in turn, stems from a complex of changes in the educational system,[5] in the economy, and in child rearing patterns.[6] Third, it is viewed as reflecting the increasing difficulty that sons have in trying to match the mobility of their fathers who had been able to do much better than their rural- or foreign-born parents.[7] Fourth, it is seen as stemming from the fact that new suburban communities lacking "community services or tradition may be limited in their capacity to promote acceptable social behavior."[8] Fifth, it is perceived

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