

THE STOOP IS THE WORLD

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The city has always been a potent instrument of culture and pre-eminently the center of culture for the surrounding countryside. The city has also been the center of power for the establishment. Within the city itself there are numerous sub-cultures and sub-centers of power, some in opposition to the establishment, some exercising powers delegated by the establishment for the achievement of its own purposes, and some sub-centers which function within a context of their own making. Most of these sub-cultural units are the creation of adults, and when they do act primarily upon children, it is with the express purpose of imposing upon the child the ways of the adult. There was, however, in the New York City of the 1930's and 1940's, a sub-culture which was the creation of children and which had on the children composing it an impact no less enduring than the school, the church, and perhaps even the family. This was the stoop.

It is a wonder to me that sociologists, now that they have discovered the city and become less enraptured with the countryside, have failed to subject the stoop to analysis. Of course--to mention one possible reason--such types as sociologists would have been treated with little tenderness on the stoops that I have known. But a more basic reason is the unfortunate propensity of sociology to descend from the general to the particular. They discovered the city, then they came upon the neighborhood, and finally wandered into the block. But they have yet to penetrate the secret of the block--the stoop.

Most stoops are communal institutions. A stoop goes with a particular apartment building housing anywhere from 30 to 60 families. These families are--in spite of their economic position as renters--the proprietors of their stoop. They act as possessively over this piece of poured cement as the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer over his quarter section. This feeling of ownership is particularly intense among the kids in the apartment. There is no need to "post" a stoop; everyone on the block knows that you frequent any stoop but your own by invitation only. This has become so ritualized as to demand that various games make the rounds of all the stoops, that meetings of the teenage athletic and social club--or the gang--move from stoop to stoop, and that courting occur on the boy's stoop where he will feel more at ease and be less subject to harassment. This is the twist that the city gives to country-style courting on the girl's front porch.

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The stoop is the special possession of the young and the old. Not the very young or the halt and the lame, but the adolescent and the middle-aged and almost old. What the personal involvement of the latter in the stoop amounts to is conjectural. Few were children on that stoop, although many were parents of the stoop's breed and there are memories enough involved in that. To borrow a concept from the historian of the frontier, Frederick Jackson Turner, the stoop is a "safety valve." It is escape from the suffocation of an insect-ridden, under-windowed, greasy-smelling, and porous-walled apartment. It is the gathering place for crones and cronies. It is the last step before the sidewalk and all of its uncertainties. It is the home port--the Golden Gate of sidewalk mariners. How many times has Mrs. Gustavo or Mrs. Delaney sighed with relief when, heavily burdened with the day's groceries, she finally plants her foot on the first step while balancing four sacks of groceries on one knee, wiping her brow with a free arm, and gazing with something like disbelief at the distance she has just covered. She must have felt something like kinship to Columbus in those moments. And for the fledgling entrepreneur who moved quickly enough, there was a dime to be earned--providing he belonged to her stoop.

The stoop has increasing significance for the young from the time of toddling until the child went off to high school and its conflicting pulls. The stoop was a dominant factor in the life of a block child during adolescence. For a good long time it was perhaps the central environmental fact outside of the three to five room apartment upstairs.

There were, of course, more temporarily exciting places which the block child quickly discovered. There were the fire escapes, but they were made for climbing or to supply a ladder for purposes of sidewalk basketball. There were the stairwells inside the apartment houses. They were convenient places to use when a trip upstairs to the toilet was positively out of the question. There were the roofs. But they were meant to be crossed when playing guns or ring-go-leevio, or to provide sanctuary from the neighborhood cop or the cruelties of the bigger kids. Cellars were abundant--the Lost Caves of the block child. But they held terrors that made them useful for little but the testing of one's courage--the super's big red dog that came out for air on the end of a heavy chain three times a day and otherwise roamed the cellar; the colored porter entertaining his girl on a stack of newspapers destined to serve the war effort; and the huge rats and even bigger alley cats that leapt out at you from behind primeval mountains of junk. None of these places could substitute for the stoop. It was to the stoop that one returned after venturing into those murky and forbidden places.

From the time a block child left the stroller, he was navigationally oriented to the stoop. The child was forever commanded not to leave the stoop and always replying that he was only going to Manus' stoop--if Manus would have him. And that was the essence of the stoop. For Manus was the proud and aggressive champion of his stoop. It was

his territory.

There is much in the life of stoop children in their stoop world that squares beautifully with the animal world Robert Ardrey writes of so persuasively in The Territorial Imperative. Whether the correlation is biological or cultural is beside the point and whether this limited example of territoriality is part of nature's scheme to guarantee the existence of the group is beyond my comprehension. The fact is that Manus fought like hell if a strong kid threatened the stoop or if someone he was on-the-outs with at a particular moment sought admittance without permission. And Manus was well-nigh invincible when fighting against reasonable odds to maintain the integrity of his stoop. In addition, there was a very visible line dividing the hinterland of one stoop from that of another and a fight generally went less well for Manus when he crossed over that line into foreign territory. Then he became the invader and his antagonist the defender, and the tide of battle turned. In the fury of successful battle, while in hot pursuit of the invaders, the child rarely noticed that he had crossed the line. I have in that way experienced the German end of many a Stalingrad.

The stoop as well as the field and the forest had its rules for the treatment of the maverick and stranger. In stoop society the maverick was usually someone considered queer in some way. Obviously this was before the stoop kids knew what a "queer" really was. The odd kid may have been excessively fat or skinny or the kid who consistently screwed up in the various games. The strangers may have been friends and relatives visiting the stoop. They were the most vulnerable and met with disaster on all stoops. As for the odd ones, they were at the lowest point, even below the girls, in the pecking order of the stoop. They had no status. They contributed nothing to the stoop and derived no benefits from the stoop. But no one could touch them while on home territory except their co-residents--which was certainly no big deal for those unfortunates. When they did venture out they were battered from one stoop to another, but there was no crossing of territorial boundaries to pursue the prey. These poor souls remained prey to be sure but the names of the predators changed. It was a perfect sharing of the good time until the bloody, beaten, and screaming child made it to the less than secure sanctuary of his own stoop. By that time there was little enough left of him and his stoop masters generally allowed him access to the front door with little more than an innocuous shove or derisive remark.

The stoop was more than a field of battle. It was a society and, as in any society, there were the chiefs and the Indians and functional specialization. Age had certain prerogatives. Each step on the stoop corresponded to a certain grade in school and one advanced in sitting privileges along with the advance in school. Top step for sixth graders with the choice seats on the railings for junior and senior high. There were stoop leaders for each age group and a generalized stoop leadership chosen from those demonstrating superior physical and intellectual

abilities. The captain of the stoop stickball team was not necessarily the leader when the stoop determined upon a foraging expedition in Woolworths. The stoop leaders vied with their counterparts from other stoops for block leadership and beyond the block was the enemy. Leadership was derived from the grass roots and the stoop provided in-service training at all ages. If a block society had been faced with the same set of problems as the plane load of English boys in Lord of the Flies, survival would have been accomplished with much less damage to individuals and culture.

The stoops were owned and used in common by the children of multi-family living-units. Access to its myriad facilities required acceptance of certain residual, inviolable responsibilities. The stoop was the location of the child's first experiences in social living--in sharing, in cooperation. He had learned all that he really needed to know before junior high. He became more sophisticated and knowing in the ways of the group through his life as a part of the stoop society than he could ever achieve in grades one through six in P.S. 152. Schools thrived and maintained a semblance of order by pandering to the herd instinct. The stoop child fought this with obviously disastrous effects in terms of conduct marks and ratings as to cooperativeness, sociability and other similarly absurd behavioral categories. It was on the stoop that the child developed his unique qualities and a capacity to live with and frequently defer to his peers and superiors. Life in the stoop group taught that the strength and success of the whole depended upon the perfected talents and individual abilities of the parts. Stoops were pitted against each other in athletic and other forms of competition. The neighborhood rating of the block was determined by the success of each stoop in providing an outlet for talent while providing group cover for individual weakness. This was true whether or not the particular skills were, from an adult or perhaps police point of view, basically anti-social. They were social from the more crucial viewpoint of the stoop and the block. The lad from an efficiently organized block faced few difficulties when journeying unattended through other blocks in the neighborhood.

If an alien walked the entire length of the block, his total impression after the experience would be one of anarchy and chaos. The block at any time of the day swarms with children. The racket is frightful. Gritty little kids of all sizes and shapes, and ages (after 3 p.m.), mill around in apparent confusion. The sidewalk itself is an endless gaming table. There might be seven or eight potsee games going on--one in front of each stoop. The boys have chalked up the sidewalk for numerous skully games, played with bottlecaps filled with melted crayons purloined from school. Sets of four engage in furious boxball matches or, using the brick fronts of the buildings, a game of King with the loser "asses-up." At either end of the block where the billboards hang, boys stand 15 to 20 feet away and aim a Spauldeen at the low pointed end of the sign. Hit the point just right and the Spauldeen is lined out over the boy's head. Catch it on a fly

and you're out, but for each bounce you get a base. The stoops were used for stoopball, the curbs for curbball, the walls for off-the-wall; and the streets were used for stickball, association (a version of touch football played with a rightly rolled-up Sunday Daily News serving as the pigskin), or rollerskate hockey -- the most brutal game of them all.

Practically every square inch of the sidewalk and street was put to use and all at once. The block was impossible to navigate without getting belted by some flying body or object--the type of object depending upon the season of the year. But the alien intruder, believing that he had just witnessed the law of the jungle in operation, was way off base. Everything was highly organized right down to the most individual of all the games, the contest between the boy and the point of the billboard. He was running a league, keeping score and the standings of the clubs. He was also using the billboard at a scheduled time, for other boys were running other leagues and billboards were in short supply. You learn turn-taking and, if you are at all reluctant to give up the board, your Spauldeen winds up in the sewer or on some roof.

Everything had its season. Spring was the signal for marbles. But marble games had to be adapted to the absence of earth. Generally, the crowd broke down into two groups: proprietors and customers. The proprietors were the owners of a business establishment consisting of a lidless cigar box and a plentiful capital in marbles. The cigar box had three or four notches cut in one side. The notches were of varying sizes, a marble just fitting through the smallest. Above each notch was a number, the largest number over the smallest notch. A boy stood in the street facing the cigar box which was flush against the curb. Taking painful aim, he rolled his marble toward the box. If his aim was true and the marble went into a notch, he received his own shooter back plus the number of marbles the notch was worth. Each entrepreneur employed a sweeper responsible for keeping the frontage free of obstructions. There were joint-stock organizations with the company running perhaps three or four games of varying types. If the company was cleaned out, each partner was liable for only that percentage of the corporate debt corresponding to his original investment in marbles. None of these boys had ever heard of--or probably ever would--limited liability. None belonged to Junior Achievement. It just seemed the most reasonable arrangement. There was lending at interest. Old establishments went broke and new establishments took their places. Disputes were referred to a board of arbiters consisting of all those proprietors and clients present at the time. There were no fights. This, I suppose, was the ultimate proof of success.

Everything had its time. When a boy was Barmitxvah-ed he stopped playing skully and took to the street for stickball or punchball. These street games had precedence over all others. This was one of the prerogatives of age and skill. Stoopball and curbball games came to a halt when the stickball game began, for latitudinal games did not mix

with longitudinal. At that point the smaller fry, with no questions asked, retreated to the sidewalk and the adults retreated to their apartments.

Stickball is a classic sport. It is played with a sawed-off broomstick and a Spauldeen ball. Sometimes there is pitching on one bounce, with English, and sometimes you toss the ball up and hit it. Sometimes you run three bases and sometimes you run to the next manhole cover--about where second base would be--and back to home--another manhole cover. There were few three-manhole hitters. I only knew one and he is now a nuclear chemist at Berkeley--an absolute decline in status. Stickball is a demanding competitive sport. The ball comes at the fielder at great speed in a variety of shapes. You need a bale of loosely packed cotton for a glove to hold on to a liner or squibbler. The ball, if hit in fair territory, must be played off car fenders, windows, walls, hydrants, occupied baby buggies, and Mrs. Gustavo. The toughest play is the shot to straightaway center. Running at full speed, never taking your eye off the ball you have little chance to see the seltzer truck approaching from the opposite end of the block. Fortunately, the seltzer man always stopped. Why, I don't know, for his wares were at a premium (there is nothing in this world like a fight with compressed seltzer and as a result the truck never left the block without a few missing bottles.)

Each stoop had its own stickball team. The boys worked their way up through the minors: from stoopball to curbball to stickball. Not everyone made it but all tried. It was stoop versus stoop with the best from each stoop composing the block team which competed with similarly chosen squads from other blocks. To be chosen for the block team was the crowning achievement of a boy's career. Everything subsequent tended to be somewhat anticlimactic. Of course there were high school teams of one kind and another. But school was an annoying interruption of the day's activities. The day did not really begin until you were back on the block. It was there that the desire for status was fulfilled or thwarted. The status achieved in high school remained in the school building between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. and all day Saturday and Sunday. The rank achieved on the block was with the boy 24 hours a day. It was ineffacable.

As I said before yielding to dreams of ancient heroics and heroes on the stickball field, the stoop carried obligations. One was the instruction of the young in the skills necessary to stoop and block power. There were always some of the more promising young included in most activities. In fact, as I recall those days, the young were positively deferred to. They generally were first-up or had first throw. They were never exploited in such traditional games as hide-and-go-seek, kick-the-can, or three steps to Germany. They were defended if chased home by the tough kids from Sherman Avenue. They were dealt swift but impartial justice if they got out of hand. The punishment was a matter of stoop discipline, ideally by an older brother,

but at the least by the closest neighbor kid. The parents accepted it and rarely complained unless there was some question as to actual guilt. As a result most kids were well-trained and well-behaved in the ways of the stoop.

Girls received equal and respectful treatment before puberty. After that they became somewhat more equal. The girls had a social structure paralleling that of the boys; separate but equal with occasional integration that increased as both sexes matured. Naturally enough there was minor harassment practiced by both sides but by and large the girls played their games in their own times and seasons and under the same rules as the boys. When the girls became young women there was a pairing off between the sexes and surprisingly little discord over the choices. Mostly block boys went with block girls, at least until the last year or so of high school. Then the older group began to break up and maybe start going with a girl from Staten Island or a boy from the Bronx. This was not a sad time and there was no recrimination, for the stoop had served its purpose. In the wings were innumerable minor leaguers waiting to take over.

The stoop offered training in government as well as pre-marital life. There was an active hierarchy of leadership within each age group whose function was to organize the various activities; schedule the events, supply the equipment, provide the space, negotiate disputes, and in general establish justice, insure stoop and block tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the General Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty. It was all there in the stoop. The stoop group had never heard of James Madison and most would go to their graves trying to connect him with the 1940 Dodgers. And so what! He had nothing to teach the stoop. Nor did those unimaginably tedious classes in civics that came one after the other from J.H.S. 52 through George Washington, Xavier, or Peter Stuyvesant High Schools. The stoop was far more successful in achieving the designs of the Constitutional Generation than their creation ever will be. Washington, Hamilton, Adams, and Jefferson all wished ardently for a government by the natural elite--composed of such men as themselves. But they were unable to guarantee this beyond their own lives. On the block, however, the government was federal in nature, democratically administered by a natural elite chosen by common consent. No elections, no mediocrity, but complete egalitarianism. One for all, all for one. The stoop was heir to the traditions of the Roman Forum and the New England Town Meeting. As in the British Cabinet, dissent was allowed until the decision was made. At that point, discussion ended and unity prevailed. What better training could a boy receive. Once again it must be recognized that this unity could serve antisocial purposes, as the neighborhood Woolworth's manager could attest to.

So the stoop was a school. There was always the not-so-remote chance that you would have to fight someone. The stoop guaranteed that you would know how. There were boxing lessons provided by the best boxers

in the next age group. In the beginning all you learned was to tuck your nose and ears into your elbows and bob and weave and hide your tears as best you could. There was the world of sex. This was picked up as you went along. The new biology teaches it differently but the stoop kids learned it just as accurately on the roof or under the stairwell. Only the terminology was really different. The stoop demanded cooperation and respect between its members. You made your own way on the stoop and status could be changed with improvement. It was a mobile society and the ladder to success was wide enough to permit movement in both directions. The stoop fostered determination, competitiveness, individualism, and sociability. It did all the things that Professor Turner attributed to the frontier. Professor Turner probably never saw a stoop and never hoped to see one, but given his imaginativeness and capacity to generalize it is regrettable that he did not grow up in the New York City of the late 1930's and early 1940's.

There is nothing remarkable about the physical appearance of a stoop. It is not structurally noteworthy and rarely makes its way onto the pages of a text in art and architecture. By an outsider, the stoop is seen only as an architectural appendage of the building behind it. But for the stoop group, the building was an appendage of the stoop. The small apartment where you ate and slept was significant of course because of the family. It was also significant because it gained you entry to the stoop.

Whatever the joys of the apartment, however much love and care were lavished on the child by the parents, regardless of the daily thrills of radio's Jack Armstrong or the Lone Ranger, three rooms and a bath could be terribly restraining. And so it was out the door, zooming down four flights of stairs three at a time, with a quick glance under the stairwell, and perhaps a kick at the door of the irascible Mrs. Pissato or sticking your gum on the door knob of no one in particular, and out the plate glass door onto the stoop. Picture Balboa at his moment of achievement. With the green jungle behind him and the infinity of the Pacific below him, he wonders what to do next. Thus, the perplexity facing the stoop child when he hits the stoop at 7 a.m. Saturday morning. There was a teeming world below him. With a Rebel yell and a mighty leap over the last six steps, he was off the LST and on the beach at Iwo or Anzio.

During the course of a single day the stoop, while apparently undergoing no visible alteration, was constantly in metamorphosis. It might start out as the bow of an LST and wind up as the watch tower of a castle under attack by an unknown but evil enemy armed with trashcan cover shields and orange crate broadswords. It was defended to the death by Prince Valiant and his companions. Between early morning and early evening it was a hundred other places and attacked and defended by a hundred different armies. It was the quarterdeck of a frigate or the bridge of a battleship, a stagecoach, a fort somewhere out west beyond the Hudson, the scene of a great bank robbery, a dry gulf (we meant gulch but had no way of knowing our error).

The stoop crowd passed through a thousand years of history in a single day, reenacting the monumental battles of mankind, admittedly with no respect for chronology or accuracy. The victor at any given battle might or might not be the historical conqueror. The weapons used were formidable and wielded with passion and dexterity. The broadsword easily shattered against the corrugated iron of a trashcan cover in which case you were run through with ease. But the sword was just as easily splintered against an exposed limb, denoting victory. If the battle called for firearms, the stoop boys had their own ordinance in ingeniously contrived pieces of wood shaped with great care which fired squares of linoleum by means of a heavy rubber band nailed to one end, brought up tightly over the other and released with the thumb. They were accurate. A well constructed rifle could send a one inch square of linoleum over the roof of a six story apartment house. Since any plane whizzing through the air has a tendency to veer, the trajectories had to be calculated nicely. There were many Sargent Yorks on the block. The kids were also mechanized. Three or four of the linoleum rifles were mounted on top of scooters, made from orange crates, 2 x 4's, and roller-skate wheels. Thus equipped, Nu block frequently launched attacks against Academy Street or Sherman Avenue. It was not unusual to field 50 to 60 scooters for a given assault. There was never any question about who was hit.

All of these games had to do with war. But at this particular time fathers, brothers, cousins, uncles, Sonny from upstairs, all of these men and millions like them were waging a war that the stoop kids believed to be--without knowing why--of the utmost importance and which the increasing number of gold stars on the thousand-windowed block effectively accentuated. So in a way, the stoop kids participated in the world's violence. They acted it out in a hundred ways on as many different days. They were barraged with patriotic appeals. They sat through "Wake Island," "Back to Bataan," "Corregidor" and all the other war movies. On two of the billboards were pictures of slant-eyed, evil-looking Japanese soldiers. In the schools, more than normally, history became solely a recitation of great American victories against overwhelming odds. Few would ever learn of the equal responsibility of the United States for the Mexican War or that the Spanish-American War was something less than splendid. But in spite of the brainwashing, this was not a violent bunch of kids. Whatever substance there is to the concept of American fairplay, it was a rule of the game on the stoop. The vanquished were treated with dignity and respect, the wounded well attended by both sides, and the defeated went through the motions of surrender with a symbolism sufficient to the demands of the victor. There were no Nurembergs, for the stoop kids realized--better than their elders--that today's victory can be followed by tomorrow's defeat.

On this block of concrete stoops each jutting out onto the sidewalk like a great club-foot and crawling with life, there was a special stoop hidden from view. One reached it by walking through a passageway no more

than 4½ feet wide into an alley about 15 feet wide. On the immediate right were stairs into the cellar and over this was an iron stoop with railings and only two steps. At one time it must have been a bright orange, about the color that is interminably splashed on the Golden Gate, but as I knew it, the stoop was rusty and rickety. I came and went over this stoop at least 70,000 times over a period of 18 years. The apartment appended to the stoop contained three rooms, a bath and a long hallway that was meant to be public but quickly became private, serving as storage room, workshop, laboratory, study, meeting place, sleeping place, and exit onto the stoop. In that apartment of 400 square feet dwelled a family of four, sharing it with occasional dogs, cats, fish, and roaches. There was also all the parental affection, discipline, and instruction that a boy could need.

But it was still down the hall and out the door to the stoop-- but with a difference. Being on the stoop had more or less significance according to the order of the day. Once on the stoop all that could be seen was a whitewashed wall about eight feet away or the Pritchard's bathroom window directly above the passageway and directly under 5 other bathroom windows. The state of the weather was not always immediately apparent nor the state of the block. This information was at the daylight end of the passageway.

I had the unrivaled advantage of a choice between two worlds. As an honorary member of all the stoops on the block, I lit where I pleased for the day and was graciously accommodated. As the owner of a stoop, a world of my own invention was available, to be shared with whomsoever I pleased or to be inviolably private. The privacy was occasionally challenged and not won without a struggle. But not only were the invaders on alien ground, fighting against the territorial instinct but they had to get at me through the passageway. It was a veritable Thermopylae. Now, at the other end of the apartment house was a similar alley connected across the back with mine. How simple to send one force in that alley to attack in the rear. But it never happened. It was a frontal assault or nothing; an assault against a determined boy through a heavily barricaded passageway. Armed with a high-powered linoleum rifle, I was all but invulnerable. All but-- for occasionally the rubberband broke, forcing a hasty and humiliating retreat into the hallway. But these piratical incursions were infrequent for this stoop was too useful to risk alienating its owner. And I was one of the gang and not to be treated lightly.

This stoop was neutral territory and served as the general meeting place of the block. The passageway or alleyway was a good place to sit out a rain or get in out of the bitter wind or play some cards or just take a break and do nothing. Unlike the stoop, it was open to all. It was only with my consent or in spite of my dissent that the stoop was used. But one way or another I figured in the decision. It was never used by my peers or superiors when I was absent.

This was as much unwritten law as the prohibition of attack from the rear. While the stoop group may have envied my good fortune, they recognized the private character of that one stoop. My use of it, on the other hand, was minimized by the ability of all the stoops to retaliate by denying me entry into the games of the block. So it was necessary, even while I was driven headlong into the hallway, to initiate the process of reconciliation. Frequently I was too obtuse or embittered to accept this gracefully and I harassed the barbarians with sniper fire from tiny portholes cut through the window screen or by a sudden sally with a dishpan of hot water. It was always my refusal to accept the extended hand that postponed the moment of peace. Peace always came and always with arms and banners retained. It was a peace without victory and, again, beyond the accomplishment of our elders.

For a time in the life cycle of the block child his horizons were more limited than those of the Ancients. The stoop was the most secure place on the outside. The stoop was the world or the center thereof. Without knowing it, the stoop group functioned in a Ptolemaic universe. All of the world that needed seeing could be viewed from the stoop. It was a self-contained and self-sufficient world--a unity. None of the stoop group believed of course that the world could be shut out or that one should venture no further than Post Avenue and Dyckman Street. They did get shunted off to school. There was the excitement of 181st Street or Fordham Road and Grand Concourse. They could easily slip under the turnstiles of the subway and ride to hell and back--say Flushing Meadows or 242nd Street. There existed the remote possibility of a trip to New Jersey or even Connecticut with the CYO or PAL. And, as the years passed, more and more of the stoop group did these things. They went, whether to Kansas or Korea or both, as graduates of the stoop school.

The products of that unique school are far more explicable as human beings because of their lives on the stoop than they are as members of the institutions and organizations imposed on and provided for them by adult society. Schools, secular and religious, Boy Scouts, the Lone Star Battalion, the local youth center, the YMCA--none of these well-intentioned organizations really made a damn bit of difference. Their ultimate purpose was to get the kids off the stoop and the street, but the kids cooled it by taking the stoop with them. It was a triumph of folkways.