

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LIFE STYLES AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES  
OF MIDDLE INCOME STATUS WHITES AND NEGROES IN DETROIT

The Detroit Urban League is committed to a course of action which involves seeking out facts, explaining and interpreting facts, and finally initiating appropriate action. The changing American mood and the growing urban problems have underscored the need for relevant research into the underlying factors which influence human relations.

This study was undertaken by the League to determine what differences, if any, exist between Negro and white families in the middle income level, and hopefully to shed new light on this broad strata of the urban community. Some interesting facts were revealed which should give new direction to social program planning.

1. There is a far smaller percentage of Middle Income families in the Negro community than in the white community of Detroit.
2. The Negro Middle Income family appears to be setting a better model of interested citizenship than is espoused by society as a whole.

This study reveals several longstanding myths concerning the Middle Income Negroes and their relationship to the Middle Income whites. It is generally assumed that as the Negro moves into the middle income status he becomes more like a white counterpart. Evidence presented in this survey found that Middle Income

Negroes are similar to the Middle Income whites in the number of female heads of household and the number of children in the family. The survey has brought to the forefront that in other areas of concern the white and Middle Income Negro groups differ.

As stated in the text, "The understanding of common community events reflects the separation of experiences and social worlds of Middle Income Negroes and whites." It is generally assumed that living together will bring a fuller understanding and concern for the total community. The survey found:

1. That in integrated neighborhoods there is less contact between whites and Negroes of middle income status than is commonly assumed occurs.
2. That in the integrated neighborhood where the survey was conducted, i.e., the Northwestern area, both whites and Negroes are more pessimistic about the end of discrimination than are whites and Negroes in separated neighborhoods.

It is commonly heard that the number of Middle Income Negroes is expanding and for this reason more Negroes than ever before are moving into the mainstream. The survey brought out that the Middle Income Negro is barely reproducing himself in terms of numbers of families with higher incomes, while the white Middle Income group is continuing to pull away from its previous levels at an accelerated rate.

## SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### OF THIS STUDY

Findings revealed that Negro families are more negative in their attitudes toward their neighborhood than whites (p. 36 - Table I) and report fewer contacts with neighbors on a basis of "spending half an hour or so with them now and then."

1. This would suggest that Negro families should be encouraged to attend and participate in community group meetings -- civic, political, and social.
2. That white families in changing and integrated neighborhoods should practice brotherhood throughout the year and develop sincere welcoming projects to greet Negroes moving in.

In Chapter VI the attitudes and perceptions of the Middle Income families in regard to the educational institutions of the community are examined. The results offer partial explanation for the present controversy over school decentralization, for twice as many Negro as white families interviewed felt that the schools were "not doing enough."

1. In answer to this critical assessment the Urban League strongly recommends that programs specifically designed to provide communication between the community and the schools, and to motivate parents to become actively involved in school programs be increased.

The findings in Chapter VII, which deals with interracial contacts, support the charge that racism is one of the most serious issues to be dealt with if we are to insure equality of opportunity to all people.

1. We recommend that religious organizations and other agencies be challenged to expand and intensify all efforts to bring about better human relations, to do whatever is necessary to dispel once and for all the stereotypes and myths that influence the thinking of the majority of white Americans.
2. That the news media be encouraged to use its resources to promote better human relations, by accurate unbiased reporting; that more attention be given positive trends and events. Honest, straightforward, verbal, written, and visual reporting can be a powerful force in changing attitudes.
3. Women's volunteer organizations and groups should be challenged to structure situations providing for the natural association of people with various backgrounds. This is an area in which Urban League Guilds could be of great assistance, by taking the initiative in planning and sponsoring interracial events and programs.

4. Some means must be found to impress upon the white community the fact of its responsibility in meeting the great challenge of this day: that of truly providing equality of opportunity to all.

Results of the survey indicate that Middle Income whites have not fully grasped the gravity of the civil rights dilemma and struggle in the country today.