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Taking Drugs in a Girls Club: A Description of Drug
Use by Adolescent Females in a Chicago Community

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Gloria Torres

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Master's degree in Social Science

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TAKING DRUGS IN A GIRLS CLUB: A DESCRIPTION
OF DRUG USE BY ADOLESCENT FEMALES IN
A CHICAGO COMMUNITY

By

Gloria Torres

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ABSTRACT

TAKING DRUGS IN A GIRLS CLUB: A DESCRIPTION OF DRUG USE BY ADOLESCENT FEMALES IN A CHICAGO COMMUNITY

by

Gloria Torres

The use of drugs among adolescent females in an urban setting was studied. Data were gathered through participant observation and interviews with twenty-four individuals, ages thirteen to nineteen. A structured questionnaire was used during the interviews. This study represents one aspect of a larger study which examined socio-cultural factors in drug use and abuse among Mexican-Americans. The larger study hypothesized that the use of drugs by Mexican-Americans may represent one response to socio-cultural stressors located in and generated by the larger society. Findings of this study indicate that moderate use of drugs was the norm among the individuals in the group studied, and that drug use was informally controlled by the group.

A review of the literature surrounding the use of drugs by youth reveals that few studies relate to: (1) use of drugs by female adolescents, (2) attitudinal variables, (3) drug use among non-delinquent youth in midwestern urban settings, and (4) the social context of drug use. The following study represents a description of drug use among adolescent Mexican-American females between the ages of thirteen and nineteen in an industrial community on the southeast side of Chicago during January to December 1974.

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I would be remiss to omit acknowledgment of my gratitude to the people of South Chicago. The residents of the various neighborhoods within the larger community, especially the young people, made this study possible by permitting me to become a part of their community, taking me into their confidence and their lives. I owe a special debt to those young ladies described in this report who, in addition to their contributions to this research, have provided me with many enduring friendships.

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PREFACE

This report represents one aspect of a larger study aimed at examining socio-cultural factors in drug use and abuse in a Mexican-American community. The larger study sought to analyze differences between Mexican-American addicts and non-addicts, and to what extent those differences represent responses to stress generated by the larger society.

The research was conducted in a neighborhood in the southeast area of Chicago known as South Chicago and focused specifically with girls between the ages of thirteen to nineteen and their use of drugs. This age group was selected in an effort to examine factors surrounding initial drug use, as well as continued or ongoing use. The study comprises a description of the use of drugs as characterized by the girls themselves as well as descriptions provided by family members, friends and neighbors. An attempt will be made to describe the use of drugs by that group within their socio-cultural context and their physical environment. That is, a description of the neighborhood and the group itself will provide some understanding of how and why drugs were used by this group.

In the description that follows, the names of geographical locations, i.e., parks, neighborhoods, and streets, have not been altered. Names of individuals and families have been changed.

INTRODUCTION

The South Chicago Community is composed of black, white (primarily Polish, Serbian, and Croation) and Mexican and Puerto Rican residents. Although the community has a strong latin flavor, visible vestiges of former Polish predominance remain intermingled with the increasing black population. In spite of the mix of ethnic groups present in this community, there is a strong awareness of each individual's ethnic identity.

One of my first impressions of Chicago was its distinctively ethnic character. Here everyone was "something"--Puerto Rican, Chinese, Swedish, Irish, Polish, Black, Croation, Mexican. Although my own upbringing in a suburb located southwest of Chicago was not that of being oblivious to these various ethnic identifications, it certainly was a far cry from the ethnic consciousness which seemed so highly developed in Chicago. As a first generation Mexican-American, I was acutely aware, through my parents' efforts, of my Mexican heritage. Special celebrations on the sixteenth of September, visits to Mexico, and maintenance of other cultural customs served to reinforce my ethnic identity. However, the rest of the suburban community did not seem particularly conscious of

an ethnic identity. To be sure, there were various ethnic groups represented and no doubt special occasions were celebrated by these groups but the special consciousness and recognition of diverse ethnic elements which characterize Chicago neighborhoods were never developed to a comparable degree in my suburban community.

This ethnic consciousness surfaced in the self-identification of the girls in the girls I interviewed in one South Chicago community. They saw and referred to themselves as Mexican. Most of the girls were third and fourth generation Mexican-Americans whose parents had also been born and raised in Chicago. Two of these girls had mothers who were not Mexican; one was Czechoslovakian and the other Polish. These girls also considered themselves and were considered by others as Mexican.

Although most of the girls understood Spanish when it was spoken by others, they did not speak Spanish with the exception of a few phrases. In fact, they referred to people who spoke only Spanish as mojados (wetbacks). This term was usually reserved for young immigrants from Mexico.

Many of the girls gave their Spanish surnames an anglicized pronunciation, so that names such as Diaz, Jimenez, and Carrillo were pronounced "Die-azz," "Jimm-eh-nezz," and "Karilo."

In addition to the identification with specific ethnic groups, there was also a strong identification

with specific neighborhoods, especially by the young people. A neighborhood was often referred to by its residents as "the 'hood." This abbreviation was usually used among residents of the same neighborhood, as in, "I think I'll just hang around the 'hood for a while." In addition to this reference, each neighborhood had a specific name. The word "love" was often seen in graffiti after the name of the neighborhood so that buildings were often decorated with the words, "Houston Love," "Bush Love" and the like.

Before becoming thoroughly acquainted with the community, I had anticipated that research could be carried out in the entire area known as "South Chicago." It soon became obvious that this would be very difficult due to the subdivisions within the community. Within a month I was introduced to at least four distinct neighborhoods within the South Chicago community. The central area dominated by the business strip on Commercial Avenue was adjacent to the neighborhood referred to as "Houston." Another neighborhood slightly more affluent and south of the business area was known as "South Deering." East of the business strip was the "East Side," heavily populated by first and later generations of Eastern Europeans. North of these areas was a small community known as "Bush."

The neighborhood with which I became most familiar, isolated from the rest of the South Chicago Community and

from Chicago itself, was known as "Bush." Nestled between the United States Steel Mill South Plant and the Illinois Central Railroad tracks, this small community was a unique but integral part of South Chicago despite its physical isolation.

Within Bush, a well-known social center, the South Chicago Neighborhood House, had been established and was the hub of many teenage activities. The "Neighborhood House" which was also referred to as "the Hood" provided the framework for an organization known as "The Girls Club." The members of this club and other young residents of this community provided the basis for the data presented here. The girls in this club ranged in age from thirteen to nineteen years old.

At first glance, the girls in South Chicago were street-wise teenagers who appeared to have grown to adolescence with a sense of being able to take care of themselves. Their often rough language, cigarette smoking, and sometimes defiant poses gave them the appearance of worldly, experienced albeit young urban dwellers. And, as I had told myself, they had grown up in a big city where muggings, murder, and other acts of violence are everyday occurrences. What I found were girls who still retained a childlike innocence; who in spite of being exposed to the realities of the urban setting, were able to take care of themselves largely through being aware of and avoiding

dangerous situations. These girls were still very close to their parents and their homes. In sharp contrast to many suburban teenagers I had known, the girls in the Club seemed more like teenagers than sophisticated young adults. Few, if any, had access to cars. Their activities centered around the neighborhood; often consisting of visiting neighbors, sitting on the front steps of their homes, or taking long walks. Sports activities such as baseball, basketball, and volleyball games were important. Little or no make-up was worn by the girls. Their apparel usually consisted of blue jeans, often bib overalls, tee-shirts, and sweatshirts.

In describing themselves and other girls their own age, the girls in the Club often used the words, "straight" and "cool." The term "straight" usually referred to a girl's lifestyle and indicated that the girl did not smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, or take any type of drug. Straight girls spent most of their leisure time at home, were usually studious and did well in school. Straight girls did not cut classes and always did their homework on time. I observed that quite a few of the girls described as straight were from families whose parents were immigrants from Mexico.

The adjective "cool" could be applied to anyone that was easy to get along with. Although "cool" was often used to describe individuals who participated in

activities which straight girls did not, such as cutting classes, smoking, drinking, swearing, and taking drugs, the term "cool" could also be used to describe someone who was also straight. Used in this way, a "straight" girl who did not object to her friends using drugs or cutting classes, did not criticize them, and could be trusted not to tell others of these activities, was regarded as "cool." More than once, I heard the remark made in reference to a friend, "No, she doesn't smoke, but she's cool."

Without going into the details which will be described in the body of this paper, this introduction should serve to place my observations in perspective.

THE STUDY

Methodology

The primary means of collecting data was carried out through participant observation. After establishing residence in the South Chicago community, various contacts were developed through volunteer work in social service organizations.

Another source of data collection was the use of a structured questionnaire which was applied while interviewing twenty-four female teenagers.

By combining the data gathered through these methods, conclusions were developed regarding the use of drugs by that particular group during the time of the study.

Field work was conducted from January through December 1974.

Getting Settled

My initial entry into the neighborhood was carried out through establishing residence in the Ramirez household. The household consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Ramirez and their fourteen year old daughter, Anita. The family provided a very good means of establishing myself in the community, although it was not very conducive to providing a wide

network of contacts which led to a later decision to relocate. As I was later to discover, the family was not atypical in its isolated pattern of social contact.

Among the positive aspects of establishing residence within that household, was the positive identification with long-time residents of the community. The Ramirez family had been in the same neighborhood for over fifteen years and had established a reputation for themselves as a stable household whose members could be regarded as trustworthy. By associating myself with a "good" family, I was also viewed as basically trustworthy by community residents. Furthermore, that association resulted in more than friendship. By living in their home, I became almost a family member. In addition to facilitating my entry in the community, becoming a part of that household enabled me to become accustomed to my new surroundings in South Chicago.

Mr. Ramirez was a retired former steelworker. He had worked in the nearby steel mills for many years, and during his employment he had accumulated enough savings to purchase several buildings in the South Chicago area. The rent from these buildings plus his own pension provided the present family income.

Mrs. Ramirez did not work outside the home but did assist her husband with the management of their property. In addition to the care of the home, Mrs. Ramirez kept busy

through a routine which made it possible for her to keep abreast of community news, and at the same time, carry out domestic chores. A typical day included one or more trips to a nearby store. Most of the shopping for groceries was done on a daily basis at three or four small stores owned by Mexican residents. One store provided the best meat; another the best fruits and vegetables; another had better prices for canned goods; and even another always had fresh bread. At each store she chatted for about half an hour with the proprietor. Conversations usually centered on food prices, information about mutual friends, happenings in the neighborhood and the city. Although Mrs. Ramirez had observed that she could purchase groceries at lower prices at the larger supermarkets, she remarked that since she didn't have a car she could not take advantage of the reduced prices. She further reasoned that such shopping might not turn out to be less expensive since she would have to pay for gas and car maintenance. Furthermore, with her present shopping system she did not have to wait in long lines and was able to talk to her friends. Another reason not mentioned by Mrs. Ramirez which might have served to encourage both her and her husband to patronize only those businesses in the immediate neighborhood with which they were familiar, was the language barrier. Although both husband and wife were residents of the South Chicago community for many years,

and had become United States citizens, neither of them was comfortable with the English language. Although they could be understood in simple English, it was with great difficulty that they could communicate with non-Spanish speaking persons. Whenever possible they both relied on their daughter to serve as interpreter. Almost as soon as I moved in, I was also called upon to play the same role.

It did not take long to observe that the Ramirez family had very limited social contacts. For the most part those contacts centered on family members who included cousins living in different parts of the city and suburbs. However, since the Ramirez' did not have a car, family visiting necessitated that other families would come to their residence. In addition to relatives, Mrs. Ramirez had a number of friends who attended the same church, Our Lady of Guadalupe, located less than a quarter of a block away from her home. Some of these friends would drop by to drink coffee and chat with Mrs. Ramirez in the afternoon. Quite often, she would visit her friends. Although their daughter, Anita, had several friends in school, she rarely saw them outside of school. The school which was affiliated with the church, was also less than a quarter of a block away.

In addition to the limited contacts with people outside the family, the Ramirez' did not allow many outsiders

in. This was true in the most literal sense of the word. Tenants and anyone not known to the family were restricted to the front steps while the front door was kept locked. Any conversation was carried out through the door which was opened only when absolutely necessary, as when tenants turned in the monthly rent.

After discussions with other community residents, I learned that these limited social contacts were not completely atypical. Apparently, many residents had a similar lifestyle. Like the Ramirez', many families did not leave the South Chicago neighborhood except on rare occasions. Mrs. Ramirez related that approximately six months earlier, Mr. Ramirez and his daughter had gone downtown to clear up some questions regarding insurance. Mr. Ramirez had been required to sign some documents and his daughter had come along to assist him in any needed translation. In Mrs. Ramirez' account of this incident, she indicated that such a trip was a rare occurrence.

Although most families did not have such restricted social interaction, it was not unusual to find families, especially first generation Mexican residents who stayed within the South Chicago community as much as possible and within their own circle of family and friends. Some of the reasons for this were given by a community resident: "A lot of people don't trust anybody they don't know personally and you can't blame them. A lot of people get

robbed around here. If you don't let people in your house, nobody knows what you got." Mrs. Ramirez also explained, "This is a nice neighborhood. Everything you need is right here."

It became apparent after a few months of residing with the Ramirez family that continued residence there would not produce a wide network of contacts. During my stay there I became acquainted with a few community organizations through volunteer work. Although I was free to pursue these new contacts, the lifestyle imposed by the Ramirez household became a major constraint. In addition to the limited social interaction outside of the household, the family retired at 9:00 p.m. every evening, and I was expected to do the same. Needless to say, many neighborhood activities lasted long past this hour. In order to widen my network of contacts and be able to participate and observe events, it became imperative to find a new residence. Through a contact made at one of the volunteer organizations, I took residence in a basement apartment in a home not too far away from "Bush."

The Bush

The Bush itself consists of a four by four block area according to descriptions of South Chicago residents. Most Bush residents are working class Mexicans or Mexican Americans, but there are a few Puerto Rican families and

some Polish residents as well. Before large numbers of Mexican families moved into this area, Bush was predominantly a Polish neighborhood. I encountered no black families residing in this neighborhood.

Although to outsiders Bush may look like a rundown area, to its residents it is a "good" neighborhood. Outsiders notice the many taverns, littered streets, abandoned houses and groups of teenage boys congregated on the corners as evidence of the deterioration of the neighborhood. While its residents are not oblivious to these aspects, they point out the absence of neighborhood "ganbangers" such as are found in other parts of South Chicago. They maintain that within the area anyone can walk around, even at late hours, in relative safety. Since many of them view blacks as dangerous, it is the areas with black residents that are feared.

In contrast to other areas, Bush is seen as a "nice place" by its residents. Their major complaints are against the city and the U.S. Steel Mill which borders it on its south and east sides. The city is responsible for the bad roads and for allowing so many taverns to open up in the neighborhoods. Complaints to the ward alderman or committeeman have not resulted in action to remedy these conditions. The steel mill is the cause of pollution and contributes to the deterioration of the streets with heavy traffic by large trucks.

The typical housing structure in Bush is a multiple dwelling unit. These two or three story units are usually owned by one of the families residing there, to whom the other families are usually related. Many of these dwellings house at least two generations of the same family although the extended family grouping does not predominate. There is frequent contact among the families living in the same building, but each family unit is individualized and maintains itself apart from the others. Although there is some knowledge of what is going on in the other households, there is no direct involvement between families unless it is requested. One example of this occurred in the Reyes house, a two story building owned by Mr. and Mrs. Reyes who lived on the first floor with four of their eight children. A son and his wife and children lived in an apartment directly above the Reyes residence. During one of the frequent arguments between their son and his wife, the wife took an overdose of drugs after the son left the home angrily. Even though the parents knew that there had been an argument and that their son had not returned to his family, they did not become involved until the young wife's sister telephoned and told them about the overdose and requested that they take the wife to the hospital. This case illustrates the way in which families remain close yet maintain a separate-ness and function independently.

Not only do members of the same family live in the same building, but usually other close relatives live somewhere in the immediate neighborhood. Many of the members of the Girls' Club are first cousins and have other relatives living within one or two blocks. Although they refer to each other as "cuz" and may spend a great deal of their leisure time together, there does not seem to be as much contact among their parents as there is among the offspring.

The homes in Bush are generally kept in good condition with improvements such as wood panelling and tiled floors; usually installed by the head of the household. Most of the homes are carpeted and furnished with modern furniture and appliances. There is a great deal of emphasis on neatness, especially in the kitchen and living room. None of the homes seemed overcrowded. Often a child would have his own room although bedrooms are usually shared with one other brother or sister.

Almost every household has at least one pet-- usually a dog. (This was especially noticeable to me because of my fear of dogs which borders on terror.) Unlike my own neighborhood, few of the dogs in Bush are vicious. Most of them are very friendly and are kept as pets for the children. The few dogs which I saw either chained or confined behind a fence and looking menacing, belonged to Polish families.

The exterior of the homes are usually also maintained in good condition. Porches and window frames are painted. The small patch of grass in front of the house is kept free of litter and the sidewalk leading to the house as well as the wider walk in front of it are swept and kept clean. The teenagers I knew freely discarded trash on the street but they all took care not to do it on their own lawns or those of people they knew. Since the area immediately in front of the house is used for visiting, it is not surprising to find that great care is given to its upkeep.

Although I have no accurate way of ascertaining the exact income of Bush residents, I would estimate that the average was between \$10,000 to \$14,000 per family. This estimate is based on reports of wages earned at the steel mills since the majority of the residents were employed at one of the five major steel mills in the area. The Ford Motor Company and other manufacturing plants also employ many people in South Chicago. In most families the wife did not work outside of the home.

The Neighborhood House

The South Chicago Neighborhood House is located in the heart of Bush. This settlement house provides a number of social services to the community and has received funds from city and federal sources. Apparently

the Neighborhood House or the "Hood" as it was often called, had been under the management of a succession of directors. During the period of high turnover of directors, the "Hood" was often closed to the public. At the time of this research, the director was Mr. Zamora, who was called by his first name "Joe" by all who used the facilities, young and old alike. Joe had outlasted his predecessors and managed to keep the Neighborhood House open though not without criticism. Mrs. Calderon, a neighborhood resident, commented on Joe's management of the center:

He's so worried about his job and all he does is worry how it looks on paper. The floors [of the Neighborhood House] are so clean you can tell nobody ever uses the place like it's supposed to be used. These kids [on drugs] still don't have any place to go because he won't let them in there. He thinks other parents' kids won't let them go there anymore if those kids go there. He wouldn't even let his own son go there. Now his son is being sent away . . . mine too. His own kid said, "My dad's going to let us use the Hood." Fine time now . . . his kid is going to jail.

Although Mrs. Calderon's criticism may have been valid, Joe maintained that through the rules he has imposed he has transformed the Neighborhood House into a social center for "good kids." He remarked: "It's a decent place for the good kids in this neighborhood. If I let all the troublemakers in, they'll wreck the place. Besides, parents aren't going to let their kids come over here if they think all the punks and troublemakers hang out here."

In any event, the Neighborhood House was the center of activity for many of the neighborhood's teenagers. Some of the activities included arts and crafts classes, baseball, basketball, and volleyball teams, tutoring for elementary school children, GED classes, and English classes for Spanish-speaking residents. Another service provided was the organization of the "Girls Club."

The Girls Club

The group with which I had the most contact were the girls in the Club. Although its official name was the Junior Advisory Council, all of its members referred to it as "The Club." Other people in the area who are familiar with the South Chicago Neighborhood House usually refer to it as "The Girls' Club." Even though it is well known in Bush, residents outside of this area are not familiar with it.

The Girls Club has been an outgrowth of an earlier organization affiliated with the South Chicago Neighborhood House, hence the name Junior Advisory Council. Judging from accounts of present and former members, the original council was comprised of both male and female members ranging in age from fourteen to eighteen. Its main role was to serve as an advisory entity where young people in the neighborhood could make recommendations regarding policies and activities carried out by the

larger organization. Whether this role was ever actually performed seems doubtful, and apparently the council as well as the original concept died with one of the former administrations.

At the time of the study, the Club, although still officially called the Junior Advisory Council, did not have any role regarding decision-making processes related to the Neighborhood House. It did not make recommendations or suggestions nor was it involved in any regular on-going administrative process. Nevertheless, the Neighborhood House provided a meeting place for the Club. It was a large room in the basement which the girls had painted black and decorated with fluorescent "stars" on the walls and ceiling. Furniture donated by residents and local businessmen was placed along the walls. The only other fixture was a coin-operated pool table in the center of the room. This meeting place was called, "the Pad." In addition to the Club's weekly meetings, this room was used as a social center between the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. During these hours both boys and girls could play pool, use a small record player and a limited collection of 45 rpm records. An assortment of games was also available: Monopoly, chess, checkers, etc. Two members of the Girls Club were assigned, on a rotating basis, to monitor the room during those hours. A staff person, including the center

director, would drop in from time to time. Close supervision had to be imposed because occasionally a fight would develop among the boys. During such times, a staff member would be called upon to break it up, and the guilty parties would be prohibited from using the Pad for a specified period of time. For the most part, however, the Pad operated without incident.

In addition to the supervision of the Pad, the Girls Club provided supervision of the weekly record hops held in the gymnasium of the Neighborhood House. The following excerpt from field notes describes my first visit to the record hop:

The Record Hop at the Neighborhood House starts about 7:00 or 7:30 p.m. It costs twenty-five cents to enter. Younger children (about ages six to ten) arrived a little after seven and older teenagers came mostly after eight. It seemed that there were about one hundred people there all together. (Joe said that approximately 140 people come to the record hops.) The majority were youth ages fourteen to sixteen. I was really amazed at how well even the small children dance. Most of the records played were pretty fast and the dance floor was most crowded during these songs in particular. During the slow songs most of the dancers were older teenagers (16-18) but there were at least three very young (6-8) couples. At about 9:45 p.m. there was a dance contest. Judges were chosen; a total of four judges, including myself. The judges observed the couples dancing for a few minutes. All but four couples were eliminated. These couples danced for another two minutes, and then one couple was chosen. The winning couple received 45 rpm records as prizes.

Before entering the dance the boys are searched by one of the adult male staff members for weapons or liquor. (One of the part-time workers told me that everyone gets high before coming inside the Neighborhood House. Question: What do they get high on? Answer: Reefer or wine.)

Although no fights occurred, some of the boys would gather in small groups in the middle of the dance floor and Joe would break up the groups. Also when the dance was over, groups of boys could be seen gathering in the middle of the street, at its intersections and on the corners. These groups seem to be of older teenagers ranging from about fifteen to eighteen in age; usually about six boys standing together.

The people I saw at the dance all seemed to know each other There did not appear to be distinct groups except as far as age separated them. Two of the part-time workers were girls. Staff members present: Joe, Sam (only until 9:00 p.m., he does not get paid for over-time), Jerry and Frank.

During the time of the study the Club membership grew from an average of ten members to eighteen. One of the reasons for this increase in membership was the fact that a new rule was enacted allowing thirteen year old girls to be admitted on a probationary status. Prior to this, membership had been limited to those fourteen years old and above. The oldest girls in the Club were eighteen and even though it had never been indicated that there was an upper age limit, most girls had not remained in the Club after high school graduation.

The group elected officers: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and sargeant-at-arms on a semi-yearly basis. Maria, the current president, had been

in office for over two years. She was well equipped for that position: very active in other community organizations and involved in other extra-curricular activities at school. She had held office in a number of other organizations, including the Girls Athletic Association, Spanish Club, the school yearbook staff, swimming team, and student council.

As might be expected, she was extremely well organized, energetic and enthusiastic about getting the Girls Club more involved in the operation of the Neighborhood House. She had arranged with a local artist to assist the Girls Club in painting a mural on the outside wall of the building. Through her leadership the Girls Club had become involved in a variety of fundraising events to benefit the Salvation Army. Some fundraising events in the neighborhood were used to purchase furniture and equipment for the Neighborhood House itself.

Most of the girls in the Club had known each other all their lives. Since most of them had been born and raised in Bush, they had been in close proximity to each other for a long time. Although they did not all attend the same schools--some of them attending parochial schools, others attending public schools--virtually all of them saw each other daily.

It was very obvious that the girls felt an individual responsibility to the Club. Absence from the

weekly meetings was rare, as was lack of participation in the organized Club activities. The meetings followed Robert's Rules of Order and minutes were recorded. They usually lasted about an hour unless a specific activity or event were being organized. Each member participated actively in the meetings.

Friends

Even though most of the girls in the Club had friends outside of the group and outside of the neighborhood, their "best" friends were also members. This was not surprising since most of the girls lived within a block distance from each other, and had lived in the same area all of their lives. Linda stated in a discussion about herself and her best friend Kris:

Ever since we were out of diapers we've been friends. I mean, you know, like she lives three, four houses away. We've always been close. We went to the same grade school, then we went around together a long time. Kris, Julie . . . that's about it. Those are the ones I hang around with. People in the Club, those are the ones I consider my best friends.

Kris used almost the same words to describe her friendship with Linda: "We live right across the street from each other and we used to always play around when we were in diapers, you know, and ever since then we've been together."

In addition to a "best friend" there are other types of friends described by the girls. Through contact with young people outside the immediate neighborhood,

primarily through school, most of the girls establish a network of friendships. Linda describes her friends at school on the East Side as "school friends" whom she talks to everyday at school, while her friends in Bush are regarded as her "best friends."

Sisters, even when involved in similar activities, seldom describe themselves as "best friends." Quite often sisters shared similar interests and were protective of each other in relation to others in the neighborhood. At home, however, there was often competition and conflict between them. Some of the girls often indicated that they could not confide in their sisters. The role of "best friend" was usually accorded to someone the same age in the neighborhood.

A number of boys in the neighborhood were closely associated with the girls in the Club. However, with the exception of three members, the girls did not date nor did they have steady boyfriends. Their association with boys appeared to be a platonic one. The boys in the neighborhood were known to the girls since early childhood and lived within the immediate vicinity. The same boys were always present at the weekly dances and were in and around the Neighborhood House every day. Although boys and girls would socialize during dances and parties, I was not aware of any serious dating going on with the exceptions cited earlier.

School

The girls I interviewed for the most part did at least average work in school, according to their responses to the question, "How are your grades in school?" Out of twenty-four interviewed, seven had grades below "C", two received more than one failing mark during the first grading period; nine obtained average grades and only eight were able to attain above average grades. From the group, only a single student had what could be described as an outstanding scholastic record.

Virtually every girl in the group felt that the high school she attended was a good school. There were some complaints about the strictness of the parochial schools. A complaint made by some of the girls attending the public high school related to the violence and racial unrest which had received much publicity through television coverage. However, for the large majority, even those girls whose grades were poor, the high school was seen as positive. The following comments by Margie, a below average student, are one example:

I think it is just the kids who don't go to class or just don't care. I think all the teachers are good. . . . They [the students] don't go, well like some of them just don't care about school, they would rather just be outside with their friends or something, they don't like their teacher they say, or just because, well like they, okay, it is too hard for them. Some of them figure oh, it is too hard, I am not going to pass anyway, so they just give up, they say why should I even go.

After several visits to the school, I felt that I could understand why a young person might not want to spend a lot of time there. The halls were dark and littered with candy wrappers and empty potato chip bags. I was usually mistaken for a student and rudely questioned by teachers, "Where is your pass?" or "What are you doing in the hall, young lady?" The following excerpt from field notes illustrates a personal classroom experience:

Kris and Diana had asked me to meet them at school at 11:00 a.m. I had assumed that we would go to lunch but they wanted me to sit in on one of their classes with them.

It was an English class and it was held in one of the mobile classrooms. The inside of the classroom was rather messy with graffiti on the walls. I was hesitant to sit in on the class because I didn't want to suffer the embarrassment of being thrown out of class when the instructor discovered that I was not one of his students. When I expressed my fears to the girls, they said, "Don't worry, he won't even notice you. He's real old."

Once again they were right--on both counts. I sat in the back of the classroom with the girls and another of their friends. We even passed a cigarette around. After a few minutes the teacher announced that we would be given a test. He wrote questions on the blackboard and said that we could use our books. A number of students had not brought their books, so the instructor passed out textbooks. Kris told him, "She forgot her book," referring to me. The teacher placed a book on my desk. Several students were exchanging answers openly, some of them shouting across the room. Occasionally, the teacher would say, "Don't help each other." . . . I asked Diana if it was always like this. She said, "No, not always. Sometimes it gets real bad with everybody screaming and walking around and nobody pays attention to him [teacher]. I feel sorry for him sometimes."

Some relationship could be drawn between degree of drug use and school performance. Out of fifteen girls who presently use or have regularly used marijuana, uppers, downers, mescaline, acid, or solvents, six got below average grades, another six average grades, and three obtained above average grades.

A somewhat stronger relationship exists between the degree of drug use and attitudes toward school. Most of the girls in the user group either did not like school, were indifferent to it, or enjoyed only the social aspects of school. Their answers to my question: "Do you like school?" and a similar one: "What do you like best about school?" were answered consistently as follows: "It's okay," "I guess so," and "Talking to my friends," "Lunch," "The boys," "Cutting classes." The girls in the non-user group were likely to respond to the same question with the name of a specific class, such as math or history. Regarding higher education, girls in both groups planned to graduate from high school, and only a small number were doubtful as to whether they would graduate or not. In both groups there were girls who planned to go to college and others who had not given any thought to what they would do after graduation.

Families

All members of the Girls Club exhibited a strong attachment to their families. Even among those girls who did not get along well with their parents, a sense of devotion to their families was expressed. Diana had stated that she did not like living at home because of constant arguments with her parents. However, she would often make comments regarding her wish to help her parents in the future. That attitude extended toward grandparents as well. Diana and all her siblings made a point of visiting their grandparents frequently, often taking gifts. A statement made by Diana regarding her high school graduation illustrates one way in which she wished to please her parents.

I really don't know if I'm going to finish [high school] or if I'm just going to quit, or anything. I really haven't made up my mind In a way, I really do want to graduate, you know, because that's like, you know, that's the least I can do to give my parents . . . because all they really want is for all of us just to graduate from high school. And if I don't graduate, they'll just think . . . they wouldn't like it at all.

Another girl expressed her concern for her parents in her decision to remain at home during her college years to spare them the anxiety they experienced with her brother who attended college in Wisconsin. Anna stated:

I realize what my mother and father are going through with my brother in Wisconsin, you know. Like they miss him a lot and he has to call every Sunday, you know, and my mom is worried about him all the time and what he is doing. I think I'd stay closer to home."

The girls' concern for their parents was also reflected in their caution in their use of drugs. While there was experimentation, each girl appeared to have felt an obligation to conceal her use of any drugs from her parents. Above and beyond their fear of punishment which would certainly result, all the girls expressed a pre-occupation with their parents being hurt or disappointed if they learned about their use of drugs. Kris commented: "When I get high I sober up before I go home. I got too much respect for my mother to walk in high." Asked about what would happen if her mother realized the extent of her true condition, she added:

She'd punish me. Not just that . . . well . . . maybe my mother wouldn't even do that, she'd just preach to me, you know, make me feel bad 'cause all it takes is my mother to make me feel bad and I'll stop.

Parents also expressed their anxieties related to the well-being of their daughters. As a chaperone for various social events, I was consulted many times by parents about the time the event would be over, whether or not someone would drive or walk the girls back home, and similar details.

Also, while most parents could not afford to spend large amounts of money on their children, the girls commented on some expenditures made by their parents. Maria observed:

We never had that much money, but if it was for a book, or something like that, he [father] would dish it out, but like for some luxury, no. So, like he always stressed education, so like he's all for it, so he's the one who kind of motivated me.

Most of the data gathered on family relationships was through observation. Although some families may have been more cohesive than others, and many had what the girls described as positive relationships among family members, all of the girls appeared to be strongly attached to and influenced by their families. This was true even among those girls who did not feel close to their brothers and sisters or who indicated that they were unhappy with their life at home.

Divorce or separation is not uncommon among the families of the girls I interviewed. Of the twenty-four, one-third (eight) have parents who are separated, divorced or in the process of getting divorced. The girls' reactions to their parents' separation ranges from apparent almost total indifference to complete despair at the time of the divorce. Those who react the most strongly appeared to have been those who had formed strong attachments to their fathers and it was his absence to which they objected.

These girls maintained contact with their fathers in spite of the divorce and opposition on the part of other family members.

Sylvia, whose parents were divorced when she was twelve, recalls the divorce as a painful experience. It was during this time that she began experimenting with drugs. She was introduced to them by older friends who, she said, noticed that she was unhappy. During the actual divorce proceedings, she saw very little of her father except in court. In addition to the break-up of his family, her father lost considerable financial investments and understandably appeared very unhappy during that time. It depressed Sylvia to see her father so despondent. She felt that her family would never again be so close as they had been. By the time the divorce was over, she had experimented with marijuana, solvents, amphetamines, mescaline, cocaine, and heroin. Since that time she had resigned herself to the situation although she felt that her parents still cared for each other and belonged together. She visited her father once a month and called him frequently.

In addition to the break-up of the family, the father's absence and ill feelings between the parents, the child of a divorced couple may lose esteem in the eyes of her peers and/or their parents. Sylvia felt that "some of the kids didn't like me because my parents were

divorced. Well, not so much them but their parents. They think you're not good enough to be friends with their kids if you come from a broken family." The friends who had expressed these feelings were described by Sylvia as "straight." Many of these friends' parents had come from Mexico and were very much concerned with the traditional Mexican family structure. Those friends who did not reject her because of the divorce, felt sorry for her. Despite their well-meaning sympathy, she felt even more separated from them, and became even more depressed. Although it had been about four years since her parents divorce, it still bothered her considerably. When faced with a problem, she felt that she could not turn to relatives on either side of the family because, "my father's relatives talk about my mother and my mother's relatives talk about my father."

Children of parents undergoing divorce also suffer from the financial setbacks which may be incurred as a result of the divorce. Yolanda knew that her parents' divorce and its aftermath would put considerable financial strain on her father. At the time she had been attending parochial school which cost approximately six hundred dollars for tuition alone. She felt that she should "give up something," and transferred to a public school. As a result of the transfer and perhaps of the divorce, Yolanda began to do poorly in school and eventually dropped

out. Not long after the divorce she went to live with her father and remained with him, visiting her mother frequently.

Of the fifteen girls who used or had used marijuana, uppers, downers, mescaline, or solvents, almost half had parents who were separated or divorced and another three had parents who had marital problems. (Marital problems included reports of incidents of physical injury during frequent arguments; one parent leaving the home for prolonged periods of time, and/or discussion or possibility of divorce. These were the types of incidents mentioned by the girls.) It is difficult to draw conclusions concerning drug use and the marital status of the parents. Based on my observations on family interaction, I would be inclined to say that the relationship between parent and child seems to have a strong influence on the degree of drug use (excluding marijuana). Those girls who had a good relationship with one or both parents seemed less likely to experiment with drugs other than marijuana or alcohol. They were much more cautious about the types of drugs they were willing to try and about the situations in which they might try them. Although they enjoy getting high, they expressed fear of addiction to stronger drugs, fear of "getting busted," and fear of "O.D.'ing."

Many of the families with whom I had close contact were held together by one or both parents, usually the mother. Many of the girls seldom did things with their brothers or sisters even when they were close in age. Each sibling had his own set of friends and activities and although there was some interaction between them, for the most part each remained apart from the other. Diana and Maria provided a very good example. Although only a year apart, the two girls were very different. Maria was studious, aggressive, and achievement oriented. She had decided to go to law school. Diana was a poor student and had little idea of what she wanted to do with her life. Suspension from school was a constant fear; although it did not deter her from cutting classes. Maria did not have any real close friends but has, as she stated, "different friends in different situations." At school she associated with different people and at home she associated with girls from the Club although she did not describe any of them as close friends. She was the leader of several organizations, both at school and in the community. Diana, on the other hand, avoided school as much as possible. On any given day, she was more likely to be at a friend's home or riding around with friends than at school. Her best friends were two girls in the Club, who often cut classes with her. At times, Diana's friends visited her and both sisters would dance or watch television together. Even.

though there were some activities which the two sisters enjoyed together--such as club meetings, going to the movies, or getting high, they were usually involved with their respective set of friends.

Considerable conflict between the two sisters was indirectly encouraged by their parents. While praising Maria for her scholastic accomplishments, they would tell Diana that she was "dumb and lazy."

As a family unit, the Reyes family took vacations together to Mexico and celebrated holidays. Aside from these occasions, however, each family member usually went his own way. There was a great deal of conflict and arguing that went on between all family members. The parents argued with each other and with their children. The children were in constant conflict with their parents over their own privileges, and in Diana's case, over school. They also argued among themselves about almost anything--which television show to watch, household chores, belongings. In this family there was little trust among siblings. Both Diana and Maria described their brother as a "trick" or a "snitcher," and would not discuss anything personal in front of him for fear that he would tell their parents. Even between themselves Diana and Maria did not reveal their personal lives to each other. While Diana knew that Maria would not tell her parents, she did not count on her for assistance and felt that Maria would be glad if she got

punished. Diana would not count on Maria to cover or lie for her unless they were both involved.

There was also a great deal of conflict generated by the preferential treatment given to Maria by their parents. Diana felt that her parents did not trust her and that they preferred Maria because she got good grades. Maria felt that Diana did not want to work for anything and that if she got punished she was getting what she deserved. Diana's mother had told her that she was not trustworthy but that Maria was. Understandably there were ill feelings between the two sisters and their parents.

Like many other families there was a great deal of shouting and name-calling among family members. Almost every time I visited the Reyes home, there was at least one loud argument going on during my visit. Brothers and sisters insulted each other and shouted out orders and demands. Although I never saw the parents arguing, the girls told me about loud arguments during which harsh words and/or blows were exchanged. According to the girls, the most common cause for argument was money.

Undoubtedly some affection exists between family members. It was, however, not expressed freely and each member felt that one's welfare would be taken care of only by oneself. In a crisis situation, however, the family drew closely together. This was very dramatically

illustrated when the eldest daughter of the Reyes family was killed in an automobile accident. Before her death she was in a coma for several weeks. During that time, according to the girls, the family was closer than it had ever been.

Although I found hostile behavior common among the families in Bush, it was by no means the rule or the predominant pattern among the families with whom I had contact. As in the Reyes family, there was a great deal of shouting in Julie's family. It was common to hear the female members of the family refer to each other as "bitch," "whore" or "puta," and the boys as "bastard" or "fag." During a telephone conversation at the end of which Julie put the receiver up to my ear, I could hear Julie's mother tell her "Come home you little bitch." Julie often calls her mother "my fucking mother," or "that whore upstairs." The situation in this family, however, is very different from that described in the Reyes family. All the profanity and shouting was done with great affection. The father was absent--the parents having been separated for about ten years--and the fourteen children were very devoted to their mother. I never heard any member of this family insult another, except through the use of profanity which was done in a joking manner. The only instance that I can recall of angry shouting was done by an older brother reprimanding a younger one for bad grades. Poor

performance in school was the only cause I saw, or heard of, for causing conflict between family members. Julie's older brother also had struck Julie for getting bad grades. However, it was after her brother had struck her that Julie stopped cutting classes and began concentrating on her studies. She told me: "I've got to do better on the next marking period or Mark will beat me up."

Physical punishment is not the rule in this family. After Mark's physical punishment of Julie, their mother interceded and told Mark not to ever hit her again. Before their separation, the father would often beat the mother, and it was after one such episode that the father was removed from the household by the older children.

Unlike Diana and Maria, there was greater trust and interaction among Julie and her brothers and sisters. Her younger sister, Belinda, who was thirteen, was allowed to go with Julie, and Julie gladly took her along with no fear of being "tricked on." Julie was very proud of her siblings and there was genuine affection among the members of this family. There was little mention of their father except when Julie reported that he had not provided money for groceries. Her older sister who had been recently married had asked her father to escort her down the aisle and give her away at the wedding. When he refused, she had asked her mother's brother who accepted. Although little was said about this incident, there was apparent resentment

and as luck would have had it, the father was at a tavern close to the reception hall the evening of the wedding. The younger children made a point of going to the tavern to ask their father for money. After a number of requests the father abruptly left.

In many ways, the mother's brother served as a substitute father to the children. As previously mentioned, he acted as his niece's father at her wedding. I also observed him hugging and joking affectionately with the other children. He visited the family daily and took the younger boys with him on long walks.

Other families have commented on the stability of this family in spite of the absence of the father. One neighbor remarked, "Even with all those kids, there's never been any trouble. None of the girls have gotten pregnant and you never see a police car over there and none of the boys have ever gotten arrested."

Activities

By and large the majority of the girls' activities revolved around the Neighborhood House. The "Hood" was a very popular place to congregate and talk to friends. Since it is located in the middle of Bush, it was a strategic point from which one could see virtually all pedestrian and vehicle traffic at any time of the day. Another important advantage was its location within a

half-block of a small grocery store which did a good business in the selling of candy, snacks, gum and soft drinks to the neighborhood youngsters. Inside the Hood, specific activities took place at the record hops, the Pad, and the very popular basketball court.

Beyond the activities in and around the Neighborhood House, another center of activity was Russell Square Park. During the summer, the girls played tennis, went swimming and bike riding, and had softball games. Although this park was not physically located in Bush it was easily accessible to its residents.

Another popular pasttime was walking on Commercial Avenue. Although this business strip is clearly outside Bush, it is the most accessible shopping area to all residents of South Chicago. The shops include large department stores, restaurants, small grocery stores, record shops, etc. It was especially festive on Saturdays when many of the shops would turn a stereophonic speaker toward the sidewalk and play Mexican tunes.

Most everyday activities were carried out in Bush. Walking around the neighborhood, sitting on the front steps of someone's house, and visiting friends' homes were the primary means of recreation. When the weather was warm, almost everyone spent most of his time in the neighborhood out of doors. Parents would bring chairs out to the front porch and sit out there until after dark--small children

would play on the sidewalk, and older ones would play baseball in the street.

Although I would not categorize food consumption as recreational activity, it certainly occupied an important place in the girls' daily life. Arrangements were always made to ensure that time and money were set aside to provide for meals or snacks when planning a social event, project or special party. It is not surprising that over three-fourths of the Club members were somewhat overweight.

Due to the limited facilities available in Bush, most special events such as parties, dances and concerts were held in other areas of South Chicago. Numerous bands specializing in rock music were available within this community. Their performances were usually staged at a dance where two bands would play during the course of the evening.

Another popular social event, the "quinceñera," was more formal in nature. The "quinceñera" is a type of coming out party given for a girl when she turns fifteen. This includes a mass and a special ceremony at a reception afterwards which usually involved dancing, and of course, food.

Another popular form of recreation was the "tardeadas." These were Sunday afternoon dances--starting at 3:00 p.m. and continuing until 10:00 p.m.--where

Mexican music was played. Although most of the girls did not speak Spanish fluently, they enjoyed the music very much. Many of the girls kept popular Mexican songs as part of their record collection which were played along with rock music at parties.

All dances with the exception of the "quinceñeras" were quite expensive to attend. Tickets cost anywhere from \$5.00 to \$7.50 for local dances and concerts. In addition to the ticket price, the cost of attending such an event might include the purchase of new clothes, and transportation expenses. Furthermore, for many of the girls, this type of event invariably called for the use of alcohol or some other type of drug. Drugs were purchased before the event and in sufficient quantity so as to share it with friends attending the event.

Drug Use

The following categories related to the use of drugs were elicited: Frequent; Occasional; Infrequent; Not Presently Used; and, Never Used.

Frequent refers to use on a regular basis, the user purchasing the drug herself and actively seeking out the use of a particular drug. Drug use was not limited to social situations or to those instances when a friend or acquaintance brought drugs to share. The frequent drug user participated in the use of drugs on these

occasions but also actively sought out other occasions to use drugs and used them alone as well.

The occasional drug user engaged in the use of drugs "just once in a while." The majority of the group interviewed fell into this category. Unlike the regular user, there was no consistent pattern of drug use and its frequency varied. Frequency of drug use depended largely on the number of social events taking place in the community. If there were many dances, concerts, parties and other social occasions, use increased, as drugs were almost always linked to these events. In addition to these situations, the occasional user used drugs, mainly "reefer" (marijuana), when someone brought some to school or work and offered to share it. The occasional user did not see herself as a regular user. She described her use of drugs as "Okay, as long as you don't do it a lot." She considered drug use acceptable as long as one was not described by others as a "pothead" or "pillhead." She would occasionally buy drugs herself, but unlike the frequent drug user, the purchase of drugs usually occurred only when no one else in the group had obtained drugs for group use. If she felt that it was her turn or had extra money, she would purchase a small amount to share with or "turn on" her friends.

The infrequent user was one who used drugs on an irregular basis. This group was made up largely of girls

who had tried a particular drug once or twice, but at the time were not actively seeking it out. Their use depended on the frequency of social events where drugs were shared within a group. The use of drugs by this category of drug users could be described as "chance," meaning that they would use a particular drug depending on its availability, on a group-sharing basis, but if the opportunity to use drugs did not arise, these girls were not disappointed. Since they had not made a decision not to use a particular drug, they used it infrequently until they came to a resolution to use it more frequently or to discontinue its use altogether.

Since many of the girls had experimented with drugs and had made a decision not to use one or more drugs, I found it necessary to designate another grouping. The category Not Presently Used indicated that a drug had been used on one or more occasions but its use had been discontinued. This includes those girls who may have been regular users in the past and those who had used a substance only once and had subsequently decided against further use. In both cases, a decision had been made to discontinue use of a particular drug.

The last category, Never Used, refers to those respondents who had consciously refrained from experimenting or using a drug.

I found only one girl who had tried every drug that I knew was available in the area and some that were not. Although many of these drugs had been used only on an experimental basis once or twice, her use of a wide range of drugs indicates that there had been some use, however minimal, of almost every type of drug.

Among the drugs that I observed being used were: alcohol (beer, wine, whiskey, vodka, rum); marijuana; amphetamines, barbiturates, tranquilizers, and hallucinogens. Less frequently used drugs included: tetrahydrocannabinol, the principal psychoactive substance in marijuana commonly referred to as THC or "Tuck;" PCP or phencyclidine which is manufactured as a veterinary anesthetic; cocaine; and heroin. The girls were familiar with the use as inhalents of glue, paint, and industrial solvents including one referred to as "Toil," but only one girl had experimented with these substances.

The reason cited for drinking and use of other drugs was usually "just to get high, just for fun, for kicks." Occasional and frequent drug users stated that the use of drugs "makes you feel good, happy, and you have more fun." The effects of acid were described as "being up," or "feeling good," that is, as having a general euphoric effect.

While most of the girls I interviewed had some knowledge about each of these drugs, there was a great

deal of confusion and misinformation about their different qualities and their effects. For example, acid was often described as an "upper" rather than as a hallucinogen; Sunshine, Purple Haze, Window Pane, LSD, and mescaline were all at times referred to as "acid."

There was even less knowledge about the negative effects of drugs. Although there was general consensus that glue, paint and "toil" were detrimental to one's health, there was no real knowledge as to its cause and effects. Most of the girls agreed that "it will ruin your brain." Stories and rumors about the physical deterioration caused by inhaling solvents were widespread and, adults especially, embellished these accounts with particularly gruesome consequences. A mother had told her daughter that glue-sniffing would result in "the lungs getting stuck together." The greatest fear associated with the use of acid was that of an overdose. Considering their knowledge of people who had died of an overdose, this was a realistic fear.

Another fear connected with use of acid was that of "freaking out." Freaking out referred to a panic resulting from unpleasant sensations and the user's inability to control them. In addition to the physical discomfort associated with such a condition, the lack of control over one's actions increased the risk of parents

finding out about the use of drugs. Carmen described one such experience:

It looked like all of a sudden something hit me and maybe I shouldn't have smoked when I was tripping. Something hit me and I was just, you know, maybe I wasn't even tripping yet, you know. I think I was just high. And I went in the bedroom and I laid down on the bed and all of a sudden I opened my eyes and I just saw the whole room going, like falling in on me, the ceilings were coming down, and all the walls are coming down. It was like one of those rooms that shrink and squeeze you to death . . . and I got all scared and started screaming. Then the music, the music was really like freaky, you know. All kinds of stuff like that, you know, and we started crying and I started saying, "Oh, God, help me." You know, I didn't know what to do. And all I saw was just a bunch of faces. It was really bad, you know, and I didn't know what to do. Closed my eyes and I still saw it, and then I saw hands reaching at me, it was really bad. So then I got up, you know, everybody got scared like I was going to do something I said, "Don't be scared. I'm not going to hurt nobody, just help me, you know, do something" 'cause I had to get off it and then I went and sat down. After that it was time to go and I don't know how we made it home. H. was the only one sober. J. and I looked like two little kids, then it was raining, and we waited at the bus stop. Then, like I was still really scared, you know. Then, finally our bus came, then I go, "Wow, where do we get off now, I don't know, cause we had to look for the L station in Chinatown." So we finally got off there, and then you know what? I saw the police and I was so messed up, I said, "Oh God, I think I'm going to just turn myself in and tell them to take me home. I cut school and I needed help; take me to the hospital or something." So, I went and I said, "Hey help me." I couldn't even walk straight, my eyes were awful, and Julie goes, "No, Carmen, don't go." Julie goes (to the policeman), "She's just kidding, Come on Carmen" and she grabbed my arm. I said, "No, let me go man, you just go ahead, I won't say I was with nobody or anything, just let me go." Then we finally got on L and came home.

Other consequences associated with the use of acid were addiction to it and to other drugs, becoming a "junkie," and the possibility of passing on birth defects to children when they married. Although most of the girls admitted that "reefer isn't good for you," they stated that they knew people who had smoked marijuana for years without any apparent ill effects. The majority of the girls felt that drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana were less harmful than other drugs.

In the Girls' Club frequency of use of drugs was kept under control by peer group pressure. Even though there were varying degrees of use within the group from total abstinence to regular use, the user who was constantly "high" was criticized by its members. Several reasons accounted for this reaction. One important reason was that the girls were acutely aware of their image outside the community. Many of them acknowledge that "Bush girls" were sometimes thought to be wild and rowdy by outsiders. However, they attributed this image to their ability to "have fun, cut school and the way we hang around together. People outside Bush don't know what the neighborhood is like." Part of this image may also have been attributable to the Club's association with the Neighborhood House. With groups of teenage boys smoking and fighting in front of the Neighborhood

House, it maintained an unfavorable image with many non-residents of Bush. The girls, then, did not want to be thought of as "potheads, pill poppers or acid freaks."

The group also maintained some degree of influence over the use of drugs by its members due to the fact that a heavy user of drugs would not be able to participate in group activities. If someone is constantly high, she will not be in any condition to assist the group in its activities. Since the group raised money and had responsibilities to the Neighborhood House, the girls felt that everyone should share in the work if they were to share in the rewards. The work included supervision of the Pad and the Record Hops, bake sales and other fund-raising activities. The rewards included club sweaters, jackets, picnics and parties. A member who did not keep up with her share of the responsibilities was criticized and risked expulsion from the group. Any member who missed more than three meetings was put on probation and risked dismissal from the Club for additional absences. Quite often members' duties included cleaning the various rooms at the Neighborhood House. Any member who did not fulfill her assignments received a demerit and was placed on probation.

Another reason that prevented the girls from excessive use of drugs was that they had known each other since infancy and were genuinely concerned about each

other's welfare. Their fear of the effect of drugs helped them to be aware of their friends' involvement with drugs. Thus Carmen, after her unpleasant experience with mescaline, was advised by her friends who had witnessed her "freaking out" to refrain from further use of this drug. Although the experience itself was enough to discourage her from further use, she commented, "Besides, Julie and H. were really scared that something would happen to me."

The most widely used drug by far was alcohol. All but one respondent had used alcohol on at least one occasion, and sixteen respondents were occasional users of alcohol. Alcohol consumption was due in part to the fact that it was more readily available (although not greatly so) than marijuana or other drugs. But its wide use might be better explained by the fact that all the parents with only two exceptions drank alcohol. Many of the girls reported that drinking was a problem with one or both parents, and some of them stated that their interest in alcohol had been sparked by parental use. Maria, whose parents and brother had problems with alcohol, said, "It makes you want to try it."

Many of the girls reported that their first drink was "sips from my father's beer." They were aware that their parents drinking caused or exacerbated family

problems. Julie discussed her parents' arguments and stated that her father would afterward go out and visit one of the local taverns. He would then come back home and beat her mother, and this behavior pattern had been the cause of their separation. "The last time he beat my mother, my brothers and sisters threw him out of the house." Diana reported that her parents argued about money, and that after such arguments, her father "goes to a tavern and gets drunk. They're arguing about money, so he goes to the tavern and spends more money."

Of course drinking was forbidden to the girls by their parents. This applied to drinking on their own since most parents allowed their children to drink moderately in their presence. Many of the girls regarded this behavior as hypocritical, and a case of "do as I say, and not as I do." "They talk about how bad drinking is and then they go out and get drunk." The girls' criticism of their parents often served as a rationale for their own drinking behavior, which they viewed as strictly "for fun."

Like other drugs, alcohol consumption by the girls was linked to a social event. A group of two or more girls would find someone who would "run" for them. If they wanted beer or wine, an older brother, sister or cousin, nineteen or older could purchase it. (This was true in 1974; however, a law passed in 1978 restricts the purchase of carry-out liquor to persons twenty-one years

of age or older.) The usual transaction involved someone willing to purchase the liquor for minors, who in return for this service would share it with him or her. A "mojado" could often be counted on to participate in this role. (A person referred to as a mojado by the girls was not necessarily an undocumented alien. The term was used to describe primarily young men who had recently emigrated from Mexico and spoke only Spanish. Since the Neighborhood House offered G.E.D. classes and English classes for Spanish-speaking people, many of the girls were acquainted with several "mojados" in the area.)

Dances and concerts were events requiring "getting high" to be enjoyable, according to many of the girls, and drinking was the most common means to achieve this. Before and during the dance enough liquor was taken to maintain a pleasant high throughout the evening. This usually involved about one quart of beer per person or one fifth of wine in the course of an evening (from three to four hours). If the person became too intoxicated, she became a responsibility to her closest friends. I never saw an intoxicated youngster left alone or ignored. I observed incidents in which two of the closest friends, or at least one other club member, would stay close to a girl, take her to the washroom, talk to her, and make sure that she returned home safely and in a presentable condition. Other group members, aware that someone was

intoxicated, attempted to keep any adults present from finding out. Particularly, a girl's closest friends would go to great lengths to keep her parents from learning that their daughter had been drinking. This stemmed partly from concern for their friend who had become intoxicated and would be punished were the parents to know. It also stemmed from self-interest because the friends themselves risked getting punished by their own parents if they were to find out. Even if the girl herself were not suspected of drinking, her parents could forbid her to see her intoxicated friend again for fear that this friend would be a bad influence on their daughter.

I did not find anyone who could be described as a frequent user of alcohol in the age group I worked with. I did, however, hear of and know of fathers and older brothers who were frequent users. Alcohol use among adults was a visibly common problem in the neighborhood and surrounding area. There were numerous taverns in the area, some of which served liquor to minors, usually boys. Even more numerous were the neighborhood "winos" who staggered on the corner or wandered in and out of taverns and stores. Most of these were older men who had lingered around the neighborhood in a daze for many years. Youngsters in the neighborhood were very familiar with these men who were constantly intoxicated. Thus, in

addition to the problems alcohol may have brought or maintained in the home, there was an obvious presence of alcohol and its effects outside of the home.

Those girls who were occasional drinkers stated that they drank "just once in a while to have fun," and since their drinking was usually done in groups at social events, this might have been the case. However, by observing actual drinking behavior, it became apparent that more was involved. Out of sixteen occasional drinkers, six became intoxicated at almost every social event within a short time after their first drink. These girls would drink a six pack of beer or a fifth of wine within a half hour or less. Of the six, all had at least one parent who had drinking problems and three had parents who were separated or divorced.

Next to alcohol, marijuana or "reefer" as the girls called it, was the most widely used drug among the girls I interviewed. Like alcohol, marijuana was usually taken when teenagers were in groups of two or more and before or during social events. Unlike alcohol, however, marijuana was also used when the user was alone. The reasons cited for this were: (1) marijuana is easier to carry and therefore can be used in small amounts; (2) marijuana does not require the recruitment of an older person to act as middleman for purchase; and (3) the difference in the "high" achieved.

While most occasional drinkers described drinking as "fun, you feel like laughing and dancing and having a good time," those who are frequent or occasional marijuana users described the high attained from marijuana as "you feel good, relaxed," "you laugh a lot and just feel nice," "you notice things more, like colors or lights or music." From these descriptions it can be inferred that drinking and being high on alcohol are more conducive to action-oriented behavior while marijuana use is more relaxed and passive.

Nonetheless, in the majority of the cases observed, marijuana was used in groups. For most of the girls its use was restricted to group situations regardless of whether or not they purchased it themselves. That is, even when marijuana was available for use alone, it was reserved for use within the group. Those within the group were expected to share their supply with the rest of the group. The following excerpt from field notes illustrates a criticism of a Club member who "bogarts" or hoards an available supply of reefer:

Somebody said "It's too bad we don't have any reefer." I told them I had a joint on me. They thought I was joking and were laughing. When I showed it to them, they told me to save it for the record hop. H. said I had some more. Julie said, "Be quiet." [Apparently she did not want Diana to hear. She said later that Diana bogarts (takes most of it) if she knows you have it.] Julie said, yes, sometimes but usually she would smoke it herself. "She says, 'Let's save it for tomorrow,' and then smokes it all herself.

With cigarettes too. I don't like to be like that. If I buy some I want to share it with everybody." (Field Notes).

Although marijuana was used for social occasions, such as dances, it was also used for non-social situations such as while walking to or from school or just walking through the neighborhood. Another important difference between alcohol and marijuana use is the people with whom the girls would use each drug. For both drinking and smoking, participants belong to both sexes, male and female. However, while a boy may not have minded if his girlfriend drank alcohol as long as it was not to the point of intoxication, he did not permit his girlfriend to smoke marijuana. He would smoke with other girls who were just friends, but not with the girl he was "going with." He set down specific rules for her and while she was in his presence she would obey these rules, but when she was with her female friends, she would make her own rules. Linda provided a good example. Her boyfriend, Paul, made it clear to her that he did not want her to smoke cigarettes, drink too much, or smoke reefer. Whenever she was at a party or dance with him, she restricted herself to moderate drinking. With girls, however, she felt free to smoke cigarettes, reefer, and drink more. Although most of the girls in the group felt free to smoke reefer with the boys in the neighborhood, Linda did not smoke with them because she felt that she could not trust them. She felt that they

might tell her brother or her boyfriend. Consequently, she limited her use of marijuana to groups of girls.

For most of the girls in the Club who used marijuana, initiation took place with its members. They had been encouraged to try it by two or more of their closest friends who had already tried it. Most of the girls reported that they did not enjoy it the first time they tried it, but after repeated attempts they came to enjoy marijuana. Those who had used marijuana infrequently, or had discontinued its use, were reluctant to try it at all and did so only because of their friend's constant insistence. Anna said, "I only did it to shut them up. I don't think I'll ever use it again because I didn't like it." A few girls who had never used it and did not plan to use it, had close contact with those who were frequent or occasional users. The reasons for their refusal to experiment with marijuana varied. Some said that their parents would object; others, that they did not like the smell, and that they did not think that they would like the taste. All, however, agreed that they did not have to get high to enjoy themselves.

While the majority of the girls used marijuana occasionally, they disapproved of people who used it frequently or "are always high." Even outside of their group, they often made comments about those in the neighborhood who used drugs excessively. "He's good-looking

but he's such a bum. Always high on something;" or,
"those guys just like to hang around street corners and
get high."

RESEARCH

Although a sizeable body of literature describing the use of drugs in the United States has been developed especially in the last two decades, there remains a relative lack of data dealing specifically with the group described here--adolescent girls in the midwest. Many of the studies have focused on the question of factors in the use of illicit drugs are based on data on adolescent boys--many of them in connection with juvenile delinquency. (Chein, Gerard, Lee and Rosenfeld 1964; Clueck and Clueck 1960; goode 1972).

With the increasing use of drugs among middle class youth, more studies have examined the use of drugs among middle class youngsters and college students (Blum and Associates 1969; Garfield, Boering and Smith 1971; Garfield 1971; Carey 1968). The findings of some of these studies indicate that factors influencing drug use among these students may include availability, contact with users, influence of peer groups, and a dissatisfaction with and desire to protest against society (Blum and Associates 1969; Kaplan 1970; Carey 1968; Bean 1974).

Studies focusing on the use of illicit drugs among adolescent girls have been very scarce. Those

studies mentioning girls and their use of drugs have compared them with boys within a specific population group. Citing Price, Richard Blum describes differences between boys and girls in terms of percentages who use tobacco, drink to an intoxication level, use marijuana, LSD, and amphetamines (Blum 1969; Price 1969). Josephson reports sex differences in the use of marijuana between youngsters in a longitudinal study comparing survey findings in 1971, 1972 and 1973.

In Horatio Alger's Children, Blum identifies features of high risk and low risk families among white middle class, blue-collar white families, blue-collar black families, and Mexican-American families. There is, however, no comparison of sex differences in drug use although apparently both boys and girls were among the drug users whose families were interviewed. While Blum does compare factors associated with high and low risk families among Mexican American, white middle class and black blue-collar families, there is not a comparison either within or among these ethnic groups regarding sex differences in drug use. In his description of Mexican American families, Blum states.

Those families where drug use among offspring was low had insightful, confident, flexible, and affectionate mothers and active, communicative, and authoritative fathers who had diverse interests. Low risk children had early and strict standards for conduct which allow parents

to give children freedom in deciding for themselves. Life in low risk families was family centered. The high risk families did not succeed in imparting values. High risk mothers were more upset, less acculturated to Anglo ways and more ritualistic than were low risk mothers. High risk mothers also could not rely upon themselves, their husbands, their children, or their church to be the pillars of strength in an environment filled with temptation, poverty and uncertainty. The high risk family was discordant, undirected, unhappy, attached to television, drugs, or the appeals of excitement in the outside world. The high risk drug use of Mexican American children was associated with a history of maternal distress, child distress, school problems, and family disorders (Blum 1969).

One study examining possible etiological factors which may account for differences in drug use between male and female adolescents is reported by Miller (International Journal of the Addictions, 1976). Exploring the hypothesis that the factors surrounding female drug use may be psychodynamic in nature while those for male drug use may be environmental, Miller collected data from male and female undergraduate students. Comparing "past," "present," and "never used" categories of male and female respondents to questionnaires and attitudinal measurement instruments, support was found for the hypothesis.

Although scarce data related to male and female drug use, frequency and range of use is lower among females than among males (Blum 1969; Price 1967; Josephson 1974).

The study of drug using behavior among adolescents has revolved around psychological and sociological approaches to explain this phenomenon. The psychological approach examines individual personality traits and attributes the use of drugs to variables such as development of the superego, ego function, oral dependence and other psychological processes. This approach argues that people who use drugs do so as an adjustive response to psychological needs which have not been met in the normal developmental process (Ausubel 1961; Chein 1964; Krystal 1970).

The sociological approach seeks to explain drug use as a behavioral response to a social environment which provides those factors conducive to drug use. Among these environmental influences are those exerted by people closest to the drug user. Kandel concludes that adolescent illegal drug use is predominantly responsive to the influence of peers (1974).

In an extensive study exploring the influence of parental drug use and peer drug use, Kandel found that "overall influence of parental drug behaviors on adolescent illegal drug use is small. The predominant factor in the use of drugs by adolescents is the use of drugs by peers" (Kandel 1974).

CONCLUSIONS

From the interviews and data gathered through participant observation, no cases of heavy drug use among this group were found. While this does not mean that heavy drug use is non-existent in that area, it does indicate that such use may be the exception rather than the rule.

Most of the girls with whom I came into contact could be classified as occasional users of marijuana and alcohol and were surprisingly conservative in their approach to other drugs.

The most widely used drug is alcohol--usually consumed in the form of beer and wine. Drinking was restricted to preparation or participation in a social event. Before and during dances, concerts and parties, alcohol was consumed by members of the group and none of the girls indulged in drinking alone.

As might be expected, the parents of many of the girls also drank alcohol. Although none of the girls described either parent as an alcoholic, many of them indicated that drinking was a problem with one or both parents.

After alcohol, marijuana was the most widely used drug among these young females. Like alcohol, marijuana was used in groups of two or more, and before and during social events. Marijuana, however, was also used alone and in the absence of social activity and special events. Nevertheless, for the majority of the girls, marijuana was used in a group setting and although available for use alone, it was usually shared with one or more members of the group.

Other drugs used include uppers, downers, hallucinogens, and in rare cases, inhalants. The use of these drugs, however, was not widespread among these adolescents, and for the majority their use could be described as "infrequent" or "never used." Some of them had experimented with uppers and downers but relied primarily on marijuana or alcohol to "get high." The use of glue, paint and industrial solvents taken through inhalation was known to them but only one female reported having used it herself. The girls' familiarity with inhalants was based on their knowledge of its use by boys in the neighborhood, particularly those in the age range of eight through thirteen.

Knowledge about drugs and their effects was very limited and usually acquired through friends who were users and through personal experience. Some girls who had experimented with hallucinogens or uppers or had mixed

the use of one or more drugs, had experienced negative effects. These experiences, which usually took place in a group setting, were shared by other members of the group.

Parents disapproved of drug use as well as of drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes. For the most part, parents appeared to be unaware of their daughters' use of drugs, drinking and smoking cigarettes. Daughters went to a great effort to prevent their parents from becoming aware that they were involved in such activities. They would only carry out these activities in the presence of people they felt they could trust. When they felt that their parents suspected drug use, they would exercise more caution to ensure that their parents would not find out.

The majority of the girls reported that they first became familiar with the use of alcohol through their parents' consumption of it. Marijuana use was introduced to all of them by a friend, usually of the same age. Drugs were easily available, often sold at school or in the neighborhood. Often, a girl's first encounter with marijuana was through a seller. Like marijuana, the use of purple haze, sunshine and mescaline were introduced to them by friends who had already experimented with these drugs.

Although the group served to encourage its members to experiment with drugs, their use was not imposed as a requirement for membership. On the contrary, frequency of use of drugs was informally controlled by the group. Through the group's association with a larger organization (the Neighborhood House) and its stated purpose to assist in the operation of that organization, the group had responsibilities and duties to carry out. Any member who could not be counted on to carry out assignments or duties could be expelled from the group. Its members, therefore, could not be constantly "high" so as to be able to fulfill their responsibility to the group.

Mutual concern for each other's well-being was another means of maintaining control over frequency of drug use. Since the girls were in daily contact with one another, they were all aware of each other's activities. Disapproval and concern by one or more of her friends would usually persuade a girl to curtail her use of drugs.

In addition to parental disapproval, those girls who had boyfriends faced additional restrictions. While they were free to drink moderately with their boyfriends, they could not smoke cigarettes, become intoxicated or use marijuana or other drugs in their presence.

What develops through observations and interviewing is a picture of a group of adolescent females using alcohol, marijuana and other drugs moderately, and

whose use of drugs is influenced primarily by the group *peer influence, availability* itself, although limits are also imposed by parents and other peers. To what degree other influences in the environment played a role in the use of illegal drugs by this group is uncertain. However, based on their own descriptions of their drug use, it surfaces that membership in the group was a major factor. Without comparison, however, with females the same age in the community who were not Club members, it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding the influence of other factors, such as parental use of alcohol and other drugs, attitudes toward school and others.

It is then extremely difficult to address the question, "Is ethnicity a factor in drug use?" with any degree of certainty or any means of describing how and why, if indeed it is. Differences "found" through comparisons of various ethnic groups must be scrutinized to ascertain which differences are attributable to ethnicity and which may be derived from other factors.

Those differences described by Blum indicate that Mexican-American families qualified as high risk are likely to be characterized by "fatalism, depression, and surrender" (Blum 1972). Can these characteristics be considered ethnic in nature? Without additional data this cannot be determined, particularly as it relates to drug use.

For this group, it might be relevant to determine the degree of influence of parents versus peers. Clearly both represent very strong influences for the girls in the Club. If, as Samora and Lamanna concluded in a study of a similar industrial community in East Chicago, Indiana, the Mexican-American family represented "a bulwark of tradition . . . (and) has held up quite well under the impact of urbanization," then, ethnicity through the maintenance of strong parental influence might well play a major role in the drugs that are used and the ways in which they are used. To the degree that the family exerts a strong influence over the daughter, ethnicity may play a major role. This influence may be a factor both in whether drug use is initiated and in the self-imposed restriction on drug use in response to parental disapproval.

That the girls experimented with drugs at all, demonstrates the strong influence of peers. The group setting for most drug use indicates a basis for agreement with the finding that the peer group influence is the most important in a young person's use of drugs. }

These findings indicate that a number of factors influence drug-using behavior by the group studied. With a number of conditions present which in other studies have been described as conducive to intensive use of drugs--availability, peer influence, poor economic conditions--

drug use was maintained at a moderate level. This would seem to indicate that other influences in the group or the community are at work.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Interviewing Instrument

For each individual interviewed determine the following:

1. Age
2. Place of Birth
If in Chicago, determine community.
3. Length of residence in present area
4. Length of residence in other areas
5. Birthplace of parents
6. Number of siblings
 - a. Brothers (older, younger)
 - b. Sisters (older, younger)
7. Establish respondent's place in family
8. How many brothers and sisters living at home
9. Other relatives living at home
10. How long have parents been married
11. If divorced, how long have parents been divorced?
12. Age of respondent at time of divorce
13. Has either parent remarried?
14. Does respondent see parent not living at home?
How often?
15. Does parent not living at home reside in same area
as respondent?
16. What is respondent's opinion of her parents' divorce?
17. Who are closest friends? List by first name only.
18. For each friend named: How long ago was friendship
established?

19. For each friend named: Where does friend reside?
20. For each friend named: How did respondent become acquainted with friend?
21. How often does respondent see each friend?
When was the last time this friend was seen?
22. What kind of activities?
Where
When
With whom
23. Grade in school
24. Academic status in school
Poor - Fair - Average - Good - Excellent
25. Schools attended
26. Ever attended parochial (or public) school?
If change, reason for change
27. Does respondent like school?
28. What does respondent like best about school?
29. What does respondent like least about school?
30. What changes would respondent make in school if any change were possible?
31. Does respondent attend church?
Where
How often
With whom
When last attended
With whom
32. Do parents attend church?
Mother - How often? - When last attended
Father - How often? - When last attended
33. What are respondents future plans
Marriage
Job
Education
Other
34. Has respondent ever used any type of alcohol or drug?

35. What was used? Identify each type of alcohol, drug, inhalant, etc.

For Each Substance:

36. What were the circumstances for the first time drug was used?
37. Alone or with others?
If others, how many?
Relationship to others
Male or female
38. Respondent's age at time of first use?
39. Expectations (What did you think was going to happen?
What did you expect?)
40. Reasons for use
41. Did respondent continue use?
How often?
When (on what occasions)
42. At what age is use of each substance appropriate?
Males
Females
43. What occasions are appropriate for use of each substance?
44. Reasons for continued use?
45. Are parents aware of respondent's use?
Are brothers/sisters/other relatives aware of respondent's use?
46. Identify substances still being used
47. Identify substances no longer being used

For Each Substance No Longer Used:

48. When was use discontinued?
49. Reasons for discontinuance of use
50. How long was substance used

For Each Substance Still Being Used:

51. Reason(s) for use
52. Does respondent know of other drugs which she has not used?
53. Does respondent plan to use any other drug(s)?
54. If so, for each drug, determine expectations regarding its use

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