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# NEGRO HARLEM: AN ECOLOGICAL STUDY

E. FRANKLIN FRAZIER

## ABSTRACT

In contrast to the Negro community in Chicago with a spatial pattern determined almost entirely by the ecological organization of the larger community, the radial expansion of the Harlem Negro community from its center, the area in which Negroes first settled, can be represented by five zones, similar to the pattern of zones of a self-contained city. The expansion of the Negro population coincides with the degree of physical deterioration in these zones as indicated by the proportion of nonresidential structures and lodging-houses, and by the type, age, and condition of residential structures. The ecological organization of the Negro community was indicated in the significant increases in the proportion of women, children, and married men and women in the population and in the ratio of children to women of child-bearing age of the successive zones marking the outward expansion of the community. Family desertion and the proportion of families on Home Relief declined in the successive zones. The distribution of crime and delinquency did not reveal significant variations from zone to zone. While the concentration of economic, political, and cultural institutions in the first zone distinguished this area as the center of community life, the dispersion of recreational institutions revealed the extent to which the main arteries of travel and the "satellite loops" marred the symmetry of the general pattern. This study indicates that a local community inhabited by a segregated racial or cultural group may develop the same pattern of zones as the larger urban community.

In a study published a few years ago, the writer was able to show, by means of an ecological analysis, that the organization and disorganization of Negro family life in the northern city were closely tied up with the economic and social structure of the Negro community.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, in the case of Chicago, it was found that, as a result of the selection and segregation incident to the expansion of population, the Negro community had assumed a definite spatial pattern. This spatial pattern bore the impress of the ecological organization of the larger community and could be represented by seven zones indicating the outward expansion of the community from the slum area about the central business district. On the basis of these seven zones it was possible to measure the selection and segregation, as revealed in the distribution of occupational classes, in the proportion of males, mulattoes, and illiterates in the population

<sup>1</sup> See *The Negro Family in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932).

and other indexes to the economic and social structure of the community. Family disorganization—measured in terms of family dependency and desertion—nonsupport, illegitimacy, and juvenile delinquency were found to diminish in the successive zones marking the progressive stabilization of community life.

With the results of the Chicago study in mind, the writer undertook, on the basis of materials collected while making a survey of Harlem for The Mayor's Commission on Conditions in Harlem, to determine to what extent the Negro community in Harlem had assumed a natural or ecological order during its expansion.<sup>2</sup> The results of this study are embodied in the present article.

#### I. ORIGIN, GROWTH, AND EXPANSION OF THE NEGRO COMMUNITY

Reports differ concerning the historical events leading up to the settlement of the Negro in Harlem; but it seems fairly well established that Harlem had already deteriorated as a residential area when Negroes began finding homes there at the opening of the present century.<sup>3</sup> As is usually the case when Negroes first enter neighborhoods occupied by whites, the movement of Negroes into Harlem provoked a storm of protest. The *New York Herald* of July 10, 1906, reported indignation meetings "throughout the neighborhood of West 135th Street, where thirty-five white families" were to be ejected to make room for Negro tenants. The article ended with the following comment: "It is generally believed by the residents, however, that the establishment of the Negroes in 135th Street is only the nucleus of a Negro settlement that will extend over a very wide area of Harlem within the next few years."<sup>4</sup>

The prophecy contained in the concluding comment has been fulfilled by the subsequent growth of the Harlem Negro community. From the small settlement in the block referred to above, the Negro community has gradually spread out in all directions. While the expansion of the Negro community in Harlem has been governed largely by social and economic forces similar to those that have

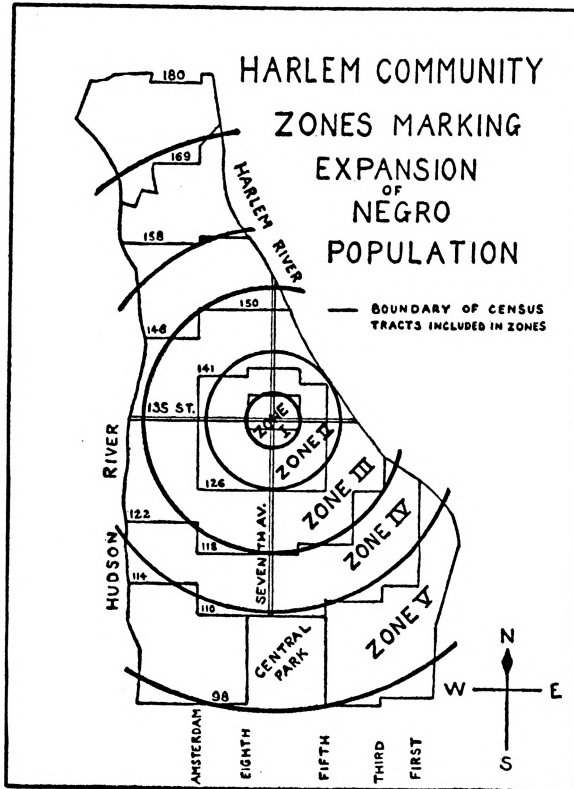
<sup>2</sup> The Commission was appointed by Mayor LaGuardia following the outbreak in Harlem on March 19, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> See Clyde Vernon Kiser, *Sea Island to City* (New York, 1932), pp. 19-20.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 21.

determined the growth of the Negro community in Chicago, an important difference in the growth of these two communities is observable. Whereas the growth of the Negro community in Chicago was dominated, as we have indicated, almost entirely by the ecologi-

MAP I



cal organization of the city of Chicago, the Harlem Negro community has shown a large measure of autonomy in its growth and, as we shall see, has assumed the same pattern of zones as a self-contained city.

The radial expansion of the Negro population from the area about One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street and Seventh Avenue may be represented ideally by drawing concentric circles about the census



tract in which the intersection of these two main thoroughfares is located<sup>5</sup> (see Map I). In 1910 there were 15,028 Negroes or 54 per cent of the Negroes in the Harlem area concentrated in the first two zones (see Table 1). At that time Negroes comprised less than a fifth of the entire population of these two zones; while in the three remaining zones marking the outward expansion of the Negro community, they became less and less significant in the population (see Diagram I). By 1920 Negroes constituted over three-fourths of the population of the first zone, over half of that of the second zone,

TABLE 1  
 NEGRO POPULATION IN THE FIVE ZONES OF THE HARLEM  
 COMMUNITY, NEW YORK CITY, 1910, 1920  
 1930, AND 1934

Zone	1910	1920	1930	1934*
I.....	1,856	9,053	12,585	7,661
II.....	13,172	43,734	72,214	59,783
III.....	6,145	22,661	64,368	67,304
IV.....	1,879	2,058	40,312	55,337
V.....	5,775	6,742	14,415	13,397
Total.....	27,827	83,248	203,894	203,482

\* Census by the New York Housing Authority.

and about a seventh of the population of the third. Up to 1920, whites in the two outlying zones still resisted the expanding Negro population. However, by 1930, the Negro had not only taken over almost the entire first zone and increased to seven-eighths and two-fifths of the populations of the second and third zones, respectively, but had become a significant element—22.7 per cent—in the population of the fourth zone. Even in the fifth zone Negroes had increased from 2.5 to 6.2 per cent. This was due chiefly to the movement of Negroes into the area between Fifth Avenue and the Harlem River (see Map I). The bulk of the Negro population in the fifth zone had hitherto been concentrated in the neighborhood of Amsterdam

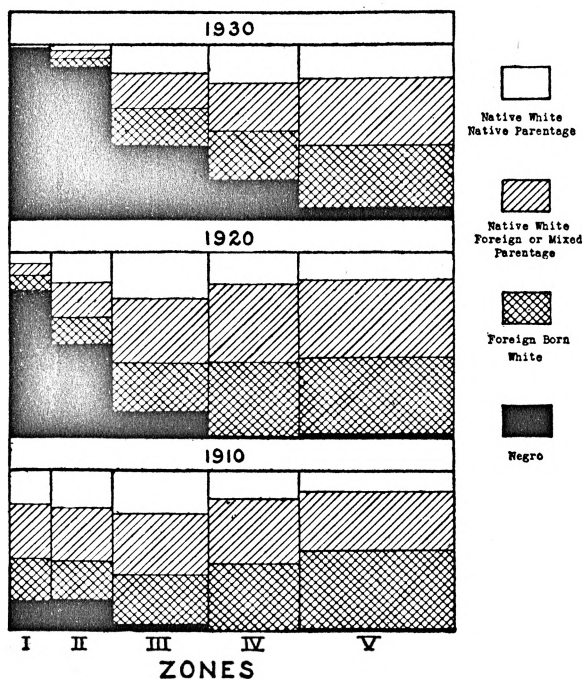
<sup>5</sup> Statistical data from the federal census and other sources on the five zones are based on data for the census tracts which are included more or less in five zones as represented ideally on Map I. Data on Zone I are drawn from statistics on one census tract, No. 228; while data on the other four zones are based on statistics on the successive groups of census tracts encircling this central census tract.

Avenue and Ninety-eighth Street, this settlement being an extension of the West Side Negro community rather than an expansion of the Harlem community.

Although the five zones indicate the general tendency of the population to expand radially from the center of the community, the

DIAGRAM I

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE FOUR NATIVITY GROUPS IN THE POPULATION OF EACH OF THE FIVE ZONES OF THE HARLEM COMMUNITY, NEW YORK CITY, 1930, 1920, AND 1910



Negro population has not expanded to the same extent in all directions. Because of economic and social factors, the expansion of the Negro population has followed many tortuous paths. It has been held in check until residential areas have deteriorated and therefore have become accessible not only to Negroes but to Italians and Puerto Ricans who live in areas adjacent to those inhabited by Negroes. In some instances white residential areas, when almost

surrounded by the expanding Negro population, have put up a long and stubborn resistance to the invasion of the Negro. This was the case with the area about Mount Morris Park; but when this area lost its purely residential character, and brownstone fronts became rooming-houses, the eventual entrance of the Negro was foreshadowed. Then, too, the advance of the Negro had been heralded by the location of light industries, as in the western section of Harlem where, after the establishment of a brewery doomed the area as a residential neighborhood for whites of foreign extraction, signs inviting Negro tenants began to appear on houses. But it seems that

TABLE 2  
 PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION NEGRO AND TYPES OF STRUCTURES IN FIVE ZONES OF THE HARLEM COMMUNITY, NEW YORK CITY

	ZONES				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Percentage of population Negro in 1930.....	99.0	87.8	41.4	22.7	6.2
Percentage of structures that were nonresidential in 1934.....	83.8	78.2	59.8	42.5	28.0
Percentage of nonresidential structures that were rooming- and lodging-houses in 1934*.....	34.2	32.0	31.5	23.0	18.5

\* Rooming- and lodging-houses are classified as nonresidential structures.

the westward expansion of the Negro population has been definitely halted at Amsterdam Avenue and will not be able to invade the exclusive residential area on Riverside Drive.<sup>6</sup>

We can get some idea of the relation between the expansion of the Negro population and the character of the areas into which it has spread by considering the predominant types of structures located in the five zones. First, we note in Table 2 that the Negro population predominates in those zones where the majority of the structures are nonresidential in character. Then, if we consider more closely the character of these nonresidential structures, we find that the Negro population is concentrated in those zones where rooming- and

<sup>6</sup> Since 1920 there has been a decrease in the number of Negroes west of Amsterdam Avenue.

lodging-houses comprise a relatively large proportion of the non-residential structures. If further analysis were made of the various zones, it would probably reveal an even closer relationship between the expansion of the Negro population and the location of non-residential structures.

Further light on the relation between the expansion of the Negro community and the physical character of the areas into which Negroes have moved is afforded by data on the type, age, and condition of the residential structures in the five zones.<sup>7</sup> In respect to type of residential structures, the third zone showed a comparatively large proportion of one-family dwellings. This was due to the fact that the western section of the third zone (see Map I) includes a large part of the Riverside Drive area. The most noteworthy difference between the zones appeared in the proportion of hotels, boarding-houses, and institutions which were simply classified as "other." The proportion of this type of residential structure declined sharply from 51.7 per cent in the first zone to 14.9 per cent in the fifth. In the distribution of the residential structures according to their age, the differences in the physical character of the zones stand out more clearly. In the first and second zones, where 99 and 87.8 per cent of the residents, respectively, were Negroes, 90 per cent of the residential structures were thirty-five years of age and over. For the remaining three zones the proportion of older structures declined significantly except in the fourth zone which included a large number of deteriorated tenements in the eastern section. This is the very section of the fourth zone in which Negroes have settled. However, the relation between the condition of the residential structures in the various zones and the expansion of the Negro population is obscured by the fact that the zones are far from homogeneous in physical character. While the third and fifth zones showed the greatest proportion of first-class residential structures, the fourth zone had the highest proportion of fourth-class dwellings. Nevertheless, there was a smaller proportion of first- and second-class dwellings in the first zone than in any of the other four zones. This was true despite the fact that there was a higher proportion of first-

<sup>7</sup> Space does not permit the inclusion of table containing this information.

class dwellings in the first zone than in either the second or the fourth zone. The comparatively large proportion of first-class structures in the first zone was due to the rehabilitation of this area.

## II. AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION

The selection and segregation which have taken place as the Negro population has expanded are seen, first, in the variations in the proportion of grown people in the five zones. Practically four out of five persons in the first zone were adults in 1930 (see Table 3). In the second zone the proportion of adults in the population declined to three out of four, and in the next three zones, from about seven to six out of ten persons in the population. The tendency on the part of older persons to become segregated toward the center of the community is reflected also in the relative number of children in the population of the various zones. In the first or central zone only 3.8 per cent of the entire population in 1930 was under five years of age. The proportion of children in this age group increased in each of the successive zones until it reached 12.3 per cent in the fifth zone. There was also a slight increase in the proportion of females in the successive zones marking the outward expansion of the population. Here, too, the influence of selective factors was apparent. For, although there was an excess of females in the total population of the community, the excess of females in the first zone was counterbalanced by the tendency on the part of males to concentrate there. A graphic picture of the differences in the age and sex composition of the five zones is given in Diagram II.

## III. MARITAL STATUS OF THE POPULATION

The tendency on the part of family groups to move toward the periphery of the community was shown in the increasing proportion of married men and women in the successive zones.<sup>8</sup> In the first zone or center of the community only half of the men and women were married. From this zone outward the percentage of both men and

<sup>8</sup> The tendency on the part of foreign-born Negroes to move toward the periphery of the community was probably due to the fact that the foreign Negro population was comprised largely of family groups with children. The percentage of foreign-born Negroes in each of the five successive zones was as follows: 11.9, 15, 20, 22.6, and 15.6, respectively.

DIAGRAM II

AGE AND SEX PYRAMIDS SHOWING THE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF MALES AND FEMALES IN THE NEGRO POPULATION OF EACH OF THE FIVE ZONES OF THE HARLEM COMMUNITY, NEW YORK CITY, ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING AGE PERIODS: UNDER FIVE; EACH FIVE-YEAR PERIOD FROM FIVE TO THIRTY-FOUR; EACH TEN-YEAR PERIOD FROM THIRTY-FIVE TO SEVENTY-FOUR; AND SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AND OVER (1930)

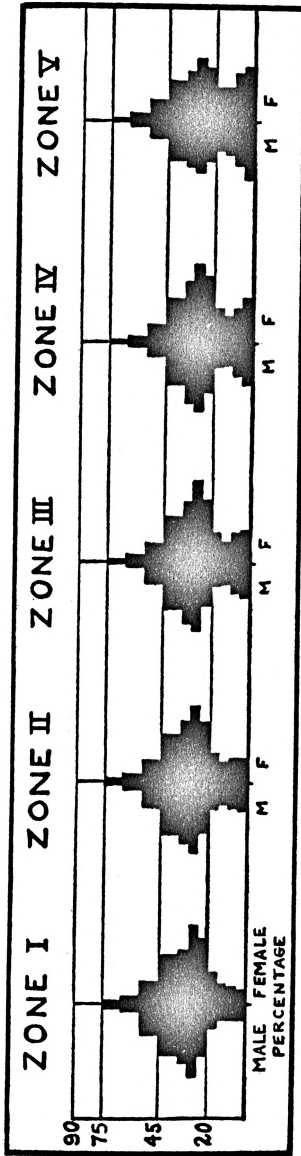


TABLE 3  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF MALES AND FEMALES IN THE NEGRO POPULATION OF EACH OF THE FIVE ZONES OF THE HARLEM COMMUNITY, NEW YORK CITY, 1930

AGE PERIOD	ZONE I		ZONE II		ZONE III		ZONE IV		ZONE V	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
75+	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.2
65-74	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.6
55-64	1.0	1.7	1.4	1.6	1.2	1.4	0.9	1.2	1.3	1.5
45-54	6.3	5.8	5.3	5.0	4.4	4.3	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.3
35-44	11.4	11.2	11.0	10.7	10.0	10.0	8.8	8.5	8.5	8.7
30-34	6.5	6.0	6.5	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.7	6.8	5.0	5.4
25-29	8.0	8.6	7.5	8.4	7.4	9.0	7.6	8.5	5.5	6.9
20-24	5.8	7.1	5.1	6.9	4.9	6.9	5.5	7.1	4.4	5.9
15-19	2.7	3.6	2.6	3.4	2.6	3.5	2.9	3.8	3.2	3.7
10-14	1.9	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.7	2.9	3.7	3.7
5-9	1.9	2.0	2.8	2.9	3.3	3.0	3.8	3.9	4.8	5.4
-5...	1.9	1.9	2.9	2.9	3.7	3.7	4.9	4.8	6.3	6.0
Total	48.6	50.9	47.7	51.9	47.0	52.2	47.6	52.0	47.1	52.3

women married increased until it amounted, in the fifth or outermost zone, to 64.2 per cent for the men and 60.1 per cent for the women. Correlated with the increase in the proportion of men and women married was the gradual decline not only in the proportion of men and women single in the successive zones but also in the proportion of widowed persons in these five zones. Although these figures do not give an absolutely correct picture of the marital condition of the men and women in the community, it is interesting to note that the proportion of men and women widowed was highest in the center of the

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGE OF NEGRO MALES AND FEMALES 15 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, AND DIVORCED IN THE FIVE ZONES OF THE HARLEM NEGRO COMMUNITY, NEW YORK CITY, 1930

Marital Status	Sex	Zone I	Zone II	Zone III	Zone IV	Zone V
Single.....	M	42.6	38.5	35.3	34.0	31.1
	F	30.9	27.6	26.3	25.6	23.5
Married.....	M	49.8	56.0	60.3	62.3	64.2
	F	50.5	54.8	57.6	59.8	60.1
Widowed.....	M	7.3	4.7	3.6	2.9	3.8
	F	17.6	16.4	15.0	13.0	14.4
Divorced.....	M	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.5
	F	0.6	0.8	0.7	1.1	1.6

community where one would expect to find considerable family disorganization. The decline in the percentage of widowed among the males was even greater than among the females. At the same time there was an increase in the proportion of divorced persons in the successive zones as one left the center of the community. A possible explanation of the comparatively larger number of divorced persons in the outer zones is that it may indicate a greater regard for legal requirements in the breaking of marital ties.

IV. RATIO OF CHILDREN, BIRTHS, AND DEATHS

The low fertility of Negroes in northern cities has been revealed in a number of important studies. For example, Thompson and Whelpton have shown that there has been a marked tendency for the ratio of children to Negro women of child-bearing age to vary inversely

with size of city.<sup>9</sup> According to these same authors, Negroes in large cities, including Chicago and New York, "were not maintaining their numbers on a permanent basis in either 1920 or 1928."<sup>10</sup> The extremely low fertility of Negroes in Chicago has been clearly demonstrated by Phillip M. Hauser, of the University of Chicago, in an unpublished study. In the case of Chicago the present writer has shown in a study of the Negro family how selective factors within the Negro community affected the relative fertility of different sections of the Negro population.<sup>11</sup> Lately, Kiser found in a study of Negro birth-rates in a health area of Harlem that the fertility of Negro women was lower than that of white women of a similar or even a higher occupational level in Syracuse and two other urban communities.<sup>12</sup> Kiser indicated in his study that the low fertility of Negroes was "due partly to selective processes with reference to residence in Harlem as indicated by higher birth rates among the colored population in other parts of the city."<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact, even within Harlem itself important differences are revealed if the fertility of Negro women is studied in relation to the selective processes within the community. These differences became apparent when the children under five to women of child-bearing age was calculated for the five zones by which we have indicated the expansion of the Harlem Negro community. We find that both in 1920 and in 1930 there was, with one exception, a regular increase in the ratio of children from the first to the fifth zone. In 1930 the ratio of children in the fifth zone was 462 or four times that in the first zone. The exception to the general trend, observable in the fourth zone in 1920, was probably due to the fact that at that time only a small number of economically better-situated families had moved into

<sup>9</sup> Warren S. Thompson and P. K. Whelpton, *Population Trends in the United States* (New York, 1933), p. 280.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>11</sup> See *The Negro Family in Chicago*, pp. 136-45. The highest ratio of children—276—to women of child-bearing age was found in the seventh zone which was farthest removed from the center of the city; while the lowest ratio—143—was in the third zone—an area distinguished by vice and other forms of social disorganization.

<sup>12</sup> Clyde V. Kiser, "Fertility of Harlem Negroes," *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, XIII (July, 1935), 273-85.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.



this zone. On the other hand, the changes between 1920 and 1930 in the ratio of children in the three outer zones seem to indicate a move-

TABLE 5

NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 TO 1000 NEGRO WOMEN 20-44 YEARS OF AGE IN FIVE ZONES OF THE HARLEM COMMUNITY, NEW YORK CITY, 1920 AND 1930

ZONE	1930			1920		
	Women, Age 20-44	Children under 5	Ratio of Children to Women	Women, Age 20-44	Children under 5	Ratio of Children to Women
I.....	4,141	476	115	3,083	336	109
II.....	23,612	4,160	176	15,021	2,793	186
III.....	21,107	4,749	225	7,217	1,858	257
IV.....	12,498	3,940	315	805	173	214
V.....	3,872	1,790	462	2,262	621	274

TABLE 6

NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN TO 1000 NEGRO MARRIED WOMEN, 15-44 YEARS OLD, AND RATIO OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 TO NEGRO WOMEN 15 AND OVER, MARRIED, WIDOWED, AND DIVORCED IN FIVE ZONES OF THE HARLEM COMMUNITY, NEW YORK CITY, 1930

Zone	Married Women, Age 15-44 (Estimated)	Number of Births	Births Per 1000 Married Women, Age 15-44	Women, Age 15 and Over, Married, Widowed, and Divorced	Children under 5	Ratio of Children to Women, Age 15 and Over, Married, Widowed, and Divorced
I.....	2,495	165	66.1	3,883	476	123
II.....	15,087	1,230	81.5	22,670	4,160	184
III.....	13,883	1,276	91.9	20,246	4,749	234
IV.....	8,552	1,211	141.6	12,120	3,940	325
V.....	2,833	477	168.4	4,104	1,790	436
Total....	42,850	4,359	101.7	63,023	15,115	240

ment toward or settlement in the peripheral zones by the more fertile groups.

We can get further light on the relation between the fertility of

Negro women and residence in the various areas of the community by studying the ratio of children to women fifteen years of age and over who were married, widowed, and divorced and the number of births to married women fifteen to forty-four years of age. Here, again, we find the ratio of children increasing regularly in the successive zones marking the expansion of the Negro community. The same trend was apparent in regard to birth-rates in 1930. In the first zone there were only 66.1 births per one thousand Negro married women fifteen to forty-four years of age. But, as in the case of the ratio of children, the fertility of the women in the successive zones increased according to their distance from the center of the community. The fertility of the women in the fifth zone was slightly over two and one-half times as great as it was in the first.

Because of the differences in the age and sex composition of the five zones, the crude death-rates were not significant. However, when the ratio of births to deaths was calculated, important differences appeared. In the first zone deaths were in excess of births, while in the second zone they almost balanced the births. In the next three zones the number of births per one hundred deaths increased from 149 to 225 and declined to 167 in the outermost zone. In respect to infant mortality there was little difference between the zones, the highest infant death rate—10.8—being in the second zone, and the lowest—7.8—being in the fourth zone.

#### V. CRIME, DELINQUENCY, AND DEPENDENCY

When we study such phenomena as crime and delinquency in their relation to the ecological organization of the Harlem Negro community, it appears that economic and cultural factors affect their distribution to a far greater extent than the distribution of the population with respect to age, sex, marital condition, and fertility.<sup>14</sup> First, we note (Table 7) that, during the first six months of 1930, the highest number of arrests in proportion to men in the population occurred in the second zone just outside of the center of Negro Harlem's economic and cultural life. The rate of adult delinquency measured in terms of arrests declined gradually in the next two

<sup>14</sup> In a recent article Park has pointed out the fact that in human society the natural or ecological social order is limited and modified by institutional and cultural factors; see Robert Ezra Park, "Human Ecology," *American Journal of Sociology*, XLII, 12-15.

zones. But we find that the rate in the outermost zone equaled that in the center of the community. As we have already indicated, the southern portion of this outermost zone included a slum section and therefore manifested many of the characteristics of a slum area. The juvenile delinquency rates for the five zones were even more difficult to explain on the basis of the general community pattern without a knowledge of the variations in the character of these zones. In 1930—and the same held true for the five-year period from 1930 to 1934—the juvenile delinquency rate, measured in terms of boys

TABLE 7  
CRIME AND DELINQUENCY RATES IN THE FIVE ZONES OF THE  
HARLEM NEGRO COMMUNITY, NEW YORK CITY

Zone	Number of Males 17 Years and Over, 1930*	Number of Arrests of Males First Six Months, 1930	Arrests Per 100 Males 17 Years and Over	Number of Boys 10-16 Years of Age, 1930*	Number of Boys Arrested, 1930	Number of Boys Arrested Per 100 Boys, Age 10-16
I.....	5,329	333	6.2	329	18	5.5
II.....	28,256	2,204	8.0	2,326	105	4.5
III.....	23,065	1,350	5.8	2,088	120	5.7
IV.....	14,274	597	4.2	1,462	70	4.8
V.....	4,508	284	6.2	716	31	4.3

\* Number of men and boys seventeen and sixteen years of age, respectively, estimated.

arrested in proportion to boys ten to sixteen years of age, was practically as low in the second zone as in the outermost zone.<sup>15</sup>

Although dependency as represented in the comparatively few cases handled by the Charity Organization Society in 1930-31 did not indicate the influence of selective factors in the ecological organization of the Negro community, selection was apparent in the desertion rates and more especially in the proportion of families on Home Relief in the five zones (see Table 8). Desertion rates, based upon desertion cases handled by the Charity Organization Society, declined from 9.0 per one thousand families in the first zone to 4.0 in the fifth. On the basis of the census made by the New York City

<sup>15</sup> It might be mentioned in this connection that adult and juvenile delinquency in Chicago fitted into the much-simpler ecological pattern of the Negro community; see *The Negro Family in Chicago*, chap. x.

Housing Authority in 1934, the number of families on Home Relief declined from 709 per one thousand in the first zone to 284 in the fifth zone. However, it should be noted that the highest percentage—91.2—of families on relief was found in a census tract in the second zone, south of the census tract which constitutes the first zone in our scheme. But, in spite of this variation from the general pattern, the percentage of families on Home Relief in the poorer sections of the fifth zone varied slightly from the average for the entire zone. In view of what our statistics indicate concerning the

TABLE 8  
DEPENDENCY AND DESERTION IN THE FIVE ZONES OF THE HARLEM  
NEGRO COMMUNITY, NEW YORK CITY

ZONE	TOTAL NEGRO FAMILIES 1930	C.O.S. UNDER CARE FAMILIES				TOTAL NEGRO FAMILIES 1934	FAMILIES ON HOME RELIEF SEPT., 1935	
		All Cases		Desertion Cases			Number	Rate Per 1,000 Families
		Number	Rate Per 1,000 Families	Number	Rate Per 1,000 Families			
I.....	2,221	80	36	20	9.0	2,110	1,497	709
II.....	15,793	448	28	83	5.2	16,321	9,560	585
III.....	16,145	533	33	78	4.8	18,875	7,473	395
IV.....	9,558	343	35	34	3.5	14,045	4,658	311
V.....	3,717	140	37	15	4.0	3,886	1,104	284

nature of group life in these various zones, it seems reasonable to conclude that the large number of families on relief in the zones close to the center of the community was associated with the breakdown of group life as represented by normal family life in these areas.

#### VI. DISTRIBUTION OF INSTITUTIONS

The distribution of institutions in the Harlem Negro community reflects in a visible form the general community pattern. The concentration of institutions in the first zone was vividly portrayed by Rudolph Fisher in a story of Negro life there. "In a fraction of a mile of 135th Street," he wrote, "there occurs every institution necessary to civilization from a Carnegie Library opposite a public school at one point to a police station beside an undertaker's parlor at

another."<sup>16</sup> A recent survey of this area revealed the extent to which the economic life of the Negro community, especially with respect to Negro business enterprises, is centered about One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street and Seventh Avenue. There were in this area, in 1935, 321 business establishments, two-thirds of which were conducted by Negroes, in addition to 53 offices of Negro professional men and women. Because of the economic dependence of the community, whites owned the bank and more than 80 per cent of the retail food stores, while Negroes controlled practically all the businesses providing personal services and other types of enterprises not requiring large outlays of capital. In this area were also located the two principal Negro newspapers in Harlem and the offices of four Negro insurance companies.

As the center of Negro Harlem has come to play a specialized role in the organization of the community, the area affected by the process has extended beyond the limits of the single census tract which constitutes the first zone. For example, as an indication of this process, since 1930 the population of the second zone has declined as well as that of the first zone. Hence, in our consideration of the distribution of institutions with reference to zones, we shall regard as a single area Zones I and II, which have a total population about equal to that in each of the two next zones, III and IV (see Table 1). In 1935 there were in the central area seventy-five churches, not including spiritualists, psychologists, and Father Divine's "Kingdoms." Forty-two of the churches were of the "storefront" type, three so-called "spiritualist" churches, and the remaining thirty were denominational churches housed in regular edifices. The number of all types of religious institutions declined in the three zones outside of this central area. For example, in Zone V, there were only one regular church edifice and nine "storefront" churches. As the focus of the political life of the community, the central area contained ten of the eighteen political clubs in the community, while Zone III had six such clubs. Although about 40 per cent of the recreational institutions serving primarily Negro Harlem were located in the central area, they were more widely

<sup>16</sup> "Blades of Steel," *Anthology of American Negro Literature*, ed. V. F. Calverton (New York, 1929), p. 53.

distributed in the five zones than other types of institutions. This fact is of special interest because it indicates how, in regard to the cultural superstructure, the main arteries of travel—Lenox, Seventh, and Eighth avenues—running the entire length of the community, and the “satellite loops” at One Hundred and Sixteenth, One Hundred and Twenty-fifth, and One Hundred and Forty-fifth streets tend to mar the symmetry of the community pattern.

However, this does not affect in any important manner the conclusion to which our study of the Harlem Negro community leads. Although our analysis provides additional substantiation of the general ecological hypothesis that the distribution of human activities resulting from competition assumes an orderly form, it introduces at the same time an important extension of the theory. It appears that, where a racial or cultural group is stringently segregated and carries on a more or less independent community life, such local communities may develop the same pattern of zones as the larger urban community.

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