

Master's Series on Field Research

A series of interviews with major figures in field research conducted in the early 1980s
by Peter Blanck

**Transcript of an interview on the Weekday TV show with
William F. Whyte
Ralph Orlandella
and
Al Natale
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[Opening music]

Ted O'Brien: Good morning, and welcome to Weekday. I'm Ted O'Brien and many times in the past you've seen us talking about and with authors, but today a most unusual situation because the book is called Street Corner Society and it was written almost 40 years ago. That's right, it was a sociologist's monograph or study of a - well it says Italian slum there, it turned out it was that we know today as the North End. And today, in addition to meeting the author and talking about the book we're going to talk about a couple of the boys and with a couple of the boys that he wrote about, 40 years ago, who are now of course, no longer boys. Professor, why did you pick the North End for a socioeconomic study of an Italian slum?

William Foote Whyte: I grew up around New York City and somehow my picture of a slum district involved large flats, number of stories, and I looked over South Boston and East Boston and so on and it didn't somehow fit the picture I had and then I discovered as I walked the streets of the North End that this indeed was the most congested section of the city and it had the characteristics that sociologists were then interested in. About one out of every ten or twelve flats had a bath tub. No - very little central heating, a poorer district, most people unemployed, hanging on the corners. Somehow that attracted me because it was so different from my own background, the son of a college professor. I had never seen anything like this, it was sort of an adventure for me.

Ted O'Brien: So in a sense, the academic community, the people out of America were looking at this area and calling it a slum. That's something that's going to make a lot of people angry even to hear that word, Professor Foote. Did it at the time?

William Foote Whyte: Yes, people didn't like to think of it that way. I remember talking with fellows on the corner about what a slum was and they would identify some place in New York City but not the North End.

Ted O'Brien: Always somewhere else. In a moment we'll meet a couple of the guys you talked with on that corner over 40 years ago and we'll also go into the nuts and bolts of the book and find out what Professor Foote learned by extension has taught generations of us about street corner society. Right after this break.

[break]

Ted O'Brien: Welcome back to Weekday, we're talking with Professor William Foote Whyte the author of this book, Street Corner Society, but more than that we'd like to have you meet a couple of the corner boys about whom he wrote 40 years ago. Would you welcome Ralph Orlandella and Al Natale.

[Applause]

Ted O'Brien: Thank you, thank you. Corner boys grow up to be men. I mean that's the first thing we realize about this situation, but to go back a bit Professor Whyte, wasn't there a little bit - when I approached the book I approached it from the point of view that there was something a little bloodless and detached about the idea of going into a community with some preconceived notions to find out what the folks were like. What was the big thing that came out of the study? What was the real surprising fact that you learned?

William Foote Whyte: Well, I think almost everything was surprising because I was so naive about the nature of the area, but as I looked at the sociological literature later it, they depicted districts like the North End as disorganized, people didn't stick together, no real standards of behavior and so on. And I was finding it completely different, very cohesive groups on the corner, strong family ties, that sort of thing. Sure, people were poor, but that wasn't surprising, I knew that.

Ted O'Brien: There were hierarchies, there were morals, there was a code of ethics, all the things that the outside society looking at the North End said "not possible to exist".

William Foote Whyte: Yeah it was a problem. The district was pretty well organized within itself but not well integrated with the political economy of the city and the region.

Ted O'Brien: Ralph, you were Professor Whyte's first research assistant. Did you know you were a research assistant at the time?

Ralph Orlandella: No, I did not. As a matter of fact, not only was I his first research assistant which I'm very proud of, but he actually changed my life. He had profound influence over my life for 40 years. I had a severe degree of inferiority complex before I met Bill.

Ted O'Brien: You were a high school dropout, you were hanging on the corner, in the book your name is Sam Franco. There are others, businessmen, politicians now, real estate operators, who were all corner kids. No job, what, no future?

Ralph Orlandella: It was during the Great Depression and things were very very bleak. I can remember hanging on the corner, during the wintertime, in one of the doorways, first I'd be on one foot and then on the other because it was so cold, but you're just hanging there wasting time. Wasting human precious time. Just hanging around doing nothing.

Ted O'Brien: Al, what was your life like in the North End during these years?

Al Natale: Well, I was hanging around the corner. The corner of Sheafe and Salem Street, they had a big group down there. Later on we got involved in ball clubs and things like that. When I was younger there was hardly any place where we could play, we had our back yard or either go up the roof or go up on a fire a fire-escape or something to that effect. I used to hide down cellar and play games and all that there.

Ted O'Brien: What did you do to the barrels before you got into them?

Ralph Orlandella: Well, when you went down the cellar you either had to shake a - make a big noise or smack a wall, or if there was a cover, take the cover and bang it against the barrel so the rats would run out, then you were O.K.

Ted O'Brien: What are we talking about? Let's set the physical scene for you. Earlier this week Weekday went with Ralph Orlandella back to the North End and he conducted a walking tour of the locale of Street Corner Society. Here he is now, Ralph, take a look at yourself.

[On film]

Ralph Orlandella: This is the building that William Foote Whyte first lived, when he was single when he started his study, Street Corner Society. It was at 7 Parmenter Street and subsequently when he met Kathleen King he moved all the way down Hanover Street to 477 and this is where he remained for the remainder of his study while he was in the North End. How I met Bill Whyte was they started a recreation center down the street on Margin Street and Thatcher, right across from the Pizzeria Regina. At that time when I saw this place that said recreation center it was new to me so I took my gang down there and met Doc - Ernest Pechey, who in the book is Doc, he was the recreation leader and he spotted me as Bill Whyte mentions in the book as the leader of my gang and the next thing you know I was introduced to Bill and that's when I showed him some of the things that I was doing, like recording the background of the guys in my gang, drew a sketch, a drawing of each one of them, their ambition, and things like that, but I had no idea of why I was doing it but I recorded all this background information on my guys and this is how Bill got to know me, through Doc, Because Doc knew I was doing this. Ernest Pechey knew I was doing this.

I was born at 92 North Margin Street in 1919 just across the way there on the stoop, and this area is called, in fact we called ourselves the Endicott Street - our corner guys, the

gang was called the Endicott Street Gang although it was a combination of some of the boys from North Margin where I lived right here and Endicott Street at this intersection. As a matter of fact, Bill Whyte's book the cover was taken right here at the corner, some of the guys you can see in the photograph were playing cards and when we had a dice game, that was a card game, but when we had dice games it would be right in this alley. This is about it as far as what we did here. We played ball here, there was a lot of activity.

Around the corner is the Charlestown Bridge and this separated the Irish from the Italians and of course in those days when we had conflicts it was on the Charlestown Bridge. Way back about 40 years ago this site was called the Gas House because it did indeed have a large structure, a large metal structure which contained gas. When that was knocked down it left a lot of debris here and we found an opportunity to make a place where we could play ball so we cleaned it up and this led to really my first protest, sort of protest march to the local police station where we told the cops we had spent weeks cleaning this place up and it was off the streets and we could, and it was a safe place to play ball. Anyway that was my start of I guess formally leading a group in protest to improve the conditions in the North End. And I might also point out that in back of me is the grill work that covers where the Brink's robbery was held. In the book, the Brink's Robbery, the author points out that it was not known that the Brink's Company was maintaining millions in the site, but I should say that when we used to hit the - our home plate was at that end and when we hit the ball and if it was a foul tip it would go behind us and get stuck into the grill work. So, the kids we always had somebody to retrieve the balls for us and the kids would scatter up the grill work and you could see the Brink's people counting money, so it's just the opposite of what the author of the Brink's Robbery said. We in fact, I can tell you this, the kids in my gang knew they were counting money up there.

And Bill Whyte came into the picture and I got involved with the social structure of the North End. One of the things we did was, the police told us we could not play in it because our balls would go over the wall and into the tenant's homes across the way. I'll

never forget one day, it was a Sunday where people were having their normal Italian spaghetti meal and the ball went right into the house and smashed the plates of spaghetti, and of course we knew that was bad because we wouldn't want that to happen to us. Making a long story short, we were able through the process of identifying the structure in the North End, the final result was that we were able to get the brick wall you see there and the fence and I was able to organize a 16 ball club softball league.

The North End Park, what you see in front of you, holds probably my fondest memories of when I was a teenager. This is where we played ball. This is in fact where we had the first night football game. The first time in the City of Boston anybody played under lights and we had to rent the lights in order to do this and it was something I will never forget. We also played baseball here during the daytime and it's just about the way you see it except that down behind me there was a long pier and across the way you can see the Old Ironsides and Bunker Hill which brings me to the Michelangelo School where I was a student, just up the hill here, and from sitting in the classroom I would sometimes kind of goof off from what I was supposed to be doing and gaze toward Old Ironsides and the battleships and Bunker Hill Monument and I knew there was something else to life besides, beyond the North End.

Bill Whyte completely changed my life. I was just hanging around the corner looking for something to do like most of the guys on most corners in most urban cities, especially in the congested areas such as the North End, and I saw the other side. When I met Bill he was interested in what I was doing and the next thing you know I knew what the word sociology meant and I became so interested in it because of the fact that he said to me, "you know Ralph I don't know what we can do here," he was talking about his study, "but I hope that some way the results will help the district." This was something that I had been fighting for all my life. I had started with a newsletter, a magazine type thing about cleaning the streets, giving us a boys community center, improving the North End Park and that kind of thing. Of course this was very compatible with what Bill told me he wanted to do in the North End. He said, "I'm not going to promise you anything, Ralph." But one thing led to another, this is how we got involved in the protest march on

City Hall and a number of things that happened in the study relative to improving our welfare here in the North End.

The reason that Bill Whyte did not identify the characters in the book by their real names is that he did not want to hurt anybody. He felt there were too many intimate details in his study that could offend or embarrass some of the people. He didn't think, and I don't think he embarrassed anybody, I think it was a credit to the North End for him to come down here and tell us and tell other sociologists for the first time that the North End was not disorganized, that it had a social system and that it was something that when you think of how we had to cope with adversity, with so many things holding us back, that I'm proud to have been a part of the scene and I'm sure that anybody that reads the book will feel the same way.

[Applause]

Ted O'Brien: OK. Ralph Orlandella. Let's get to some of those problems. Let's get to some of the statistics of adversity. 25,000 people were there when you were there?

Ralph Orlandella: Approximately 25,000, and 95 percent of the 25,000 were Italian Americans. However, as a direct result of gentrification that's been reduced to around 12,000 and less than 60 percent are now Italian Americans. And we're talking about 35 acres, around 619 people during my days to the acre. I'm sure some of you people have 35 acres with one person on it.

Audience member: At your time wasn't the Bennett Street Industrial School in being and you also had a Kaddie Camp to which the youngsters did go up to New Hampshire?

Ralph Orlandella: Oh, sure, I never went to Kaddie Camp.

Audience member: Neither of you attended?

Al Natale: I did, I have been. I used to go to Kaddie Camp, I used to go up to Maplewood New Hampshire. Mr. Fangine was the leader of the club then.

Audience member: My husband's name is Campagna.

Ralph & Al: Oh, we both know him very well, very fine man.

[Laughter]

Ted O'Brien: Incidentally, Kay, during the break you said you were very hostile toward that term "slum."

Audience member: Yes I was, I resent that because to me the North End had a flavor all of its own, not just the food. The people are warm, loving, they are out-going. Housing is somewhat congested, but it's expensive living there.

Ralph Orlandella: Could I react to that as one of the guys that was born and raised there? Actually, Bill is not knocking it. Like I say, I'm proud of living in the North End and I'm proud of what Bill did because he told us for the first time, this is how I got out of my inferiority complex. All I know is - we were inferior, we were Dago, you can go all the way to the Sacco and Vanzetti case - we're talking about an impoverished district. We were disorganized, dangerous, sinister area. Bill comes on the scene and I find that we're organized, that we had a social commitment, that we had a viable interaction, livable interactions between ourselves and so forth.

Ted O'Brien: What principles were you able to abstract from Street Corner Society that apply to any sub-group Professor Whyte. I don't want to get too esoteric here but isn't everything that I hear you saying Ralph, that could be applied to any extremely poor area, couldn't it?

William Foote Whyte: I was particularly interested in the informal group structures because if you approach a group of fellas like Ralph's on the corner. If you asked them straight out, "who's your leader" they'll all deny that there is a leader, you know "we're all equal." But if you look at the way the actions get organized it's easy to spot somebody like Ralph or Doc, Ernest Pechey and you could see that life was structured and you had to understand the structure of the group. I think it's very important that outsiders tend to try to approach the individual and be unaware of the group structure. If you don't deal with the structure you can't relate to people effectively.

Ted O'Brien: In other words, there was some organizational analysis going on here to find out what moved the particular group. We'll be back to ask for specific examples of that and take more questions and comments from our audience right after this.

[break]

Ted O'Brien: Welcome back to Weekday. We're looking back 40 years from the time that Street Corner Society was written, the story of the North End and some of the groups that interacted there. Marion, you had a comment to make.

Marion: Yes I have. I would like to take exception to the word "slum" in describing the North End. These gentlemen have been subjective, I can be too. In that period, 40 years ago, I went to the North End every Sunday to St. Stephen's as a part of John Kiley's quartet and I saw the street corner society all dressed up. They were playing morra as I went down Hanover Street and all the grand-dads were on the plaza and all the mothers and grandmothers were in the church, and I discovered, because I did visit homes in the North End, that that front, that sort of broken down door very often reveals a beautiful home at the top of the stairs; neat, clean, orderly, so my memory of the North End is a very beautiful one and I don't have any marriage links or blood links, O.K.

Ralph Orlandella: I don't think we're coming across then. Yes, we agree, I agree and I don't know if I'm speaking for - we agree 100 percent, but you see we were congested.

We couldn't take a bath, for example. We had a bath-house, men and women shared the same bath-house. The beach, you know there was a wall that separated the boys from the girls. Did you ever go down the cellars? Did you ever play on the roofs? These are things we're trying to point out that the total picture is a little different from walking into Capodiluppa's Bakery shop, an Irish woman, came down Endicott Street and buy on a Sunday, hot bread, go to St Mary's Church, that kind of thing, beautiful and it was very safe. I never remember a single robbery in the North End. I never remember a grocery store being broken in. My sister or his, any sister could walk down the street very safe. Night, daytime, anytime, not a robbery. I'm 63 years old and I don't remember a robbery, I was only 24 when I left there.

Ted O'Brien: O.K., fair enough. Let's say the term slum was imposed from the outside wasn't it.

William Foote Whyte: That's the point.

[many voices]

William Foote Whyte: It was looked upon by sociologists as the classic example of a slum district so my purpose was to penetrate beneath to stereotype to see what life was like there.

Ted O'Brien: And what was it like in brief? And then we'll hear from Ralph.

William Foote Whyte: Well, I never felt finally so much at home in my life. That is, it took a while to fit in but I was fortunate in being able to move in with an Italian family, the Orlandis and the Capri Restaurant. I had Italian cooking for the first time in my life. I got to love it. I thrived on it.

Ted O'Brien: How long were you there?

William Foote Whyte: The total study was about 3 and a half years. I lived with the Italian family for about 18 months and then I got married and we moved down to our own flat at the end of Hanover Street in a Sicilian district. That's interesting perhaps to you because, Ralph, your people are from around Naples and yours also Al, and they looked down on upon the Sicilians. We were warned that the Sicilians were very tough people, don't go down there.

Ted O'Brien: Well, it wasn't all one thing there in the North End.

Ralph Orlandella: What Bill is saying is - it all depended on what town, for example my parents came from Santo Sossa della Baronia, so you would find that those people who had lived in Avellino would tend to cluster. Sicilians tended to cluster, Genoese people tended to cluster. so we had Little Italies in one big little Italy, you see.

Ted O'Brien: And all of you were regarded by outsiders as the same thing.

William Foote Whyte: Right, they felt discriminated against heavily at the time.

Ted O'Brien: And they were. Yes, Carol, you had a question.

Carol: I'm interested to know, the book is coming out now and - I presume that's

Ted O'Brien: It's being reissued again.

Carol: Reissued after 40 years and what was the interest there, the other thing I wanted to know is was what Ralph did when he left and that he said his life had changed so much, and the other gentleman too.

Ted O'Brien: First of all, the book is now in its third edition, why is the interest again here?

William Foote Whyte: Well, it was published first without the appendix in which I described my experiences, the way I did the study. When I was teaching sociology later I found that it was impossible to get any reading material that told students what it was like to be a participant observer, the method I was using, so I wrote this and that seemed to revive interest in the book. That was the second edition. The third edition came out after my retirement event at Cornell the college invited back seven research assistants who have served with me over the years, starting with Ralph. Ralph made such an eloquent statement that he stole the show from all these eminent social scientists and so people were saying, that must be published, and that became part of the book. That was really the justification for the third edition, but it's sold - it's never been out of print.

Ted O'Brien: What did you do Al when it came time to get out. Did you get out?

Al Natale: No, I'm still there. I was born in the North End and I'm still living there.

Ted O'Brien: Alright. How about you Ralph?

Ralph Orlandella: World War II changed my life, but when you raised the question - you asked Bill has this been applied, some of the things he gets done. I don't know whether this leads to that but can I explain? It served me well. I call it, actually, I call it Whyte's sociological insurance policy. What I did, when I learned about identifying the natural leader and this structure business I applied it in the military service and I applied it in civilian life as Superintendent of Public Works in Burlington and it did me well because I was able to identify people that were not just a supervisor, but the guy down below that might be the natural leader and promoted him and put him in the right slot in spite of civil service.

Ted O'Brien: The real shaker is what you're saying. You learned to study groups to see where the real power was and to adjust accordingly. Did you ever feel that you've run out on your people?

Ralph Orlandella: I regret that I'm not there every day. I love it so much. I'd like to go back to Marion here, I want you know, I know I speak for Al, we love the North End, that's why I guess this is happening today because we love the North End.

William Foote Whyte: Ralph, you moved out because you went in the service. You were in the Marine Corps and in the Air Force until - and that's when you settled in Burlington.

Ralph Orlandella: I might point out I'm a veteran of World War II, Korean conflict and Vietnam, so I wasn't down the North End during that period, especially when we were in combat.

Ted O'Brien: I guess what I was driving at was the idea that that was home and that deep roots were there and I know of other sections of the city where when people move away from them there's a sense of guilt that they carry with them.

Ralph Orlandella: Well, I'd like to give you some more on that. I ended up during World War II with the Marines, I ended up in the naval hospital after the combat setup and when my wife - the book had been published, the first edition had been published and I had told Bill - after all I did make a little contribution and my gang was in there. I will never forget it. I needed something to help me physically and mentally at the time in the hospital and Rose sends me the book. And that brought the North End to San - I was in San Diego - brought it right to San Diego and that did a lot to help me cause when I saw for the first time there was some recognition this was something that I mentioned to Bill. I was hurting for - hanging around the corner doing nothing and I always knew that I had an inferiority complex but I didn't feel inferior inside, but what do you do, how do you get out of there? How do you accomplish something? And this is how it all came about.

Ted O'Brien: You mentioned, professor Whyte, that all the role models there, school teachers, police captains, anybody with any authority was of another ethnic background

and another nationality. We'll get into what effect that can have on people and their growth right after this.

[break]

Welcome back to Weekday. We were talking with and about the authors and a couple of the principals of Street Corner Society, which 40 years ago opened a lot of people's eyes to what really went on in a lower socio-economic area of a major urban city. Gentlemen, the settlement house played a critical role in the Americanizing of group after group after group. Could you give us a couple of sentences on that Professor Whyte?

William Foote Whyte: Well, the social workers mainly were oriented toward somehow lifting people out of their cultural, social background and promoting social mobility, ambition and so on.

Ted O'Brien: Making them more like English Americans?

William Foote Whyte: Americanizing them. There were no social workers in the district that I knew of at the time who spoke Italian. That wasn't part of the job description.

Ted O'Brien: Wait a minute. They came in to help the people become Americanized and by not speaking Italian seemed to be looking down on you own language, didn't they Ralph?

Ralph Orlandella: That's why Bill learned to speak Italian, one of the first things he did. He could converse with my Mother as though he came from Avellino.

Ted O'Brien: Was he the first outsider you ever knew who cared enough to learn Italian?

Ralph Orlandella: I would say yes. In fact, with no reservation.

Ted O'Brien: That must be quite a shock. Al, what did you think of guys like Bill Whyte? What did you think of the settlement house, the ladies and the men who came in there to improve you?

Al Natale: Well, I tell you, as I said before, I was born there and I still live there. I actually mingled in with all different kinds of Italians, as you call them Sicilians, Neopolitans, and whatever, Genoese. I mixed in with all of them. I got along marvelous with all of them, no matter which corner I went I was always recognized down the North End. I had a name for myself because I had a pool room at one time, and then I won a championship softball team in 1945, then I got a charter club and I got involved in politics, and I had quite a following there. I found them very interesting, that's the reason why I'm still there now.

William Foote Whyte: Let me add on the settlement house, not to give too much of a one-sided picture, because as we point out there were differences between the two in the area, the North Bennett Street Industrial School and the North End Union. It was Frank Havey at the North End Union who was very much involved in the development of the softball leagues where Ralph played a major role. There was more related to the fellows on the corner, there was less of a social gulf there.

Ted O'Brien: O.K., but it was Doc, Ernie Petchey's remark that closed the conclusions to your book that stayed with me and I'd like to share it with your audience now, "You don't know what it feels like to grow up in a district like this. You go to the first grade, Miss O'Rourke, second grade, Miss Cassey, third grade, Miss Chalmers, fourth grade, Miss Mooney and so on. At the fire station it's the same. None of them are Italian. The police lieutenant is an Italian and there are a couple of Italian sargents but they never have made an Italian captain in Cornerville," which is the name used for the North End. "In the settlement houses none of the people in authority are Italian. Bill, those settlement houses were necessary. At first, when our parents landed here they didn't

know where to go or what to do. They needed the social workers for intermediaries. They did a fine job then but now the second generation is growing up and we're beginning to sprout wings. They should take off that net and let us fly." Nineteen Thirty Eight, that was Ernest (Doc) Petchey and it took a world war to open up the economic end of it. I mean for you, big deal, right Ralph, it was right into the Marines. That was not such a fine economic life, but, it's true. There was zero unemployment and that's when people in Cornerville, the North End and other street corners came off of the street corners into the factories and service. Right?

Ralph Orlandella: That's how they got their jobs. Then they were eligible for civil service. They slipped into the post office, Police and so forth.

Ted O'Brien: It's a shame it take a war to break up that kind of bind. We're in a similar bind now in a lot of different ways. We have a declining economy and a lot of groups. Has the book, Ralph, given you an understanding of other subgroups?

Ralph Orlandella: So much that I'm doing some writing myself. This is kind of the, the heart of the study. Especially going back to Marion again, is the importance of the attributes of living in a close knit community, this extended family business which is lost today. That having aunts, uncles, grandfathers and all that thing is so important to the welfare of a person or individual growing up. I would say relative to youthful criminality the breaking up of homes and not living this extended business is -

Ted O'Brien: Did you know how poor you were?

Ralph Orlandella: Definitely. I would agonize not because I was poor, but because I knew there was something on the other side of the fence.

Ted O'Brien: How about the way you look at other groups now? Say the Blacks, there was a study done in Washington, D.C. called Tally's Corner. Having come through what

you came through Ralph does this give you an understanding of what other groups are going through?

Ralph Orlandella: It sure does.

Ted O'Brien: What would you say about that?

Ralph Orlandella: About Tally's Corner?

Ted O'Brien: Yeah and about other corners. You know, one of the things that I found in 20 years as a journalist and broadcaster is that it's so easy to say "they" - "they are", "those people", "that bunch." You know what I'm talking about ladies. You come from South Boston - you were telling me during the break, hey when people say Southie's this and Southie's that it makes me mad. O.K., but that's an American tendency, they or this or that. What kind of a message does Street Corner Society give to all of us about trying to understand that? Ralph?

Ralph Orlandella: Well, the message is - it's so important that we learn to understand other ethnic groups, whether it be at the race level, ethnic level. We should have a better understanding that everybody has something to offer and the more we understand the better we can have the interactions that would go on between one ethnic group and another, we would have a better way of life in this country if we understood some of our problems and some of our needs, and some of our customs and traditions.

Ted O'Brien: Professor Whyte do you see that coming?

William Foote Whyte: I'd like to see that coming. I think we have to approach it from the standpoint of organization. I don't know Black neighborhoods, but Elliot Liebow, who did Tally's Corner study found similar sorts of organizational life and he found the basic problems there as we found earlier in the North End was that there were no jobs except dead-end jobs for people that were in Tally's Corner. The ladder up just

had one rung and that was it, just part-time jobs or jobs that led no where. That's I'm afraid the bind we're in now.

Ted O'Brien: When you went back and looked at the Doc after a short break you found that he had risen to a certain level and then begun to fall back because he didn't have work. Maybe it wasn't Doc, maybe it was somebody else you were describing in the book, but you noted that having lost his job he began to drift back and he knew he was drifting back.

William Foote Whyte: Well, he had this psychological problem that as a leader he had the men on the corner depending on him. When he was unemployed and had no money to spend, nobody was a big spender on the corner, but if the fellows wanted to go somewhere, go to a movie or even go out for coffee and he didn't have money, he didn't want to depend on the others who were depending upon him and so he would get these psychological problems dizzy spells and yet when Frank Havey at the North End Union put him in charge of the recreation center he snapped out of it right away, he had a job and a place and he identified Ralph right away and they were running that recreation center very smoothly, whereas the two trained social workers in other centers couldn't hack it, they were closed down in a couple of weeks.

Ralph Orlandella: Stole the plumbing too. [Laughter] That's right, broke windows. Where we had actually put on vaudeville shows, boxing matches, ping pong tournaments and that kind of thing.

William Foote Whyte: You had to get your kids to knock off stealing things to bring into the center.

Ralph Orlandella: That's right. And Bill points that out in the book. I had to stop them from bringing things in.

Ted O'Brien: I want to thank all three of you. If there is a message that rings loud and clear to me, not only Street Corner Society which continues to be the seminal understanding of what goes on in so-called tough areas, it's jobs and it's an opportunity to grow that really make the difference, and not having somebody stand on the outside and say, well, over here is a slum. Thanks Al Natale thank you Ralph Orlandella, Professor William Foote Whyte. The book is Street Corner Society, it's 43 years old but it's as current now as it was when it was written and it has something to offer for all of us.