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An Ethnography of Youth Texts on Gangs, Trouble and Rehabilitation

**A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Psychology at Massey University**

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Abstract

Guided by the premise that the best information about the experience of young people would come from young people contacted directly in the field, *An ethnography of youth texts on gangs, trouble and rehabilitation* focuses on the thesis that by carefully reading and attending to the spoken texts of youth, psychologists can enhance their understanding, learn from, and improve their relationships with them. Youth texts were generated from fifty three recorded interviews, one month participant-observation in a residential unit, one month participant observation with a neighbourhood gang, photography and many casual conversations in the field. Thematic analysis was used as a method for carefully reading participant texts and attempting to develop an understanding of what Geertz (1983) called local knowledge. Rehabilitation at Te Whakapakari Youth Programme (Great Barrier Island, New Zealand) was the first site where youth texts were gathered and discussed with an aim of capturing the richness of experience that exists in the lives of the programme participants. Looking back on their experience of the youth programme two years later participants described healing themes related to the experience of whaanau (extended family), helping, talking, listening, trusting, respecting and disciplined working. Trouble is the second site in which I tapped youth texts. I found trouble was conceptualised as fun, easy, and about being seen to be “bad.” Participants did not perceive themselves to be “in trouble” unless they had been caught, although trouble was seen as a way to make money, a form of vulnerability and part of their social niche. The third site in which I probe for youth texts is in youth gangs. Over-riding most gang activity there seemed to be a desire for affiliation and belonging. They talked about the parties, hanging with “the boys,” girls, telling jokes together, laughing, meeting new people, talking, arguing and public recognition or “fame.” In terms of gender sub themes of “gangs are for men” and “caring for women” emerged as complimentary forms of exclusionary talk. If women crossed the gender line to attempt to function in “men’s space” (as tomboys) they lost their supportive and prized sexual value but were still forced into a sexual role by the

boys. While vulnerability increased the likelihood of seeking gang based protection, joining a gang dramatically increased participants' protection needs and scope of vulnerability. Increases in violence, threats and feelings of vulnerability were however, coupled with feelings of togetherness, helping, supporting and generally backing each other up. Key discussion issues included empowering indigenous approaches to rehabilitation, defining youth gangs and youth gang membership in New Zealand, the influences of American cultural imperialism on New Zealand youth, and the convergence of empirical data with theoretical perspectives on vulnerability. Suggestions were made for future research topics.

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Introduction

This research began in 1993 on a wild and beautiful island five hours boat trip from Auckland city. I spent a month on Great Barrier Island in a survival situation with some of New Zealand's most notorious young criminals and drug users. Originally my aim was to explore and discuss the effectiveness of a Maori wilderness therapy programme as a potential rehabilitative option for troubling youth in New Zealand (Eggleston, 1993). Experience as a participant-observer on the programme was an appropriate and very successful method for gaining rapport with a participant group which is traditionally very hard to reach. The ten participants characterised the hard-core youth offender described by Fergusson (1996) as representative of 5 percent of all youth justice cases or those diagnosed with having conduct disorder. I was able to maintain a dialogue with the group for over two years and the rapport developed while on the programme was a great asset for both finding and interviewing participants in the current study. Semi-structured interviews gave way to less structured yet "richer," discussions, as participants began to share their experiences of life with me.

Evaluation of treatment initiatives for emotionally disturbed and behaviourally problematic youth typically focus on recidivism as the measure of success or failure (Mulvey, Arthur & Reppuci, 1993; Basta & Davidson, 1988). Without dismissing this tradition I provide the scope for participants to add additional description in order to capture the richness of experience that exists in Te Whakapakari Youth Programme (Great Barrier Island, New Zealand) and the lives of the young people who attend it. Such richness is not captured by statistics, yet represents the broader contextual explanations for understanding why and how change did or did not occur. The psycho-social experience of rehabilitation is therefore the first topic under which youth texts are gathered and discussed in a way that does justice to their perspective.

Throughout history teenage youths in gangs have been equated with youths in trouble and contemporaneously the eradication of gangs has been equated with the restoration of peace in urban communities. However, youth gangs have persisted in creating such

“trouble” across the centuries and currently show signs of increased membership, (Klein, 1995) despite the efforts of community policing and rehabilitation. Unlike some of the adult gangs, contemporary New Zealand youth gangs are not geared towards organised crime, however, their “fun,” and “trouble” does spark much criticism and opposition from police, business owners (Walsh, 1996) and parents. My observation is that as professionals we tend to focus on the troubling behaviours, crime, drug use and fighting, armed with research, diagnoses and treatments which youth care little about. It was not until one research participant said to me “yeah that [crime] stuff’s OK but I’d much rather be fishing” that I realised the perspective of youth is often misunderstood. Rather than trying to fit youth into adult models I chose the experience of trouble as the second topic around which to tap youth texts, that is the perspectives, contexts and motivations of youth regarding their troubling behaviour.

While there are a myriad of good reasons for focusing on troubling behaviours it is possible that we do so at the expense of a wider understanding of what it is like to be youth. This is particularly noticeable in the youth gang literature where I have read much about the perspectives of the researcher yet hear very little from the participants. While participant testimony may at times be designed to mystify both researcher and participant (Campbell, 1984) I am convinced that the emic (Vigil & Long, 1990) or participant story is worth telling. I became interested in the psycho-social question of how youth conceptualise their world and themselves within it. I found ethnography to be especially useful in the third topic where I probe for youth texts from within the youth gang scene. I have tried to understand what it is like to be a youth gang member in New Zealand. I set out to examine gang members thoughts about why they joined a gang and to explore what they understood to be the central themes of youth gang membership.

Historical Setting

Groups of street children have been a concern in the urbanised world ever since there were streets. The spread of capitalism and industrialism brought many rural European children to the cities both in search of work and as a function of parental relocation. Such urbanisation brought young people together in youth groups, sport, gambling, drinking, courtship and neighbourhood gangs. Gillis (1981) suggests that the street gang was to some degree the school of the poor: young persons learnt how to survive on the street as street peddlers, thieves, beggars and prostitutes. In London during 1848 Lord Ashley remarked that there were “30,000 shelterless street arabs” (Hopkins, 1994, p. 194) out of a city population of 2.5 million.

In the 1800’s, European cities and lands were becoming overpopulated and resources scarce. In Britain, expansion of the empire was seen as the answer to population control, obtaining raw materials and maintaining industrial prosperity. While the colonial frontier of Oceania functioned initially as the farms of an industrialised Europe, the process of urbanisation in the colonies was inevitable.

In New Zealand, the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) was interpreted by the British as a deal whereby they were to get full sovereignty¹ in return for the introduction of “order and civilisation” (Orange, 1987). Missionaries, military personnel, farmers, traders and eventually trades-persons and professionals all came to the colony. The settlers moved to facilitate the acculturation of the indigenous Maori and develop a colonially dependent, state based, capitalist society (Spoonley, 1988). While adults argued and fought both intra and inter culturally about the past and future of the country, a new generation of children were emerging: New Zealanders (Belich, 1988).

The 1890’s saw an influx of British, German, Scandinavian, Dalmatian and Asian

¹ Confusion and ambiguity regarding the British understanding and Maori translation of sovereignty left Maori unaware of the implications of British annexation and supreme rule (Orange, 1987).

immigrants in New Zealand. Immigrant populations tended to socialise and work in ethnically distinct circles. The most stark division, however, was between the indigenous, tribal and predominantly rural, Maori and what came to be labelled Pakeha (European descendants). While most Maori children lived with their whaanau (extended family) in the rural parts of the country, children of Pakeha were spread between farms and the newly developing cities (Rice, 1992). Predictably, a portion of city children began to emulate the street child “larrikinism” that Europe had yet to overcome. As Beagle (1974) notes, juvenile delinquency echoed across all frontier societies. It was understood as the “besetting sin” of colonialism and referred to by the Police Commissioner of 1892 as “undoubted evil” (Beagle, 1974, p. 208).

Between 1895 and 1920 [Pakeha] child welfare issues became a concern of the state. Legislation raised the age of consent (1896), provided better homes for the homeless (1896), prohibited children from smoking (1903), and attempted to create effective legal structures for dealing with juveniles (1906). (Rice, 1992).

The Child Welfare Act of 1925 created Children’s Courts and the Child Welfare Branch both of which were briefed to focus on preventative rather than punitive practices (Rice, 1992). The Boy Scout movement was established in New Zealand in 1908, followed by the Boys Brigade and later Girl Guides. The 1920’s saw churches establishing orphanages, parents lobbying to outlaw violent games and local bodies building parks and playgrounds. While Pakeha children became involved in such western initiatives, most Maori children remained in the care of their tribal, rural whaanau (Rice, 1992).

For Maori, urbanisation quickly accelerated during the Second World War when the Maori War Effort Organisation opened up a variety of manufacturing and labouring jobs for Maori men and women. The effects of urbanisation were crippling for tribal society. Over the first half of the century many Maori had lost their traditional means of earning a living: huge blocks of Maori land were appropriated by Pakeha as Maori relocated themselves in the city and a new economic system (Rice, 1992). With urbanisation

Maori came face to face with the discrimination and disadvantage that indigenous minorities have encountered whenever and wherever they have been integrated into a western society (Burger, 1987).

Technological developments of the forties replaced both Maori and Pakeha rural labourers with tractors and other machinery. The trend of urban drift in search of jobs was evident across ethnicity and by the end of the second world war over half of New Zealand's population was located in fourteen key urban areas (Rice, 1992). The Maori population in Auckland swelled from 1 766 in 1936, to 7 621 by 1951; Maori were becoming an urban people (Rice, 1992). Living in closer proximity only brought out the racism which Europeans were brought up to express: Maori-Pakeha social relations remained virtually non-existent "beyond the rugby field" (Yska, 1993, p. 50).

As a time of economic prosperity and full employment, the fifties gave way to the emergence of the New Zealand teenager. The dominant ideology of the time denied teenagers the economic power and independence of adults: teenagers were to be shielded from the culture of mass-media and transformed into soldiers, workers and mothers of New Zealand. Despite the efforts of the parental generation, an international youth culture was sweeping the western world. Youth were creating a moral panic (Cohen, 1972; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994) concerning their inter-rival fighting, dress, sexual promiscuity, occasional hooliganism, and associated music, books and films. American academic David Ausubel (1960) was taken aback by how fiercely the "bodgies" (male youth gang members) of New Zealand proclaimed their individuality and challenged authoritarianism in comparison to their American counterparts. Auckland psychologist Manning (1958) met with criticism from the teenage population when he condemned bodgies and widgies (female youth gang counterparts) as the "active boils on the body of society and the tragically unhappy ones of this generation....They are the ones that need active, friendly, skilled help" (p. 89).

As popular music left “Oh Mein Papa” and “How Much Is That Doggie in the Window?” for “Heartbreak Hotel” and “Tutti Frutti,” Auckland youth of all ethnic groups packed the dance halls and joined the youth groups to experience the thrills of what was often noted as the most evil influence within adolescent culture: Rock’n’Roll (Yska, 1993). Despite the valiant efforts of youth club promoters to occupy the time of the teenage population, juvenile crime was on the increase. With the nationally shocking exception of the Parker-Hulme² murder in 1954, offenders were predominantly boys between the ages of fourteen and sixteen who got in trouble for theft as part of group activity during the weekend (Yska, 1993).

In 1955 the bodgie subculture became an official problem when nineteen year old Paddy Black stabbed Johnny McBride in a Queen Street milk-bar. As a nation not long out of war, military style discipline was understood as the best way to cope with the juvenile problem. Hanging had been re-introduced in 1950 and Paddy was the first of three young men who were hanged for their bodgie related crimes. The message from the state was that New Zealand would no longer tolerate this delinquent cult. While returned servicemen called for the re-introduction of flogging, the government instituted a compulsory military training scheme. By 1960 the military scheme had most certainly failed and teenage brawls, sex scandals and in particular the mugging of an elderly man in Hawkes Bay left the government particularly vulnerable in the 1960 election (Yska, 1993). The “bodgie problem,” as Manning (1958) referred to it, was here to stay.

The prosperity of the fifties and a perceived labour deficit promoted an influx of immigrants from the Islands of the Pacific. They came to the cities of New Zealand in search of employment, education or prestige from Western Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Nuie and the Cook Islands (Johnston, 1973; Rice, 1992). In the late sixties, while New Zealand was experiencing an economic downturn, British immigrants were taking the

² The brutal killing, lesbian relationship, and Parker’s sexual encounters with a male boarder created national outrage regarding Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme during 1954. While the pair were sentenced to life imprisonment the case marked the beginning of a revolt against the corrupting influences of American mass-media.

top jobs from trained New Zealanders and Pacific Island immigrants were prepared to work manual labour in exchange for training. Concerns were voiced regarding population size and distribution, and latent feelings of racism were re-kindled (towards Pacific Islanders, Maori and to a lesser extent British - "poms"). New Zealand had become a predominantly urban, multi-cultural society, the most vivid representation of which was Auckland (Rice, 1992).

While national trends in the fifties and sixties showed inequality regarding distribution of income and wealth was decreasing, an image of increasing inequality was developing in the cities. In Auckland, while those on high incomes increased by two thirds, such prosperity only functioned to polarise income across ethnicity (Rice, 1992). A large influx of rural Maori filled the factories and lined the pockets of well established (and generally Pakeha) entrepreneurs. During the late sixties and seventies financial and social inequality was challenged by a Maori cultural resurgence, the women's liberation movement and liberal Pakeha. However, the long established economic, racial and sexual contours remained somewhat resistant to the pressures for socio-political change.

The late seventies and eighties saw New Zealand become an international destination for trade, tourism and investment. While adults were concerned about Asian investment, refugee intake and sporting links with South Africa, the most crucial influence for youth was America, symbolised by the surging "McDonaldisation" (Ritzer, 1993) of New Zealand from the early eighties until the present day. American television programmes, clothing, music, sports and film stars, took New Zealand by storm (Tomlinson, 1991). The gang film *Colors* (Solo & Harper, 1988) was an inspiration for many young, wayward New Zealanders who attempted to emulate the romanticised version of gang life which the movie depicts³. Youth street gangs, usually of ethnically homogenous composition, became common in the cities. While the image of the African-American "Crip" and "Blood" gangs appealed to Polynesian and Maori

youth, New Zealand Pakeha were involved in both these and the European inspired “skinhead” gangs. Such history distinguishes youth gangs from the significantly more established New Zealand adult gangs “Black Power” and the “Mongrel Mob,” and international adult motorcycle gangs such as “Hells Angels.”

Youth Gangs

While New Zealand youth gangs may call themselves “Crips” and “Bloods” it is questionable whether they accurately resemble their American counterparts. Indeed the problem of defining exactly what a gang is has plagued over sixty years of gang research. In the United States differences in approach have resulted in different views of the nature, scope and seriousness of youth gang activities. Sheldon (1898) used the term “gang” to refer to spontaneous societies of young people who engaged in predatory acts of property and violent crimes (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996). In his 1927 classic *The gang: a study of 1303 gangs in Chicago*, Thrasher set out to explain the inter-generational nature of gang neighbourhoods and found three consistent ecological features: deteriorating neighbourhoods, shifting populations and disorganisation of the slum. Thrasher (1927) described the gang as “the spontaneous effort of boys to create a society for themselves where none adequate to their needs exists” (p. 37) and recognised the gang hang-out as “the hub of the gang boy’s universe” (p. 90). The American male gang member was originally regarded as a spirited, venturesome and fun-loving individual who lived in lower class immigrant communities situated in transitional inner city areas (Thrasher, 1927). Whyte (1943) emphasised the stable, organised and community integrated character of youth gang members, while others saw connections between such youthful groups and organised adult crime (Spergel, 1964; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Shaw and McKay, 1942). Cohen (1955) argued that rather than examining each boy becoming delinquent we could look at “gangs of boys doing

³ Interestingly, gang members and researchers from the United States also attribute the movie “Colors” as the marker for the proliferation of “Crip” and “Blood” gangs throughout their country (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Klein, 1995).

things together” (p. 178). He stressed the togetherness from which gangs derived their meaning.

The work of Short in the sixties and seventies highlighted the psycho-social nature of gangs. Short (1974) suggested that sociologists had tended to focus on “macrolevel (i.e., social system or cultural) forces or microlevel (i.e., group process or situational) processes” (p. 3) at the expense of examining more closely why individuals behave the way they do. As Klein (1995) notes, Yablonsky’s (1963) book *The Violent Gang* raised concerns regarding the psychopathy of gang leaders and individual susceptibility of gang members. While Yablonsky (1963) may have over-emphasised the individual nature of gang behaviour his work did serve to highlight the point that person centred issues were often ignored by the sociological literature. Klein (1995) comments that while he tried to facilitate individual assessments of a few of his participants, he found psychologists and psychiatrists could not cope with the “open street setting which gang members choose” (p. 72).

The eighties and nineties has seen a resurgence in gang research and a tightening of operational definitions as to what a gang is. Klein (1995) used the term “American street gang” as distinguished from juvenile, delinquent or youth gang because the mean age of members is approximately 20 years old. Such gangs are similar perhaps to New Zealand gangs like Black Power and The Mongrel Mob. Klein (1995) describes gangs qualitatively as:

Hanging around, usually in the open. It may be at a street corner, a taco stand, or on the side of a park watching the action; they’re somewhere in the open or in the open behind a building. They’re smoking, drinking, roughhousing, playing a pickup ball game, messing with a few girls, or sauntering up a street in a possessive, get-outta-our-way fashion (p. 21-22).

Klein excludes skinheads, bikers, terrorists, and Satanists from the term street gang because of the planned nature and narrow range of their troubling behaviour. “Street

gang members get into any and every kind of trouble" (p. 22), a phenomenon Klein describes as "cafeteria style crime" (p. 22). Klein also eliminates the occasionally troublesome youthful play groups, tagger crews, car clubs and street corner pals as described by Whyte (1943). Pertinent to the New Zealand experience with regard to defining gangs Klein (1995) suggests that the most difficult groups to exclude from his street gang term are the "wannabe" groups who are trying out gang life. Perhaps the reason such a distinction is so difficult relates to the pervasive popularity of American youth gang culture across widely differing groups of youth. In New Zealand it is apparent that many "wannabe" youths watch the gang movies and listen to the gang rap: they play around with gang styles, names, initiations, symbols and legends. As the gang culture is considered "cool" across a broad spectrum of New Zealand youth the lines as to where groups of friends become "wannabe" groups and "wannabe" groups become gangs are very difficult to draw. It is likely that in addition to such American gang culture there is also a New Zealand youth culture operating which like the Australian examples explained below could blend quite well with American gang ideals in the formation of a New Zealand street gang. Polk (in Klein, 1995) describes the patterns of Melbourne underclass young people as follows:

They pool together with others like themselves, and flow into the available public space, often collecting up with others as they move. Thus, their experiences are collective youth experiences, but the groups are informal and brittle in terms of their social composition, often breaking down and being added to as the group moves through space....Rather than being based in a localised turf, Australian underclass youth are likely to move routinely through public spaces...in the late hours, and when the young people have been drinking for some time, then the target for one group's violence is most likely to be other marginal or underclass individuals or groups (p. 219-220).

Horowitz (1990) has suggested it may not be prudent to have a definition lest we lose the diversity of gang life. Yet to avoid talking past each other (for example, comparing gangs with tagger crews) definitions can be useful. In an attempt to draw together the

range of definitions offered by researchers across the last sixty years Ball and Curry (1995) suggest the following exhaustive definition:

A spontaneous, semi-secret, interstitial, integrated but mutable social system whose members share common interests and that functions with little regard for legality but regulates interaction among its members and features a leadership structure with processes of organisational maintenance and membership services and adaptive mechanisms for dealing with other significant social systems in its environment... traditionally but not exclusively male and territorial and often associated with lower-class, urban areas (p. 240).

Notably, this definition does not mention drug use or sales. There is much research about the involvement of gangs with drugs (Hagedorn, 1994a, 1994b; Fagan, 1989; Moore, 1991). In his most recent book and supported by the findings of his research team (Klein & Maxson, 1994; Klein, Maxson & Cunningham, 1991) and others (Fagan & Chin, 1990), Klein (1995) has been particularly forthcoming with his findings that drug distribution is not controlled by street gangs:

Drug distribution requires good organisation and most street gangs are not well organised. Drug distribution needs hierarchical, dependable leadership, whereas gang leadership tends to be limited by age, ephemeral, and functionally narrow. Drug distribution requires interpersonal loyalty; street gang loyalty can be very strong in feeling but often is manipulated by good police work. Drug distribution requires focusing on the business and not becoming involved in irrelevant criminal activities; street gang crime features...opportunistic endeavours along with the more appropriate planned events. Drug distribution requires a cohesive organisation, with the membership carefully controlled, whereas street gangs normally do not maintain the level of cohesion needed for a sustained market operation (p. 127).

Between 1983 and 1985, while the growth in both crack sales and gang membership in Los Angeles were high, the increase was in low volume street sales. Gang members played a very minor role in the distribution, organisation and additional violence that crack brought to the streets. Further, gang members who worked for crack dealers did so as individuals rather than as a gang enterprise (Klein, Maxson, & Cunningham,

1991). Importantly, while groups may form for the purpose of selling drugs, street gangs are very seldom converted to a branch operation for drug dealing (Klein, 1995).

Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte & Chard-Wierschem (1993) found gang members, as compared to non-gang members, did not have higher rates of criminal behaviour or drug use before entering or after leaving the gang, but when they were members, their rates increased substantially. They concluded that the group processes of the gang and the normative support it provides for criminal behaviour generate a social context in which such troubling behaviour flourishes. Similarly, in Sweden Sarnecki (1990) found affiliation within what he described as "asocial networks," (p. 46) advanced knowledge of criminal techniques, fostered drug dependence and minimised the possibility of employment. In further concurrence, Curry and Spergel (1992) found that in a sample of 439 eleven to thirteen year old Chicago school children gang involvement did not always precede criminal behaviour. Such non-gang delinquents were more common amongst African-American respondents (19.7% of African-American sample) than Hispanic respondents (5.8% of Hispanic sample) and they observed youths who were involved with gangs yet not crime (14% of their sample). One important conclusion which can be drawn from this is that gangs do not exist for the sole purpose of crime.

The gang may be conceptualised as a means for young men to relate to each other. In a self report study with 131 participants, Lyon, Henggeler, & Hall (1992) found no differences in family relations between gang members and other serious offenders yet gang members tended to be more aggressive and less socially mature than other serious offenders. In concurrence with Short and Strodtbeck (1965), Lyon, Henggeler, & Hall (1992) hypothesised such aggression to typify friendships between gang members, for example such pseudo-aggression as body punching due to social disabilities that preclude other ways of relating.

Thrasher (1963) and other proponents of what came to be known as the "Chicago school" (Sutherland, 1934; Shaw & McKay, 1969; Kornhauser, 1978) brought an

ecological perspective to the study of gangs, suggesting that delinquency was a product of where children lived not individual deviancy, as traditional psychological models posit. Later, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) merged Sutherland's differential association concept with Merton's (1938) anomie theory to provide a further angle on the origins of criminal behaviour. That is, gang crime arose not simply from conformity to deviant norms, bad families, or lack of controls, rather the source of crime lay in frustration. The poor were basically the same as the middle-class with the exception of being unable to attain American cultural goals and achieve success (Hagedorn, 1997). The gang was therefore a response to such a lack of opportunity (Bourgois, 1990). Moore (1985) describes Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles as disproportionately representative of an urban underclass; a group that strives in vain to escape the "ascribed deviance" associated with minority persons in the ghetto and achieve the benefits of a middle-class lifestyle. Moore (1985) defines ascribed deviance as when society stereotypically labels some minority persons as "probably deviant." For example, to be a young Samoan or Maori male in Auckland is to be a suspect person. Ascribed deviance should be distinguished from the achieved deviance of the drug addict or criminal. When the suspicious majority, anxious to avert and control possible deviance have power over the police, schools and organised services for youth many children are groundlessly assumed to be deviant; many may become deviant as a result. Vigil's (1983) "multiple marginality" integrates the psycho-social effects of living in an underclass with the conflicts of cultural assimilation and acculturation. While most struggle to make the best of their marginality gang members personify the "cumulative effects of these multiple status crises" (p. 68). Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) examined common themes of youth gang membership in Hawaii and describe the gang as a social outlet and alternative family (also see Spergel, 1995) within a boring, under-resourced and distressed community.

In contrast to Moore (1985) and Vigil (1983), recent gang theorists such as Sanchez-Jankowski (1991), Katz, (1988) and Sanders (1994) argue those who live in the less desirable parts of town and grow up amongst poverty and racism do not all join gangs

and commit crime. Such authors suggest gang members have different cultural goals and values: a separate culture of poverty or violence which pushes them to commit crime. Katz (1988) has suggested gang members are lured by the sensuality of crime and violence. Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) develops the micro-sociological argument to the point of arguing that joining a gang is a rational decision, a choice that a defiant, individualist youth makes. Sanchez-Jankowski understands competitiveness, mistrust, self reliance, a survival instinct, a defiant persona and a social Darwinist worldview to be representative traits of gang members.

Aside from theoretical approaches members have given many reasons for joining gangs. These include material incentives of the criminal subculture (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Spergel, 1964; Cohen, 1955), affiliation (Fleisher, 1995; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Hagedorn, 1988; Spergel, 1964; Whyte, 1943), physical protection or personal safety (Spergel, 1995; Scheidlinger, 1994; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991), resistance to being like their parents and a form of commitment to their community (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991), boredom and peer pressure (Scheidlinger, 1994), and fun, thrills and excitement (Spergel, 1995; Campbell, 1990; Katz, 1988; Vigil, 1988; Sarnecki, 1986). Like Thrasher's (1927) boys and Cohen's (1955) boys it is apparent that the gang members of the 1990's still spend most of their time hanging out and partying (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Hagedorn, 1988; Vigil, 1983; Campbell, 1984). As one of Hagedorn's (1988) participants states, "If I didn't have no job that's where I'd be. To me it's like community help without all the community" (p. 131).

Decker and Van Winkle (1996) have focused on threats of physical violence, whether real or perceived, as a model to account for the decision to join a gang. Based on field research they characterise the reasons for joining the gang in terms of a series of "pulls" that attract individuals to the gang, and "pushes" which compel the individual to join. The lure of the gang was the opportunity to make money selling drugs (84% of participants) and to increase one's status in the community (60% of participants). Ironically, they found while threat (perceived need for protection) compels individuals

to join the gang (84% of participants) and increases their level of activity and commitment to the gang, it is also the reason that many cited for leaving the gang. Furthermore few participants acknowledged that gang association increased their risk of victimisation, some in fact stating the opposite as one participant said, "It keeps people from fucking with me. So I don't have no trouble, no fights out on the street"(p. 66).

While psychology typically examines individual pathology, the idea of threat and marginalisation point more to the sociology or circumstances of the gang member's life which surround the need to affiliate with a gang for protection and result in isolation from conventional social institutions (schools, churches, local business, professional people and youth agencies). In support of considering such circumstantial issues the statistical risk factors for joining a gang include known association with gang members, presence of neighbourhood gangs, having a relative in a gang, failure at school, with potentially dispositional issues including perhaps also failure at school, delinquency record (particularly aggressive acts), and drug abuse (Spergel, 1995). Gang membership is a psycho-social variable not fully defined by a "type of person" or social circumstance model. Coming from a psychological perspective and being able to handle life on the street I am in an ideal position to be able to provide the apparently lacking psychological insights while still taking into account issues of the social circumstance.

Youth Gang Research and Gender

A psycho-social perspective is crucial to understanding gender issues in gangs. Historically, the social position of girls in the gang was glossed over and generally de-emphasised by gang researchers (Cohen, 1955; Whyte, 1943; Thrasher, 1927; Miller, 1958; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). Interestingly, while male gang researchers have attempted to bridge the social boundaries of ethnicity and class, gender boundaries are so rarely crossed that a newcomer to gang research may well assume that there are no girl gangs. It was not until Campbell's (1984) classic *Girls in the Gang* that girl gangsters became a recognised entity. As Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) have stated:

The stereotype of the delinquent is so indisputably male that the police, the general public, and even those in criminology who study delinquency, rarely, if ever, consider girls and their problems with the law (p. 409).

Much gang research was driven by a concern for the overt troubling behaviours of young men at the expense of a more detailed understanding of the diversity of gang life. Indeed the gang phenomenon itself was conceptualised as a male response to the pressures of poverty (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995).

Campbell (1990) proposes that ideas about female delinquency are commonly focused around three myths. Firstly, female delinquency is equivalent to sexual promiscuity and symptomatic of maladjustment and social isolation. Such girls were seen as rejecting female peers in favour of brief affairs with exploitative older men (Cowie, Cowie and Slater, 1968; Konopka, 1966 both cited in Campbell, 1990). Although boys also engaged in precocious sex, it was the girls who were stigmatised for it. Secondly, it is supposed that family factors exert a more powerful influence on girl than on boy delinquents. Thirdly, the idea of girl gangs is neglected. Past researchers have presumed that girls who hang out with gangs do not form strong same sex relationships (Campbell, 1990). Bowker and Klein (1983) conducted psychological tests with gang girls and found personality variables, relations with parents and sexual behaviour problems to be minor issues compared with the racism, sexism, poverty and limited opportunity faced by girls who were in gangs. On a more micro scale, Bowker and Klein (1983) found social factors such as peer relationships to be a great deal more indicative of juvenile delinquency than any measure of personal maladjustment.

It seems likely that much of the discussion about young women in or around gangs is tainted by the perspective, and possibly gender, of the researcher. Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) stated that women were a form of property in every gang he studied (a ten year study across the United States), however, as Spergel (1995) noted, there is evidence to

suggest that female gangs and female sections of gangs function somewhat independently of male gangs (Bowker & Klein, 1983; Quicker, 1983). Chesney-Lind, Sheldon and Joe (1996) suggest that approximately 7% of gang members are female (other estimates range to 33.3%, Moore, 1991) yet girls accounted for 13.6% of property offences, 12.7% of drug crimes, 3.3% of crimes of violence, and 11.4% of homicides committed by gang members. Given such prevalence and involvement in gang life it would not be presumptuous to suggest that girls have been somewhat "invisible," at least misunderstood with regard to their gang interaction by researchers, police and perhaps male gang members themselves.

The lack of discussion about gang girls is partly related to the way we have conceived of gang boys. By understanding gang boys to be "different from us" we listen to their voices of deviance and define them as defiant individualists (Jankowski, 1991), products of a lower class culture (Miller, 1958), or as Katz (1988) has suggested, badasses lured by the sensuality of crime and violence. The assumption of gang members as basically different encourages the adoption of aspects of their behaviour which endorse such an assumption and indeed the theoretical removal of gender issues from their lives does separate gang members from most others. Hagedorn (1996) discussed the presentational nature of accounts given by gang members, concluding that the accounts that we are given about gang members may be at least partly a function of the person they wanted to present to us. The position of girls in gangs, or supposed lack of it, may well be a function of the way the male gang member wants us to see his world. During the last decade a few researchers have stopped to ask why do they want to be seen like that? Messerschmidt (1986) and Connell (1987) were first to discuss masculinity and crime in terms of differential access to power and resources: the gang is understood as a resource enhancing masculinity in a social world that denies men the economic access to "manliness" via traditional methods (such as a well paid job).

Armed with the knowledge that despite accounts of gang men, girls do exist in large numbers as gang members attached to and separate from male gangs a few recent

researchers have sought more indepth discussion and explanation for gang boys' talk about girls. Hagedorn (1996) has discussed the differing perspectives of gang boys on women with regard to either the "frat boy" mentality (boys will be boys, or sowing their wild oats is in mens' nature), the "new jack" (money makes you think you can do whatever you want) or the gentleman (who protects women from "bad" experiences). Blazak and Maneevone (1996), drawing on the economic thesis of Messerschmidt (1993), conducted ethnographic interviews with court diverted gang members and found gang membership to be partly defined in gender terms. Notably, gang members were unable to get a job (apart from what they defined as "female jobs" within the service industry) and "take care," or provide for women in the traditional context, yet the gang allowed them the means to do so. Further, masculinity norms were construed in relation to femininity: as women developed more and more violent means of behaviour men became even more violent in order to maintain power and domination. The "hard women" that gangsters found themselves surrounded by made it very hard for them to feel masculine. While Hagedorn (1996) and Blazak (1996) have weaved normality through the gender relations of gang boys, as Campbell has often noted gang girls are curiously neglected from normality and defined more diagnostically as deviants.

Rehabilitation

In their recent books both Spergel (1995) and Klein (1995) outlined a diverse range of interventions used across the past 30 years in relation to the gang problem. The exhaustive range of psycho-social problems related to the incidence of youth gangs are evidenced in the wide range of intervention foci across programmes which purport to tap an aspect of youth gang etiology.

Street work in gang communities has since the sixties been popular in the United States as having a great deal of face validity although little measurable change has been observed (Klein, 1971). Cloward and Ohlin (1960) have suggested that the most

successful street work programme is one which has the capacity to provide legitimate opportunity for gang members outside of the gang. In his later writing Klein (1995) comments on the street-wise, charismatic street worker who through his empathy and energy for street gang members ends up feeding gang cohesiveness as opposed to helping individuals find ways out of the gang community.

Thompson and Jason (1988) describe the Broader Urban Involvement and Leadership Development (BUILD) programme which incorporates both educational classroom sessions and recreational late afternoon sessions with 12-14 year old youth. Results suggested that their programme did not significantly decrease gang involvement. Psychological counselling appears to not particularly effect gang involvement. As Spergel (1995) states individual gang members tend to be influenced by gang norms and pressures a great deal more than any promises made in therapy sessions. Drawing from the hypothesis that gang involvement stems from family breakdown family support programmes have aimed at helping parents structure controls and sanctions as well as on the support of youths vulnerable to gang influence. Frequent home contacts, parent support groups , 24 hour hot lines, and ongoing assessment of current family issues are all components of such programmes (Spergel, 1995). Hawkins (1989, cited in Spergel , 1995) has suggested that the most likely family interventions to work are those which target parenting skills in early childhood as gang involvement is a sign that parents have lost control of their children. Therefore, as Conley (1991, cited in Spergel , 1995) has stated parents are generally not part of the solution for those youth already in gangs.

Prevention efforts have included providing other options to youth gang involvement. For example, "The Neutral Zone" is a collaborative community programme in Seattle, Washington that attempts to occupy the time of youth at high risk of gang involvement on Friday and Saturday nights between 10 pm and 2 am (Thurman, Giacomazzi, Resig, & Mueller, 1996). Along similar lines, the "Late Night Basketball Programme" of Salt Lake City, Utah was developed to redirect youth energy from gang involvement, improve the quality of youth life, and promote personal development (Derezotes, 1995).

As one of Derezotes (1995) participants stated "It's hard to shoot someone after you play ball with him" (p. 33).

Morales and Sheafer (1989) observed that major changes in social context such as having a child, getting a steady job, re-enrolling in school or becoming a Christian tended to lead to abandonment of the gang. As Spergel (1995) argues the facilitation of such new social contexts, perhaps the pinnacle of gang intervention, requires an integrated and accessible range of services including professionals from youth centre, mental health, law enforcement, educational, social service and youth justice agencies. Morales and Sheafer (1989) found that the most profitable stage of intervention was after the gang member had suffered a serious injury and suffering from an adjustment reaction which could provide a therapeutic window of up to 6 months where the individual is motivated to stop hanging out with the gang and can be directed to the required educational, recreational and training resources to promote long lasting stability. The family too, may be more willing to accept the help of social services having almost lost their child. While inter-agency collaboration looks good on paper a few researchers such as Reiner (1992, cited in Spergel, 1995) in the United States and Gilling (1994) in England have found it to be fraught with personal crusades to go it alone and what Reiner (1992, cited in Spergel, 1995) describes as inter-agency turf wars.

Turning the focus back to New Zealand where youth gangs are a relatively new phenomenon, programmes are typically designed to address key problem areas (such as drug/solvent abuse, truancy, delinquency, sexual offending), and community, cultural and personal development rather than youth gangs themselves. As such rehabilitation is not tailored to the young person as a youth gang member but rather as a drug user, young offender, truant, community member, or victim of abuse.

In New Zealand too, the outdoors has perhaps more often been used as a place to run such programmes than elsewhere. Evidence for this be drawn from attendance at the

First International Adventure Therapy Conference (Perth, Australia, 1997) at which 38 of the 240 delegates were from New Zealand (a country of 3.1 million people). Further, in New Zealand culture the outdoors is strongly associated with the development of one's potential; whether through sport, adventure, or simply appreciation of nature. Geographic and financial accessibility to sea, surf, mountains, lakes, rivers, and forests are key reasons for this. While rehabilitation in a wilderness environment may not be an ideal way of assisting gang members, the particular wilderness programme from which my participant group originated is where many troublesome young gang members ended up - the police, justice, social welfare and educational systems having almost given up. A month on a wild island was their last chance before prison. It would be prudent then for the reader to become familiar, as I have, with the wilderness therapy literature before being exposed to participant talk regarding experiences of wilderness therapy.

Exercise and outdoor pursuits have long been understood as therapeutic: "the wise, for cure, on exercise depend" (Dryden, 1675, cited in Spencer, 1990). These ideas were first put into official practice during World War II with an Outward Bound training program in Scotland intended to physically and psychologically prepare men for life at sea (Berman & Anton, 1988). Outward Bound has blossomed to cater for populations ranging from high school students to corporate managers (Burton, 1981) and physical activity programmes have become a popular adjunct to mental health services (Minor & Elrod, 1990; Marx, 1988; Hilyer, Wilson, Dillon, Caro et al., 1982; Wright, 1982; Collingwood & Engelsjerd, 1977). The environmental education (Miles, 1986), life changing experiences, and personal growth (Berman & Anton, 1988, p. 42) that Outward Bound and other wilderness programmes facilitated was not readily duplicated in traditional school, home, office or clinical environments and the emotional benefits of physical conditioning became well documented (Hilyer & Mitchell, 1979; Stanaway & Hullin, 1973; Collingwood, 1972).

While such personal growth and experiential education generated by spending time in the outdoors may well be considered therapeutic, to call it therapy is tenuous to say the

least. Therapy is a western term which generally refers to a psycho-social intervention designed case by case to address specific problematic thoughts, feelings and behaviours that an individual, family, or group are facing (Bunce, 1997; Itin, 1997; Hawton, Salkovskis, Kirk, & Clark, 1989). More recently in the literature the outdoors has emerged as a useful place to do therapy, not least because of nature's therapeutic qualities and the diversity of metaphors for healthy living that nature provides. As Davis-Berman & Anton (1993) have suggested, such a distinction between therapeutic and therapy is clouded by issues of training, therapeutic rationale, measures of success and definitions of what it means to be doing therapy. With particular reference to New Zealand, what it means to be doing therapy may be different for Maori than for New Zealanders of western origin, and therefore some flexibility is needed in allowing for alternative definitions of therapy. The distinction between therapy and therapeutic is further clouded by the diversity of programmes, some of which use the outdoors as a place to do therapy (Bandoroff & Parish, 1997; Crisp & O'Donnell, 1997), while others use the outdoors as an adjunct to, and/or transition from, traditional office based therapy models (Goldthorpe, 1997; Eger, 1997). In the latter the outdoors becomes a place to action therapy centred development.

The 1980's saw the emergence of a range of wilderness therapies tailored to specific clinical populations. Clients have included psychiatric (Crisp & O'Donnell, 1997; Pawlowski, Holme & Hafner, 1993; Stich & Senior, 1984), chronic drug dependent (Gillis & Simpson, 1991), adolescent offender (Sachs & Miller, 1992; Burdsal & Buel, 1980), emotionally disturbed (Clagget, 1989; Behar & Stephens, 1978), familial (Bandoroff, & Scherer, 1994; Mason, 1987), sexual abuse survivor (Asher, Huffaker, & McNally, 1994), and adolescent sex offender (Eger, 1997) populations. Common threads of rationale for wilderness therapy include development of interpersonal/cooperative skills (Sachs & Miller, 1992; Berman & Anton, 1988; Behar & Stephens, 1978), self concept (Klorer, 1992; Brown, 1986), connecting of physical and cognitive dimensions of self (Mason, 1987), transforming body image (Arnold, 1994), reducing substance use (Behar & Stephens, 1978), promoting adaptive, pro-

social behaviour (Berman & Anton, 1988; Pawlowski, Holme & Hafner, 1993) and increasing motivation (Berman & Anton, 1988).

Mulvey, Arthur and Reppuci (1993) summarise that while claims are often made of the apparent effectiveness of wilderness programmes in the treatment of juvenile delinquency the “nature, extent, and conditions under which positive outcomes occur is unknown” (p. 154). It seems illusory, however, to try and compare a vast array of programmes on the basis of possibly only one similarity: that they occur in wilderness settings. While programme diversity makes evaluative comparisons difficult it lends well to descriptive approaches. Wilderness therapy research to date has concentrated on testing clinical objectives rather than more openly trying to learn from those who have experienced the programmes. In particular few researchers have privileged the knowledge and experience of the young person above their own, when determining key benefits of wilderness programmes.

2

Method

Overview

While this is a psychological study the method draws strongly on participant-observation as a way to generate texts of youth talk (O'Neill, 1996) and facilitate an understanding of what Geertz (1983) called local knowledge. Such texts were written (in the form of recorded interviews), experiential (based on field experiences with gangs), pictorial (in the form of photographs taken by the researcher and the participants) and intuitive (hunches, personal feelings and observations regarding gang talk). By examining texts through thematic analysis an understanding of local knowledge emerged, that is, the texts, and eventually the analysis, talk from a participant, or insider's, perspective. Throughout the dissertation I refer to phase one where I traced participants from Te Whakapakari Youth programme, and phase two where I spent time exploring the youth gang culture and talked with youth about their involvement in gangs. Following a discussion of definitions regarding participant-observation and ethnography, I present three narratives which in keeping with the ethnographic tradition together comprise the components which build the methodology of this study. In the personal narrative I recognise myself as a human research tool. The procedural narrative outlines how I went about the study, from whom I collected data, and under what circumstances I came to be talking with them. The procedural narrative sets a frame for the three narratives of ethnographic experience presented in chapters three, four and five. The analytical narrative presents the method I used to carefully read and attend to the texts which were generated during fieldwork.

Ethnography & Participant-Observation

Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) define ethnography as oriented towards "exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them" (p. 248). Within the ethnographic method participant-observation is the

specific method used in this study¹. As the words “participant-observation” suggest this research method involves looking, listening and experiencing a social setting and then writing it all down (May, 1993). Bernard (1994) defines participant-observation as “...getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives” (p. 136). Buraway (1991) distinguishes participant-observation from all other methods of social research on the basis of breaking the barrier between those who study (observers) and those who are studied (participants). When doing research with criminals Polsky (1985) makes clear the problematic circumstances surrounding researchers who pretend to be “one of them,” or as Jorgensen (1989) has put it “becoming the phenomenon” (cited in Bernard, 1994, p. 137). Yet by expressing an interest in understanding what it is like to be “them” the researcher may succeed in establishing an observational role within the social setting of the study. During the past seventy years of youth gang research, participant-observation has been the method of choice for many anthropologists (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Fleisher, 1995; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Hagedorn, 1988; Campbell, 1984; Polsky, 1967; Cohen, 1955; Whyte, 1943; Thrasher, 1927), sociologists (Vigil, 1988; Leibrich, 1993; Horowitz, 1990; Moore, 1979) and even journalists (Bing, 1991).

Being an observer “inside” the study necessitates that the researcher will become a participant: a person who has a position within the social scene. Participant-observation is a particularly good method for developing rapport amongst participants, especially with those who may be reluctant to divulge their stories. Due to the “blur” between participant and observer (insider and outsider) there is potential for genuine bonds of

¹ While I am aware of the qualitative versus quantitative debate in psychology, I can find no appropriate application for it here. The use of qualitative methods may be somewhat “new” in psychology, yet proponents of sociology and anthropology can quote classic works dating back to the post-enlightenment period in terms of theory (Marx, 1964; Weber, 1949) and ethnographic work which includes classics such as Malinowski’s (1922) *Argonauts of the Pacific* and directly related to the present study is Thrasher’s (1927) *The Gang: a study of 1303 gangs in Chicago*. The qualitative versus quantitative debate in psychology is therefore to some degree reinventing a wheel which has rolled through a century of research and disciplinary discussion already. I chose not to promote the generalities of “qualitative,” (for it is a naïve representation of a diversity of theory and methodology) focusing specifically on participant-observation, the research method which is both traditionally and contemporaneously appropriate to my thesis.

trust to develop and this encourages honesty and openness between researcher and participant. Through firsthand experience in a geographic locale and immersion in the lives of people, participant-observation fosters cross-cultural empathy for what it is like as “the other.”

The method of participant-observation was chosen for this project as it enabled distinct advantages over other methods. Firstly, through experience in the field setting the researcher is able to gain a broad perception of the socio-cultural environment, exploring a range of areas before focusing in on specific variables. When conducting cross-cultural research and aiming to develop participant centred texts this is important because it both widens the lens through which the researcher observes, and encourages the acquisition of local knowledge as a pre-cursor to the collecting of texts. Secondly, the emotional, cognitive, social and physical experiences of the participant-observer in the field setting add life to participant texts. Thirdly, the method of expressing personal, field-based experience beside participant texts promotes a distinction between the cultural baggage of self experience (attitudes and ideas from one’s own culture that can distort perceptions of participant experience, Hammond, 1990) and the experience of the other. Potter (1995) describes this as reflexive validity.

While experience in the field setting is the cornerstone of participant-observation, ethnographers often use interviews as a key sub-method for generating texts of participant talk. The difference between interviews conducted by an ethnographer and those of a sociologist or psychologist is the ability of the ethnographer to accurately draw out and contextualise texts based on experience and rapport within the field setting (May, 1993). The local knowledge derived from participation concerns the meaning of particular phenomena for the insider. Such a shift from a psychologists concern for accuracy of representation to an ethnographers search for meaning through participation somewhat addresses the point Hagedorn (1996) raises with regard to the presentational accounts of gang members talk:

Use of hype is a common strategy for gang members, particularly, younger kids, who want to build themselves up to an outsider...the less familiar the interviewer is with the respondent, the greater opportunity exists for the respondent to exaggerate or to produce an account which creates a role of "gang member" to match the background expectations of the researcher (Hagedorn, 1996, p. 5).

Hagedorn (1996) advises that the use of multiple methods is the best way to triangulate and verify data and reduce "hype". In this study such triangulation includes young and older participants, new and experienced gang members, multiple members from the same gang, personal experience and finally observations made while with the gang and/or individual participants over an extended period of time. Interview hype is recognisable, understood and able to be contextualised by the ethnographer in the field in a way that weaves meaning through participant texts. This is unlike the psychological interviewer who lacking context is driven by a concern for accurate reporting of data.

Personal Narrative

This research may itself be contextualised by turning the ethnographic lens, for a moment, on the researcher. Unlike proponents of post-structuralist tradition I have tended to shun academic theory as a deductive research tool (where interpretations are led by a specific theoretical framework) in favor of empirical exploration of meaning. As a human research tool I am better suited to exploring and interpreting meaning than attempting and refining accurate measurement. I am personally driven to interpret life through experience and drawn to the field by a passion for a taste of the experience of life as the other. The other that I chose was a function of who I am. I have an enthusiasm and confidence for working with youth and feel I have the temperament and skills to do so. To add to my enthusiasm we shared common ground as basketball players, which as a rapport establishing exercise was matchless.

For many years I have chosen the outdoors for my recreation, stress release, and

personal development. I am at my best when I am in the outdoors, whether it be feeling a oneness with nature as I gracefully maneuver my kayak down the raging white-water of a deep river gorge, a sense of awe as I lie out under the stars, or feeling the adrenaline running as I click into my skis on a mountain peak, poised to get vertical. I aim to experience life to the fullest and often feel as if I am doing so.

Working as an outdoor instructor in the central plateau region of the North Island (New Zealand) I starting doing my psychology degree so I could work as an instructor on youth programmes. As I progressed through my studies I became interested in both the experiential methodology of social anthropology and the practical nature of clinical psychology. Recently I attended The First International Adventure Therapy Conference in Perth, Australia and very quickly came to the conclusion that my original intentions had changed. I started in the outdoors, became an academic and have since started moving back to the outdoors with my research, but I realise now that I am not coming back as an outdoor instructor. I am a clinical psychologist with the knowledge, experience and enthusiasm for working with psychiatric populations and have a passion for the outdoors as the place to do it. I find utility in the scientist-practitioner interface which is so central to clinical psychology, and seemed lacking in social anthropology. While I have a strong desire to work as a clinician I also see great value in spending time learning and thinking, especially if such exploration can then be fed back into clinical practice. I seek to do so through publication and my own clinical work.

Procedural Narrative

As Table One illustrates there are a total of 46 interviewed participants in this study. Starting with a sample of 12 participants of Te Whakapakari Youth Programme, 11 were found and 10 became the phase one, follow-up interview sample. Chapter Three documents the process of doing research with this sample. Three phase one participants provided a link into phase two and the youth gang culture by providing advice and

Table One: Components of each research phase, key goals and associated participant numbers.

Phase	Component	Key Goals	Participants
One	follow-up	trace 12 participants from Whakapakari	10 (11 found 10 interviewed)
Two	advice/consultation	learn about youth gangs seek help in planning study	3 (all phase one participants)
	a day with a gang	ethnographic pilot work	4 (including 1 phase one participant)
	interviews in residential centre	gather participant texts become immersed in the youth culture	22
	participant observation (p/o) with a gang	first hand experience of youth gangs contextualise interview data	12 (interviews) (plus 30 non-interviewed participants)
	additional Interviews (through p/o contacts)	supplement interview data	3

consultation (which 2 offered from prison) and the opportunity of spending a day with a youth gang. As Chapter Four elaborates these 3 participants provided the crucial links and local knowledge that enabled me to get the youth gang study underway. Based on the advice of these young consultants and my own experience with the gang I decided to organise to conduct interviews at a national residential centre located in Auckland. The latter part of Chapter Four details in narrative form my experiences at the centre. Through contacts and experience at the centre I was then able to move into an intensive phase of participant observation with a neighbourhood youth gang. While I was only able to formally interview 12 participants I had numerous short conversations with many others and spent a great deal of time “hanging out.” Chapter Five tells the story of my experiences with the gang. Through time with the gang I developed some additional contacts, three of which resulted in additional interviews in and around the gang community.

Analytical Narrative

The analytical method of this study was described above as carefully reading and attending to youth texts. Unlike a traditional psychological approach which “listens” carefully to texts to reliably or validly categorise, diagnose or identify symptoms, the purpose of reading and attending here was for learning about the meanings that were real and relevant to the speakers. Drawing originally from sociology, this analytical method is known as theme analysis (Kellehear, 1993). Ideally participant texts “speak” around a range of desired issues and the analyst develops themes which accurately represent participant texts. As validity of interpretation rests on “how well a researcher’s understanding of a culture parallels that culture’s view of itself” (Kellehear, 1993, p. 38) participant-observation is arguably an excellent data gathering method to accompany thematic analysis. In New Zealand, Leibrich (1993) used a thematic analysis of interview transcripts to draw out common themes for stopping crime amongst adult ex-offenders. Like Leibrich (1993) I approached the interviews with issues in mind (see Appendices A and B) yet the participatory part of the study was a great deal less specific. In this study the process and results of the thematic analysis rest partly on a bedrock of direct experience with youth and youth gangs.

By using participant texts as the orienting stimulus for interpretation the analysis becomes inductive. However, I was only able to present what Kellehear (1993) described as “a point of view” (p. 43)[emphasis added]. Given the multi-cultural context of this study (not simply ethnic but also the experience of being a young person, the culture of poverty, and the criminal sub-culture) such experience adds credibility to what can be described as an (not the) interpretation. While the quotes within this dissertation are verbatim, they are inevitably ordered according to the thematic patterns I have found and clustered around the interpretations I have made. I make no apologies for voicing my own perspective but invite criticism and comment which furthers the understanding of the issues I discuss. With specific regard to the subject matter, I start with the assumption that as a group, youth may know things about what it is like to be

youth that adults do not know. Further, I assume that New Zealand youth, particularly those in urban areas, do share some common ground as a group, that there is to some degree a “youth culture.”

I compiled all interview transcripts into one document and read through them to re-immense myself in the data. I slowly read back through the transcript document, writing words on the side of the page that I thought represented a phrase or statement that a participant had made. This process, known as coding (May, 1993), allows threads of experience to emerge from participant talk and is a way of organising the data so that such threads can be compared and contrasted with others. As Isinger (1991, cited in Kellehear, 1993) suggests I then re-organised the interview data, clustering together threads of common experience (using the cut and paste application in *Word for Windows 6.0*). I then re-read through the partially organised data, comparing the different talk within clusters, with the aim of finding a labelling word (or theme) to represent each cluster. By re-reading, thinking about, and re-reading again what had become very familiar data I was able to settle on key themes of common experience that I thought explicated the participant perspective. From this point I used my ethnographic experience in the field setting to test and add to the representative nature of each theme. I would ask myself, “Does this theme ring true based on my experience with the gang?” In further inductive fashion, the themes were organised around still broader topics of trouble, vulnerability, belonging, gender, and rehabilitation.

For the purposes of future reference where questions from the researcher are integrated into the indented quotes an (R) is used. Participant quotes of less than two lines are generally integrated into the text while all others are indented. Only the researcher knows the exact origin of participant information.

Validity Checks

Hammersley (1992) argues an ethnographic account is “valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise” (cited in Altheide and Johnson, 1994, p. 487-488). While the present study is an attempt at cross-cultural translation, it would be extremely presumptuous to suggest that such realist accuracy is possible here. Based on the principle that the social world is an interpreted world (Altheide and Johnson, 1994) I incorporated into the research design two attempts to examine my interpretations.

Firstly, with regard to the participants from the youth programme on Great Barrier Island, I was presented with the dilemma that while there was a number of similar themes across participants, each transcript related to a life story (or at least life after the programme story) which I thought needed to be told to contextualise what each participant was saying. As part of the analytical procedure I constructed an interview summary for each participant. I sent each interview summary to the appropriate participant for comment. I included a couple of questions within each summary and provided some instructions for the participant concerning response and freepost return of the information. The information I received back was very useful, however, that I only received two out of ten return letters implies, I believe, that the written medium was not an ideal method for communicating with participants. I chose not to pursue this method further.

Secondly, consistent with interpretive (as opposed to realist) principles, as suggested by O'Neill (1992), I gave copies of all interview transcripts to three evaluators who completed the first phase of the theme analysis procedure independently. I asked them to write down their own “labelling words” beside participant phrases and offer an interpretation of the main points present in the interview data. Similar summary words emerged across evaluators and me; this procedure was useful in helping to clarify and further interpret participant perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

In methodological terms this research is an ethnographic endeavour so it is fitting that it be guided by the comprehensive ethical code of the New Zealand Association of Social Anthropologists (NZASA, 1992). Fundamental to this code is that “anthropologists’ paramount responsibility is to their research participants” (NZASA, 1992, p. 2). I turned to this code for guidance on ethical dilemmas regarding participant-observation, interviews and research in general.

In terms of ethical review this project has been subject to the peer review process of the NZASA and the consideration of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. I have discussed the project with two NZASA members and have an ongoing supervision from Dr. Jeffrey Sluka regarding the ethical and ethnographic nature of the project. Through discussion and literature review the following ethical principles of informed consent, reducing potential harm to participants, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity were integrated into the research design.

Interviews were carried out only with the informed consent of the participant. All participants were informed that the research would provide both a contribution to my doctoral study at Massey University and research which Te Whakapakari Youth Programme coordinators would find useful. Participants were informed that their role in the research was to offer their time for a one hour taped interview and participants were informed that they could drop out of the research at any stage or decline to answer any of the interview questions. Attempts were made to elaborate on areas of the research project which participants found interesting or confusing so as to ensure that consent was informed to a level with which participants were satisfied (Leibrich, 1993). Participants were informed that all data would remain confidential and where reported individuals’ details (such as names, towns and other identifying information) would be removed and replaced by pseudonyms. Many participants did want to be identified and therefore were not entirely satisfied with my explanation that the university ethics

committee did not allow me to print their real names. This issue remains contentious, questioning in particular whether it is the job of the researcher or the participant to decide what is best for the participant. Arguments could be made either way but in the end, the academic world is not ready to accept such overt naming of informants nor an inconsistent approach to accommodate participant choice to be named.

Confidentiality is an extremely contentious issue with regard to the photographs published in this dissertation. Arguably the most important issue here is that of informed consent, that is, were participants informed that I was taking photographs and that those photographs would be printed in the dissertation? All participants in the photographs knew who I was and that I was taking photographs for my book on youth gangs. Most were so keen to be in the study that they asked time and again if I could take their picture "for the book." The photographs that I took were predominantly posed or were of graffiti. It is notable that not all the people in the photographs are youth gang members. I took the photographs to give readers a visual context of my research setting. Some of the photographs were taken by the participants themselves when I was not around and given to me to put in "the book." Participants were therefore informed in their decision to be in a photograph, and informed in their decision to offer me photographs they had taken.

The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi are now recognised as essential to all facets of New Zealand life (Orange, 1989). As van Wissen (et al., 1994) suggest, a partnership approach between Maori and non Maori will be instrumental in the success of Maori health research. The present study developed out of a partnership between Te Whakapakari Youth Trust (especially Whakapakari Youth Programme Co-ordinator, Mr. Hone daSilva) and me. It was through discussion and eventual participation in the programme (for a month long period) that I was able to produce a research project about Te Whakapakari Youth Programme, which the current research builds upon. This research is further informed by the work of Jackson (1988) and Metge (1986), both of whom have conducted extensive research with Maori.

Nevertheless readers should be warned that despite the precautions of cultural safety taken by the researcher, a New Zealand Pakeha such as myself will obtain a different perspective with different emphases from a person of different cultural background who looks at the same information. This does not mean that either perspective is right or wrong but that both are culturally bound. I accept the interpretive limitations that my ethnicity engenders in relation to aspects of Maori, Tongan, Fijian, Nuiean, Cook Island, Tokelau and Samoan cultures.

Precautions were taken to ensure that no one was harmed as a result of taking part in this research. While some participants found it painful to discuss the parameters of their life the researcher, through shared experience and previously developed rapport, was able to offer a degree of support as a friend as well as a researcher.

3

Narrative of a follow-up study with Te Whakapakari Youth Programme

Whakapakari Song

The very first day we all met, we didn't know what to expect.
We all came from Aotearoa, the great white clouds of our land.
Whakapakari is our name, thanks to Hone we've found our way.
Aroha is what we give, thanks to Hone, for the special gift.
We found our home in Mangatu Bay, as far away across the waves.
We worked and played every day, in the heart of this sunny bay.
And now we stand side by side, singing our songs with great pride.
The day our whānau says goodbye, we'll remember those special times.
Kia ora Hone for the special gift.

(Whakapakari Youth Programme)

The shaded narrative that follows has been edited and re-worked from my BA(Hons) research in which I spent a month on the Whakapakari Youth Programme (Great Barrier Island, New Zealand) with what became the phase one participants. Academically my description of life on the programme was not intended to be an examinable part of this dissertation but it does help to contextualise phase one of the study, in particular how I came to have rapport with such an interesting group of people. Following snippets of narrative from the programme I go on to describe the process of conducting a follow-up study.

Five and a half long hours I spent watching an island in the distance get bigger and bigger until we arrived at Manganui Bay, Great Barrier Island. We were met by a welcoming party of seven, all looking very rugged and obviously well adapted to their natural surroundings. Hone Da Silva, two supervisors and four boys had been on an extended programme occupying the island for seven weeks before we arrived. The tangatawhenua (people of the land) spoke first welcoming us, the manuhiri (visitors) to their land and place by spiritual, mental and physical well being and support.

As a newcomer to Whakapakari I was taken aback by the power of the situation, my mind spinning with thoughts about all the variables I had come to study or measure. Self-esteem, trust, respect, anger management, they were all there but not in an individually isolated fashion for all the concepts and many more were holistically encapsulated by this emotionally and spiritually moving situation. It was at the outset that I realised I was entering a world culturally different from the one I was used to, a world which my psychological/analytical 'tools' were not equipped to 'objectively measure'. A world which I became immersed within in order to reveal to those without my experiences interpretations and perspectives as well as those of my friends within the programme who I came to know as whaanau.

Koreo- teko-teko sessions (structured group talking sessions) were common at Whakapikau. The teko-teko was passed around and each person was given the chance to talk. It was started by Rob to open the session and introduced people to the teko-teko which together they waihangā and has been here ever since. Besides giving people the right to talk the teko-teko was said to bring a bad omen upon those who did while waiting at. From then on no one else could speak while an individual was holding the teko-teko. I recorded many such sessions (in written form) and below are some excerpts from the first session.

I have a lot of good feelings for this place. Don't stuff around in the waihangā. I bought my maoritanga from my grandfather and he taught me not to stuff around. (Points at one boy who is) (Rob).

I apologise for being a jerk at times and Rob you can just lay off. What you are saying is not true. The cooks are real good and the work is hard. (Celine doesn't pay as storytelling) I am learning. (Pama).

Man those fish are big! (Rowy).

It is good to see new faces (had been here seven weeks previously) and apologise for hurting peoples feelings. After three weeks of hell here I turned around you know I'd rather be here than locked up for sure (Don).

Throughout the programme I heard snippets of each person's life but it was not until the last week that it all came together as participants started talking more during the koreo teko-teko sessions. In one session participants talked about their lives. I wrote in my diary one of the more moving life stories.

I was born in a small place. My mum and dad used to fight a lot. My dad worked at the meat works and came home drunk. he would beat mum to no end. When I was seven I came home from school at lunch time one day. we never had school lunch so I used to take off. I was mucking around at home when I heard some laughing coming from the shed. I went out and tried to go in but someone was holding the door shut. "Go away" I heard my brother say. I was interested in what they were laughing about so kept on pestering them and they eventually they let me in. There was my brother

and a few of his friends. They had these plastic bags up to their faces and were breathing in. I asked what the heck they were doing. My brother gave me his bag and said, "Try it but don't tell dad." I did and that was the first time I got a blue buzz and I have been a smoker ever since.

Mum just up and left one day and no one knew where she had gone. Dad said she had gone on holiday and would be back in a couple of weeks. She never came back but we did get a couple of letters from her. She had gone down the line, way down south. After mum left my dad used to give us tidings more than before. For sailing and that, real big tidings too. One day when I was eleven dad was giving my brother and I a big tidging in the bathroom. I went in and tried to help my brother get dad out the bath, both turned around and beat up me. After that dad tried to drown me in the bath. That made me so scared and hateful for dad that I left too. The Mongre Mob took me in and raised me from then on.

Every second evening the whaanau practiced their waiata (song) party for continuing custom ceremonies while on the programme, but importantly for the big night when they returned to the mainland at which time a formal welcoming ceremony was planned. Very loud waiata often echoed from beside the fire up the bush clad valleys to the mighty hill tops as fifteen proud teenagers sang together songs of togetherness, happiness, sadness, peace and expectations all of what Whakapapa means to them.

When the day came my job was to load the gear onto the barge via a row boat. We then towed the barge out to the awaiting boat for re-loading; it was quite an operation. All done with their jobs the boys were transported onto the launch and then out to the big boat. Looking back as we motored out of Mangan Bay, while happy to be going home I couldn't help but feel sad to be leaving this magic place where a part of me still remains.

As we crashed through the waves, returning from our wilderness retreat on Great Barrier Island to the hustle and bustle of life on the mainland, I thought of each participant: "What would become of them?" "Was this it?" "Were they now expected to be fully

functioning and contributing members of society?" "Would I ever see them again?" I had in my head, in my notes and in my photographs, the memories of an enlightening experience. Over the months that followed, while I wrote about the experience of Te Whakapakari Youth Programme each of these twelve participants was having a new experience. Such unanswered questions seemed to me to represent the lasting essence of the rehabilitation experience and provoked my interest to conduct follow-up interviews (phase one). Furthermore, the links participants had to the youth culture was a useful head start to my youth gang (phase two) study.

The Present Study

A year after we had returned from Great Barrier Island I began tracing the whereabouts of each participant. They had spread out across the country, only one having a stable address for the year that followed. I sent out a letter to each participant addressed to the "current address" on the Whakapakari referral form and one participant out of twelve responded. I then spent a week in Auckland during August 1994 trying to trace and interview participants. By the end of that week I had interviewed two participants and had come across many difficulties.

Firstly, the participants themselves moved around a great deal and the whereabouts of many were unknown, even to their parents. Secondly, those who were living at home tended to have parents that were also somewhat transitory: addresses changed and no forwarding address was readily available. Thirdly, ten of the twelve participants either had no phone number or the phone had been disconnected.

In the official realm I had difficulties with the requirements of the Privacy Act (1993) in terms of government departments supplying me with information about their clients. I

¹ Two such waiata are on the title page for Chapters Three and Four.

attempted to alleviate this problem by leaving the following message to be passed on to the participant by their social worker:

Erin Eggleston is trying to contact you as part of his research and would you please ring him collect if you are willing to be part of the study.

They therefore had the right to decline participation and retain their privacy if they so chose to (one participant did decide that he was not to be contacted). Initially it seemed to be a matter of luck whether or not I came across a helpful official; however, I found that by faxing around the Children, Young Persons, and their Families Service (CYPS) and the Department of Corrections I was able to find a number of social workers who went out of their way to legally provide me with the information I required.

Finding Participants

After a year of searching I found eleven of the twelve Whakapakari participants (or they found me as happened most often) of whom ten allowed me to re-interview them. I believe my success in finding participants had much to do with the rapport I had established through one month together in a wilderness survival situation. The stories of finding participants, presented below, illustrate both the colorful nature of follow-up research and the diversity of participant experience upon return.

Andrew was particularly difficult to locate. His mother had moved without a forwarding address, and neither Social Welfare nor the Police could help me as he had not been in trouble (and got caught) since Whakapakari. Five months later one of the other participants reported seeing Andrew working at a bar in town. I went down to the bar and got his phone number from the manager. Andrew was very surprised that I had managed to find him.

Finding Anna was not easy. She had moved at least four times since coming back from Whakapakari. I was eventually able to contact her via CYPS who, after negotiation, gave me the phone number of her mother. By the time I reached Anna she was becoming settled in the rural town where she had been for the past nine months.

I interviewed Rewi in a secure care unit. He had spent much of his teenage years in and out of such institutions. Recently introduced privacy legislation made it very difficult for me to find out exactly where Rewi was. After four months of phone calls, writing letters, trying my luck at youth institutions and sending faxes, I had a vague idea of where Rewi was located. I used the information I had to contact Rewi's social worker who was willing to pass on the message to Rewi that I wanted to talk with him and he could ring me collect. He rang a day later.

To find Richard I sent numerous faxes to CYPS around the North Island, letters to Richard's family and asked other participants for help locating him.. He had moved often and his whereabouts were unknown. I had given up on finding him until I went to see Clive and heard Richard was in the same town. Following Clive's interview we went into town and successfully located Richard. His face lit up when he saw me "What are you doing up here?" he said with surprise and wide open eyes. "I came to see you and Clive," I said "Jump in."

Piripi was not particularly difficult to find. I went around to his parents' house (they were not on the phone) only to find that they had two vicious pit-bulls which succeeded in chasing me back out to the road. Soon after Piripi's mother and older sister emerged. They were very surprised that I wanted to talk with Piripi. We had a long discussion about their struggles with Piripi. Piripi's mother had given up on her son yet still cared for him and I think would give him another chance if he sorted himself out. Piripi was

close to his older sister: they have at least weekly contact and she stands up for him and cares about him as a brother and friend. From the perspective of Piripi's mother she had every reason not to trust her son; she recalls a time when Piripi organised for his friends to burgle the place and sold everything before it could be traced. Two days after talking with Piripi's family (and following up on a couple of dead end leads around Auckland) I got a call from Piripi himself. He was enthusiastic about talking with me and we spent a morning together in downtown Auckland.

Tama still lived at home where he was on house arrest and was therefore easy to find and happy to do an interview.

Ed was one of the hardest participants to find. I could not locate him through his family and CYPS were reluctant to pass on information. After several months I finally got to talk to one of the social workers on Ed's case who provided me with the name of his lawyer. I found out he was on remand in prison awaiting a trial for attempted burglary and wounding with intent to injure. I liaised with the prison and organised to see Ed the following day.

Similarly, I was told Rob was in prison for assault and by sending a few faxes through to prison managers was able to arrange to see him.

Johnny was not easy to find although I did manage to trace him from Whakapakari to his family in a southern city back to a CYPS family home in Auckland, back out to Whakapakari and then back to his home town before I finally caught up with him at another CYPS family home in Auckland.

Interview Structure

Despite having some key issues I wanted to discuss² I structured the interviews in favour of exploring participant perspectives. I tended to use the participant's last answer as the base for the next question trying to both follow their line of thought and test ideas I developed as the interview proceeded. This technique is described by May (1993) as the focused or unstructured interview and has the benefits of revealing interviewee concerns and constructions of reality, and challenging the knowledge of official accounts.

Interviews began with about 5 minutes of review time. The participant and I would talk about what we had been doing over the past year. I would mention the book I had written about our time on Whakapakari and let participants flick through it, most only looking at the pictures but all showing enthusiasm to either get a copy or some of the photos.

When I felt it was a good time I would outline the reasons why I was here to see them. I would discuss the contract that confidentiality would be maintained between my supervisor and me and personal information (such as places and names) would be disguised to ensure that the participant could not be recognised. I would then ask the participant if it was okay to record the interview on tape and would sometimes have to go back over the confidentiality clause at that stage.

With the tape running, I turned to the computer³ and asked the participant whether they recalled the last interview we had. Invariably they did but many could not recall what they had said. Typically participants found it amazing when I said "It's all right here in this computer." Having got their attention I proceeded to call up their file and outline the

² See Appendix A for phase one and Appendix B for phase two.

³ I used an IBM laptop computer and stored the interview data as Word Perfect 5.1 files. I chose to use a computer for these interviews both so I could compare current interviews with responses in the previous interview and for the novelty value of a computer with participants.

interview structure. I told them we would start by going through what they had said previously and that they could agree or disagree with, change, add to, or talk about what they had said at any stage. Participants were encouraged to use the computer themselves (five out of ten did to some degree) but I ended up doing most of the typing. After re-evaluating the prior interview I asked them a set of questions about what had happened since they came back (see Appendix A for interview questions). Proceeding through the interview we talked about each question and often broader social and personal issues. The questions served as a base for discussion not as a rigid structure. I let participants talk for as long as they wanted about any of the questions or related issues they thought to be important or wanted to discuss. Most of the information was typed into the computer at the time of the interview. I would often clarify what the participant said as I typed and this would lead on to a more complete explanation or example.

I would then turn off the tape recorder, pack away the computer and talk with them for a little longer. I tended to stay longer with the people in prison and we would talk about what it was like to be inside and if they brought it up why they were there. I offered to send those in prison some reading material and have since done that. We often talked further about personal issues and I would bring up my ideas about the gang study I was planning. Participants were interested to talk about this study and many offered to help with it in some way. Probing for advice was consistent with the overall thesis of representing youth texts and learning from the perspective of youth. Three participants continued to provide advice and contacts during the youth gang study.

Individual Interviews

Rob was one of the most interesting youths I have met. He was very pleased to see me; any break from the monotony of being behind bars was, I imagine, pleasing. While I had good rapport with Rob he seemed to behave very manipulatively at times. For example, I

had a bottle of coca-cola in my bag and gave it to him. He was very pleased to receive it and thanked me. While drinking the cola he hid it underneath the table whenever someone walked past the door. When I inquired what he was doing, Rob replied that you are not allowed to bring drinks into the prison and I would get in trouble if the guards found out. I felt Rob was trying to create a secret between us, one which could be further exploited later. I told Rob that I was not worried about the guards and if I got in trouble I would deal with it. No one would come in while I was interviewing him and he could feel free to drink the cola as he pleased.

Toward the end of the interview I offered to send Rob some reading material (magazines and Maori language material) and he saw an opportunity to push my offer further and asked me if he could borrow some money. Under other circumstances I would have given him a couple of dollars or as I did with some participants taken him out to lunch. It was the way that Rob manipulatively went about trying to get money out of me that discouraged me giving anything tangible to him in case it could be used for further manipulation purposes. As a beginner in the field and at prisons I did not want to get into a manipulation battle with one of my participants.

Despite getting re-acquainted with Rob's manipulative behaviour I believe I had good rapport with him. He talked about going as far as he was going to go (in terms of crime) and that it didn't really matter what he told me. When Rob was beginning to talk in detail about a bank robbery he committed, I said to him, "It's your information and you keep whatever details you want to for you!" He replied, "I don't really mind." I said, "Whatever feels good for you to be telling me you can tell me." He replied, "I just keep it the same man, I don't really mind. I've virtually come to the last stage really. And I just want to get everything out and once it's out I can virtually just start again." I said "OK."

Rob's interview was one of the longest, he was certainly keen to talk about anything I

wished to ask him about. While this may be somewhat a function of the prison context I do believe that he was genuinely interested in the study and/or in the study being interested in him. This kind of openness is certainly not typical of an antisocial personality; a diagnostic cluster for which this participant could certainly meet the requirements⁴ when out on the street, in prison, or in the office of a social worker.

Ed prized his reputation as a gangster and uses his tag as his name. I used this in a joking fashion to help establish rapport and snap him out of the daydream he seemed to be in by asking him a question which contained the word he used as a tag within the sentence. This certainly brought about a response, some laughs and more enthusiastic participation. As the interview went on, Ed became more comfortable talking with me and by the end was really enjoying it. His leaving remark as he wandered back to his cell was, "You're a pretty cool dude," which meant a lot to me.

Andrew was sent to Whakapakari due to his violence and anger problem. Andrew lived at home in suburban Auckland with his mother and step father. He was not on drugs and generally pleasant to be around. Unlike other participants who were enthusiastic about telling me all and happy that someone wanted to know, Andrew was somewhat withdrawn during the interview and not willing to elaborate on his answers. I felt that I was not connecting well with him. I do not believe he was telling me lies but think that he did not feel comfortable about being entirely candid with me either.

Knowing Piripi's record as someone who takes advantage of people I was a little cautious about accepting what he said as entirely reliable. I often asked him to elaborate his discussion and found few inconsistencies. There was no doubt that Piripi had made some

⁴ Antisocial Personality Disorder as recognised in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV (APA, 1994) is characterised by a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others as indicated by three of: failure to conform to social norms, deceitfulness, impulsivity, irritability, reckless disregard for safety, irresponsibility, and lack of remorse.

effort to help himself since returning from Whakapakari. For me the most distressing aspect of this case was Piripi's relationship with his family and in particular what he described as "my attitude." Piripi had been in a few fights since coming back but he said that the way he dealt with conflict was to just walk away. It seemed that while he thought this was a good idea it did not always happen. At the time of the interview Piripi was "in love" and lived with his girlfriend's parents. Post interview I heard from a reliable source that Piripi had broken up with his girlfriend and was living under a motorway bridge. Piripi's lack of interest in or support from his family had cost him a great deal.

Anna came from a family torn by the legacy of sexual abuse. As a somewhat independent youth Anna had struggled with life and found it difficult to stay away from crime and drugs. I believe I had a good rapport with Anna stemming from our time on Whakapakari. I was one of a number of people who promoted her healthy living and supported her when she needed it (as the only female participant she was sometimes teased by the males). Anna was referred to Whakapakari for a time out/personal development period before she went on the independent youth benefit. The support that she has had since coming back had been from her family and from a friendly Youth Aid officer (part of the police) who had helped her along her way. He used to say "hi" when he saw her around town and treated her like a person not a criminal. As far as she was concerned Social Welfare had made no effort to help.

When Anna was in her home town and smoking drugs she was getting into trouble. She was living with people who were doing crime and it was hard to stay out of trouble, especially when her mind was not functioning well due to the drugs. Her crime seemed more related to where she was living than Whakapakari. Moving to a small rural town had been good for her. Anna was looking towards the future and said she wanted to get somewhere in life. She wanted to get her own house, save up for a car, get a job and have kids. I wrote to Anna, summarising our interview and I asked her if she thought she

could do all the things she was planning while still taking marijuana. In her return letter she wrote:

Dear Erin,

Hi how are you. Well I have now got a job working at the supermarket in town. Today was my first day and it was quite good. I have also given up drinking and smoking marijuana. Good A!!!

Me and my boyfriend have broken up, I got sick of all his abuse, the way he talked to me and him hitting me. We are still friends and can still talk to each other nicely. I am now living down linton street in a bed sit which is kind of OK.

To your questions. My Mum is the only one that helps me really . She has always been there for me. My Grandmother and stepfather are good but Mum has never really given up on me. She all the way knew that I had it in me to get somewhere. The Youth Aid Officer got me out of stealing things and that's all, but he saw us kids as people not no-hopers.

By next year I should have a little bit of land or it will be 2 years cos I might buy a car (I will). Well, have to go to work tomorrow and I'm tired so better go.

From Anna

Since Whakapakari Tama had committed nearly 200 burglaries of commercial properties, been to "corrective training" and spent short amounts of time in prison. Tama was the leader of a severely criminal sub-section of a large youth gang and spent much of his time either out with the gang or at home on house arrest (that is by law he was not allowed to leave his house). Tama's hyperactivity and enjoyment of crime were a precarious combination. While he did not regret the burglaries and car conversions/joyrides (they were just a buzz at the time), Tama was not malicious or remorseless. For Tama crime seemed to be like an addiction: he got a buzz and went on a binge for a period of high action and excitement and then came home in the morning and crashed for the day. Enforced house arrest was a way for curbing this pattern but Tama did not stick to it. I found it sad that Tama had travelled down this criminal path for so long without

intervention, aside from the numerous, and to Tama's mind, worthless family group conferences⁵. It was likely (after 10 years of crime) that he would end up in prison, where a new criminal cycle would begin. Since coming back Tama had been to school where he ended up getting into fights. He tried staying with his aunt and uncle but ran away after a while, because he wanted to go out and they would not let him. For Tama the call of crime was just too strong, most notably because of the enjoyment he got out from doing it.

Rewi came from a physically abusive family and had been living with foster families since the abuse was discovered. He showed great affinity toward his brothers, sisters and mother but had not forgiven his father for the abuse that he reports continues to this day. Rewi perceives himself as a hard worker and there was much evidence for this on the programme. While Rewi thought that Whakapakari helped him a great deal it seemed to be working that kept Rewi out of trouble. He really enjoyed his recent job on a farm. Unfortunately, not long after Rewi stopped work, he was back into the burglaries again. During the interview he occasionally slipped into what appeared to be brief phases of dissociation from the present. It was my hypothesis at the time that he worked so hard to rid himself of distressing thoughts. When Rewi was not working he kept himself busy with crime.

Despite being friendly, talented and sometimes showing maturity beyond his years, Johnny had been a gang leader, committed armed robberies, and at times was a heavy drinker, marijuana smoker and sniffer. Johnny had tried and was still trying to escape the abusive cycle that traps him but temptation and peer pressure were two very large

⁵ Central to the principles of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 the family group conference (FGC) is a means for avoiding prosecution while still determining an appropriate outcome for offending behaviour. The FGC is a meeting of the young person, their advocate, members of the family whom the young person invites, the victim or their representative, the police, and the social worker. FGC's can take place in the Department of Social Welfare, in the family's home, in a Maori meeting house, or

stumbling blocks for him. Johnny had cut himself off from his family and had made this more permanent following the death of his mother. He had many regrets surrounding her death and in particular not being able to make peace with her before she died. His lack of support in the familial sense was therefore another stumbling block which sent his progress spiralling back to crime and drugs. I had very good rapport with Johnny and trusted him and could call him a friend. Since the interview we have met once socially and once to help me find another participant. We planned to meet again so that Johnny could introduce me to the gang that he hung out with but he got a job and I did not want to jeopardise him getting there in the morning (given that we could only meet the gang at night).

I had very good rapport with Clive and I think he enjoyed talking with me. He was especially impressed by the distance I drove to see him. The interview went well and was followed by a social cup of tea and talk. Following that we went to find Richard who was located in the same town and after his interview we went to the beach for an hour before I dropped them off.

Richard went to Whakapakari at the age of 13. Both his whaanau and the system had given up on him as a perpetual delinquent. He had been in and out of institutions because of the trouble he had been causing with crime, drugs and fights. Richard was sent to Whakapakari as one last chance. Richard and I were good friends during the camp and recalled our friendship at the interview. The main problem with the interview was that I had wiped Richard's file from the hard disk of the laptop I was using and did not have my back-up disk with me. This meant that Richard could not see what he had said in our previous interview out on Great Barrier. While this was unfortunate and a let down for Richard, we got straight into the follow-up questions and had some useful discussion. It

where ever else is appropriate. An FGC is mandatory whenever criminal proceedings are contemplated and its outcome only limited by the imagination of attendants (Morris and Maxwell, 1993).

seemed that Richard was trying to put all his crime and time behind him and this was emphasised by his starting school. While he was starting back at school where he left off, he had grown a great deal personally, as I said to him when I wrote him a summary letter:

You are very smart of the street and can take care of yourself in the bush. You probably know a lot more about yourself and your culture and you seem settled with your whaanau at the moment. These things will I hope make it easier for you to stay in school and do well. Good luck!

While originally planned as a pilot study the experience of conducting a follow-up with these participants was enlightening. Their talk about rehabilitation provided a unique participant centred angle on what has generally been assessed with tests and crime statistics. I was able to do this because of my rapport from spending time with them on Whakapakari. The data that this study generated is reported in Chapters Six and Nine. Chapter Six summarises participant texts on rehabilitation and draws out the key healing themes. In Chapter Nine texts from this study are combined with the texts of youth gang members to provide a participant centred perspective on trouble. This study is linked to Chapter Four by the three participants who became advisors concerning how to go about my youth gang study.

4

Narratives of learning how to go about a youth gang study

Totara Tree

*Once I stood like a totara tree, gently swaying in the breeze
I hear your whispers in the air and I cry, still I cry
I feel my tipuna everywhere, even next to me
Proud and noble, strong and free, and still I cry, still I cry
I knew one day that noble tree would fall, and now a new one stands
Proud and noble, strong and free, and still I cry, still I cry*

(Whakapakari Youth Programme)

This narrative describes the process of going about phase two, the youth gang study. From consultation with youth gang members in prison, to spending a day with a gang, to conducting interviews in a residential centre, this is a narrative of my learning curve to being able to spend a month with a gang (Chapter Five). In total I did forty three interviews, with members and/or affiliates from eighteen different gangs, twelve of which were with participants in the gang I eventually hung out with. Thirty nine interviews were with young people who claimed to be active gang members or affiliated with a gang. Affiliates were defined as individuals who did not class themselves as gang members but did hang out with the gang on a daily basis. Five interviews were with non-affiliated participants on the fringe of the gang scene. The mean age of participants was 15.8 years and the cultural diversity extensive (see Appendix C for more detailed participant demographics).

The youth gang study is tied to phase one by three Whakapakari participants (Tama, Piripi and Johnny) who volunteered to be unpaid consultants to the next phase of my research. Tama and Piripi, both serving prison terms, spent time with me talking through my plans for the study. They were both critical and encouraging in what they had to say. They taught me how to behave and enabled me to learn from their first hand experience before I actually entered the gang world. Spending time with Tama and Piripi shortened the time needed to conduct what Bernard (1994) has described as successful ethnography:

If you are a successful participant-observer you will know when to laugh at what your informants think is funny; and when informants laugh at what you say, it will be because you meant it to be a joke (p. 137).

The local knowledge (Geertz, 1983) that I gained from discussions with Tama and Piripi in prison was valuable in terms of the information itself and in giving me confidence to work with a youth gang population. In particular I needed to become comfortable with the way they talked and getting an inoculation of this with Tama and Piripi was useful.

Piripi gave me advice for going about the research:

So if I wanted to talk to some of these guys what would I do? (R).

Well you are talking to one of them now. HA HA. Ar (Piripi).

Yeah but you are someone I know. I reckon they might just tell me to piss off (R).

But if you took it more serious see like you had a real interview. like ar...(Piripi).

Camera or something like that? (R).

Yeah yeah then they would be in... Only to be on TV that's all (Piripi).

Yeah (R)

But it is best to just get the ones that are in prison a man. Cause they are the main ones. Not the main ones actually but they are the ones that would you know help you cause you know, got nothing you know we are in prison. Nothing else to do, can't just tell you to piss off. Aw you can but you know (Piripi).

More likely to help? (R).

Yeah but the ones on the street you know, you just go up to them and you know, yeah they'll tell you to piss off. a bro, yeah (Piripi).

Do you think there would be any way to get to know those ones on the street. Maybe by getting to know some of the ones in here (R).

Could do (Piripi).

We talked about aspects of gang membership:

You know we're the same, Crips and Bloods over here but it's Tongans and Samoans, some Maoris (Piripi).

As in the Tongans are the Crips? (R).

Aw, it's all mixed. It started off Tongans and Samoans, you know Crips and Bloods, but err, there's are Samoans that are Crips and Tongan's that are Bloods, and Maoris that are Bloods and Maoris that are Crips (Piripi).

So it is not really a race thing (R).

Aaah na just you know (Piripi).

It's just who you belong to (R).

Yeah (Piripi).

Does it have to do with where you live? (R).

Sometimes yeah, ar yeah yeah, mainly cause ar, most of us are Crips or Bloods from South Auckland. Ar there is some fulla from west south, west Auckland and ar down the line and up north but ar you they're not the main ones cause ar south Auckland that's the main, you know where there have been Crips and Bloods. Cause that's where mainly you know bad

things happen. Like you know there's heaps of stabbings and murders and all that stuff. You know drive bys or something (Piripi).

With Tama I talked about drugs and gangs:

So they're kinda in the drug trade a bit? (R).

Na the older ones man, they used to be PCT's in the old days, 88 and 89 and all that. Yeah fuckin they sell drugs at this flat at the top of the stairs (Tama).

Cause that's different to the other younger gangs eh, cause the younger gangs just stand people up for their money and that (R).

They're all shit they just beat up little kids all that (Tama).

Yeah, yeah. but the older gangs are into dealing you reckon? (R).

Fuck off, those older, those are just out of it cunts man. I don't know why they do it there. The only reason they can sell drugs in x is cause they've lived in x all their lives. And cause they know everyone (Tama).

So they'd just sell it to people they know in x? (R).

Every fuckin cunt goes in to buy dak from them (Tama).

Would they like, would dealers come and buy dak off them? (R).

Aw fuck no...(Tama).

I talked with Tama about the nature of gang members around Auckland:

Fuck if you try and, if you're from Royal Oak or something and you try and go over to the south side and do the shit that you do over where you stay, fuckin go up to some cunt and go take your shoes off or I'm gonna waste you the cunt I'll just pull a knife on you and stab you on the spot (Tama).

But are there people over there that do similar things? (R).

Awe fuck yeah. Of course (Tama).

They're a bit tougher over there though? (R).

Fuckin oats, that's where all the pure bred criminals are. No remorse for what they do they don't care. That's why you get so many of them in here there is fuckin heaps of people from south Auckland in here, you know (Tama).

Why do you think that is? (R).

Cause we are all ruthless cunts man. Cause everybody gets caught one day, we just seem to get caught and it all seems to pile up on us. We're just all bad cunts. Famous throughout the country, troublesome youths (Tama).

Johnny was my initial contact within the gang scene. It was through Johnny that I had my first experience of “hanging out” with a gang. It was an uncomfortable, disturbing, yet thought provoking and enlightening experience. I was uncomfortable because despite my prior training I was definitely an odd one out and I did not know how to act or what to say. I was somewhat disturbed by what seemed like abusive talk and behaviour. I was however, intensely interested in all they had to say. That, at the end of the day they wanted to do an interview with me was indeed fortuitous, as apart from graffiti on the walls around the city, I never saw them again. As the textbooks suggested I went home and wrote notes about my short and somewhat inadequate experience with Brixton, Dean, Former and Johnny. I wrote:

Johnny introduced me to “his boys” at about 3 p.m. down in central Auckland. They were all excited about their day. We talked for a while and I told them about my study. They seemed interested and would be happy to talk any time. As we were talking I realised that they were watching the street for any potential people to stock (mug) and presently they spotted someone, a guy with a skateboard. Johnny stayed with me (to commentate) and the others took off after the guy with the skateboard. I was suddenly in the position of being about to witness a crime first hand which I could do nothing about. They were about two hundred metres up the road and although my long distance eye sight is not that good I could see that they were really beating this guy up although managed to get away eventually. Johnny was looking out for what he called “heroes”: people who might stop and assist the guy in trouble. What amazed me was that it was broad daylight, three o'clock in the afternoon, right outside a busy mall and these guys would wait around pick their prey, go for it and get away with it! Despite their violence I did feel personally safe hanging out with them, although I discussed with Johnny the fact that I will not be able to get into the crime, drug and fighting behaviours that they were doing. So, if they were going to do crime I would have to know not to be around. Similarly with fighting I would just not be around. The problem would have arose if a rival group approached the guys unexpectedly: What do I do? I needed to make it clear that I would not stay to fight; in fact I would take off. I am not, under any circumstances, a gang member.

One thing I did realise from my time with the gang was that the more severely troublesome youth do spend a great deal of their time in youth institutions. This discovery prompted a slight change of tack. I organised to spend time “hanging out” and interviewing participants in a *Children Young Persons and their Families Service* (CYPS) institution, the Northern Residential Centre, before going back to gangs on the street. My reasons for doing this were mainly economical. That is, I would get to gather a great deal of data from a wide range of youth gang members in a short amount of time. Partly too, I still felt ill-equipped for life on the street at this stage and wanted to do some more talking before I tried to hang out with gangs.

Interviews were relatively common and had a place within the culture of the institution so I had little trouble fitting into the routine. Ethnographic work was unheard of! I had much difficulty trying to explain that sometimes I was quite happy just to “hang around” with the group, not gathering any information in particular. After two weeks at the Northern Residential Centre I reflected back on my experiences:

I would turn up in the morning and conduct a few interviews before gym at 11 am. Then I would go to the gym with the residents to play basketball. Basketball is a game I have much passion for and I felt my desire to play did a great deal for rapport, bringing the benefits of a shared experience to the interview. After basketball we would have lunch and a swim before going back to the hostel to conduct some more interviews.

I tried not to disrupt the schedule of the residential environment in any way, especially with regard to limiting residents involvement in any of the activities. For example I did not attempt to schedule any interviews when they were watching videos, or having recreation. Due to it being “school holidays”, there was limited structuring of programmes and residents spent a great deal of their time sitting around. Such times appeared to be ideal times for conducting interviews. Given that I took such precautions I was surprised that one staff member in particular complained that I was taking up too much of the resident’s time and the sooner I left the better it would be. I can only interpret such remarks as jealousy regarding quickly established rapport.

On one of the days I took my kayak along and did some team building exercises with it in the pool with a small group of boys. Although they had not enjoyed nor participated much in the team building exercises given out by an instructor earlier in the day the kayak proved to be a real novelty. The exercises I had them do with the kayak, although team building by nature, were disguised by the fun they were having. First of all I got them all to swim under the overturned kayak into the cockpit and a number of them could fit in there at a time. Then each boy took turns at getting in the kayak, without a paddle, and hand paddling around the pool. Once they had got their confidence, I used the other boys to stand the kayak on end and front so the kayaker was thrust into the air. Then we would do some rolls where the kayaker would tip themselves out knowing that it was up to the others to turn him upright again. This worked well. Two participants were on either end of the boat with one located next to the cockpit. The kayaker would reach his arms to the centrally located person and then flick his hip and pull on the bystander in order to complete the roll. The final exercise was a personal effort to tip out and exit the boat. The joy on the faces of participants was great to see. They really enjoyed this exercise. I wish I could have done this for all the participants.

The interviews were quite casual although I did have a number of questions I wanted to ask. I tended to use the participant's answer as a base for the next question or comment. I tried to reflect back to them what I understood of what they had said at times, and at times just affirmed their statement and moved on to another topic. I was surprised when one participant began interviewing me. He started asking me questions and assuming the interviewer role which I then realised I was obviously in. After that I began to allow for more of a dialogue to flow and this was a profitable thing to do. I believe it was conducive to a more "egalitarian" discussion. This was valuable learning for the street study: the goal being to learn from the participants rather than clinically extract information from them.

Talking with the staff at the centre I often encountered the belief that research was not of any value. I tried to reinforce the point that this research was one way of informing future work from practical experience. Furthermore, that health workers were too busy "doing it" to have time to think. I suggested to workers on the unit that I sought to find new perspectives and angles on difficult issues based on the knowledge of participants as opposed to what we could learn from reading books. Workers on the unit seemed somewhat convinced that this was useful.

In a sense I was struck by what "normal" young men and women these participants were. They enjoyed playing, and responded well to new activity and my energy to offer

them something of myself. Participants appeared to be genuinely interested to talk about youth gangs. It was a “cool” topic and one I had the feeling they did not get to talk about with professionals. Spending time at the Northern Residential Centre fostered a sense of confidence in me as having the skills, “the words” as one youth worker said to me. I was developing the local knowledge I sought and felt I was able to develop a genuine rapport with participants. The data emanating from my time at the centre is integrated with 21 other interviews with youth gang members and affiliates, contextualised by personal experience with two gangs, and presented thematically in Chapters Seven and Eight. Further the data is combined with phase one texts to elaborate a participant perspective on trouble in chapter Nine.

From my time at the centre I also had the contacts to probe deeper into the youth gang culture to the point of actually experiencing what I had spent so much time talking about. Drawing on my experience following up youth programme participants, hanging out with a youth gang for a day, and interviewing youth gang members in the residential centre, I felt ready to embark upon two months of street based participant-observation. The narrative in Chapter Five presents an ethnographic slice of life and a reflexive account of my fieldwork with a neighbourhood youth gang in Auckland. I refer the reader to Chapter Five to view the gang through the eyes of the participant-observer and experience some of the excitement, frustration, emotion and thought provoking experiences that ethnographic fieldwork engenders.

5

Narrative of experiences with an Auckland Youth Gang



(Figure 1: "It makes us famous in front of all the people" Has).

The aim of this narrative is to present an ethnographic slice of life and a reflexive account of my fieldwork with a neighbourhood “gang”¹ in Auckland. This story allows the reader to view the gang through the eyes of a participant-observer and experience some of the excitement, frustration, emotion, and thought provoking experiences that ethnographic fieldwork engenders. The texts on which this narrative is based took many forms. I conducted individual interviews sitting in my car outside the basketball courts; however, we were often interrupted, sometimes additional people would join in, and occasionally the interview became a group discussion with four to six participants. I conducted three interviews at the local take-away restaurant, one of which was a group discussion with people who were reluctant to talk at the courts. I conducted two interviews at the home of a participant and one discussion group in a local park. With permission I tape recorded informal discussions between participants when we were travelling in the car and have integrated many such informal discussions into the text of the narrative. I also recorded and have used some of my personal reflections on each day with the gang. I have inter-spliced the text with a collection of photographs, some of which were taken by the researcher and others by participants.

“Is it OK if I come down to the community centre tonight?” I asked the social worker.

“If you want, but we’re not really doing much,” he said.

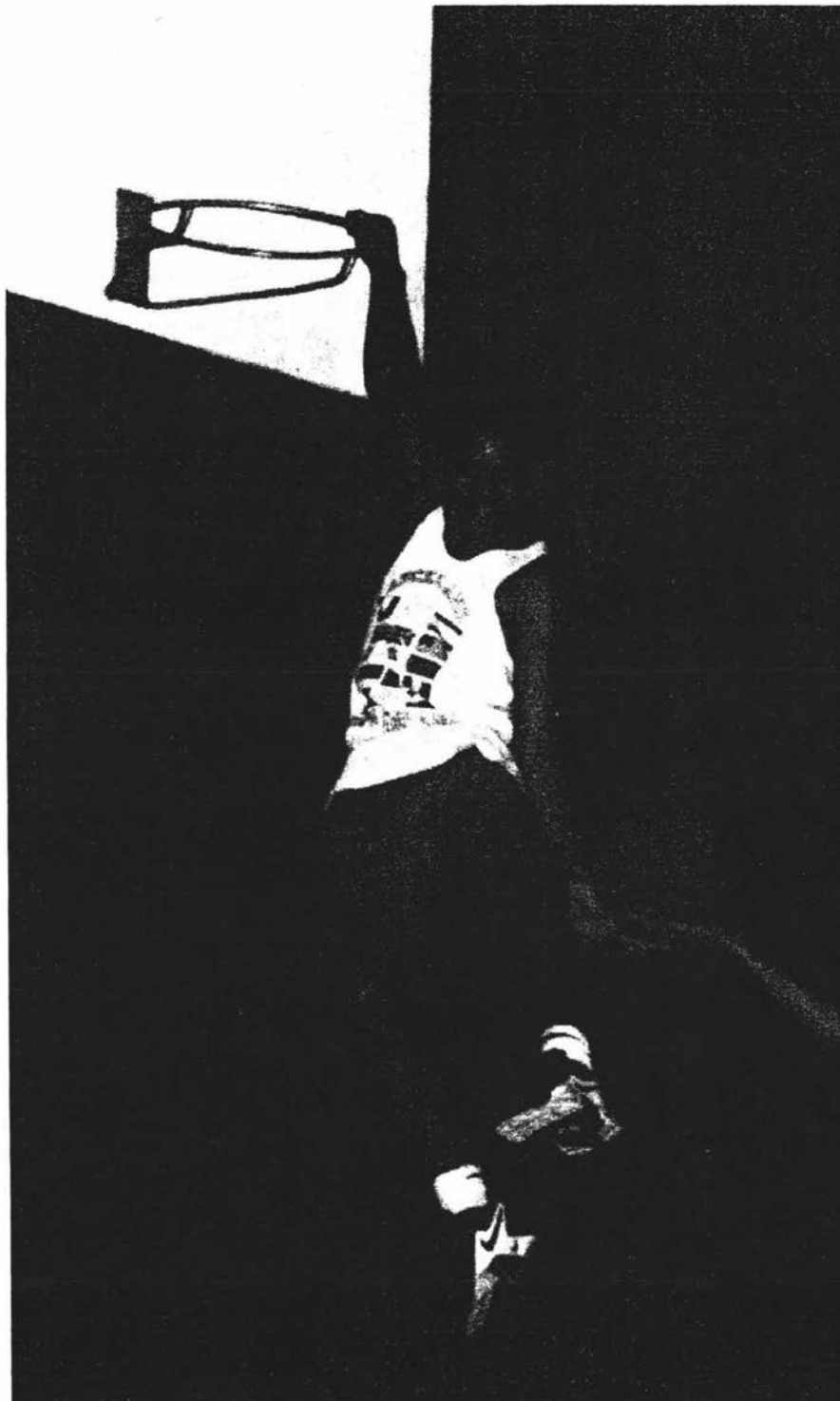
“I’ll see you tonight then,” I replied.

“OK.”

I found out about the Mt Roskill community centre while interviewing participants at Weymouth Residential Centre and it seemed like a good start in my search for gangs. I found John, the social worker, in the hall and re-introduced myself. About ten young guys were watching a movie and the older ones were playing basketball in the park next to the centre. After some brief words with John about the place I decided it was time for some basketball, “I might go and join in on the game,” I said to John.

¹ I use the term gang quite loosely here: they did call themselves a gang but may be closer to “wannabes” according to Klein (1995). See Chapter Seven for more detailed discussion of this.

“Go ahead,” he replied, “you can introduce yourself.” Unsure of whether the basketball had anything to do with the community centre I walked over to the courts and said, “I’m



(Figure 2: One of the guys playing basketball at around 9:30 on a Friday night).

a friend of John's. Is it OK if I join in?" Receiving a pass from the side I stood with the ball, left turn, right turn, bounce, swivel and shoot...."Damn, that was an easy one, oh well." Dee set up a move, faked a shot then passed it off to Quinn, "Yeah!" A basket. "Reeelaaax," called Dee, "take it eeeasy. You are playing the master, Scottie Pippin is my name, reelax." Passing, shooting, turning left, turning right, the game of basketball was a welcome familiarity in the different world on the other side of the motorway.

Laughter, exercise, fun and excitement centred around a bouncing ball and a hoop. I felt in no danger... should I have? There were no angry, violent gangsters on the court or were there? I turned to my car and tried to remember how much money was in my wallet, I checked to make sure my keys and watch were still under my shirt. Gang members are supposed to be bad, remorseless, malicious, callous dudes...aren't they? How do you know what a gangster looks like anyway? I turned left and shot. "Yes!" I said as I made a basket.



(Figure 3: The researcher at the courts. Picture taken by a participant).

Time was getting on, the community centre had closed and a group of 14 year olds turned up with flagons of beer, sculling them back as they wandered over to the courts. "Get that away from here," yelled Has. Personally I was very thirsty and could have

done with a swig of beer but I dropped into the background a little, just watching the interaction. Initially I was surprised that beer was not part of the culture down at the courts, but then I began to think that beer was a reminder of some of the problems in the community. Has was in the gang for the good times, the laughing and the friendships and so he could hang with the boys he grew up with.



(Figure 4: “With that million dollars, you know what I can do? If there was heaps of us I can divide us and put this side touch team, this side rugby team, basketball team, that’s what I would do if I have enough money” Dee).

It was dark and people were wandering off. “Where were they going? Should I go with them? No this is too soon,” I thought to myself. Finally, it was just me and Dee, time for a bit of one-on-one. He quickly beat me, but as we played we talked. “So are you from round here?” I asked. Shoot, miss, rebound,

"Yeah, just across the road." I grabbed the ball, dribbled for a bit, "What about you?" asked Dee as he shot.

"Palmerston North."

"Wow, what are you doing up here?" he asked.

"I'm writing a book about gangs."

"Oh yeah?"

"Are there any gangs around here?" I inquired.

"We don't have much trouble round here."

"I heard there was the KCB's," I persisted, "Krip City Boys."

"King City Boys," Dee corrected, "they hang out over there." Dee shot and made it.

"Well I guess that's the game. When do you guys normally hang out?" I inquired.

"After four every day," Dee replied. "You should come back then and play some more ball."

"OK," I said, "thanks for the game I'll see you later."

I returned a few days later, still unsure of whether the guys at the courts were gang members or not. Driving to the courts I wondered if the boys knew any gang members, they certainly didn't talk much about gangs. I wondered how I might define a gang member. I wondered if they necessarily had to be criminal; the guys I had been playing basketball with were not "bad" enough to be defined as gangsters using US models, or were they? At this stage the whole gang world seemed a bit secretive. The word had quickly spread about what I was doing and although I did not know it I was interacting with gang members (who looked and acted no different from the others) on a daily basis.

I returned because regardless of whether they were gangsters, they seemed to accept me and lived in an area where I knew gang members lived. My motivation was primarily to collect data, but when playing basketball this was obscured, blurred by the excitement of the game and the relationships I was developing with the boys. I was very pleased we had something in common. In turn, I too was being evaluated. I could have been seen as an undercover policeman, or just someone who did not really fit in to the current

social setting. In those first few days I had to prove myself and basketball was a good place to start.

A shot and a pass, a pass and a shot, the game continued and I heard snippets of each person's day. One guy was suspended from school, another started a shoe making course and was pleased to gain some employment. "Did you hear about Posca on the way back last night?" one of the boys inquired.

"Nap."

"He broke into the factory and stole all this Pepsi and chocolate bars. We didn't even know he was gonna do it," he said and after turning to me added, "otherwise we would have given him a hiding."



(Figure 5: "Good thing to me is just hanging round with the boys. That's it." Dee).

Shoot, pass, the game continued. I subbed off and met some of the guys. One was wearing a yellow bandanna and a few were wearing blue bandannas, "What does this mean? Are they gang members?" I wondered to myself. Because I did not want to offend people by mis-labelling them a gang member I was reluctant to come straight out and ask. "Are you writing a book?" one of the guys asked. Dee must have told them, I thought to myself.

"Yeah it's about gangs," I said.

"Have you thought of a title for it yet?"

"Na, not yet."

"Can I buy a copy?"

"It's not that sort of book. It's the kind that's in a library at a university."

"Aw, ask this guy he knows all about gangs. Or that guy over there, he's a bad as² gangster."

"Oh yeah? What about you?"

"I go to school man, I don't go out for that gangster stealing and shit. I just hang out here, play basketball and go home."

"Sub!" someone called, I jumped up and the game continued.

The third afternoon, still feeling a bit of a stranger, I wandered up to the courts hoping that the boys would come along to play. I shot a few baskets, some guys turned up and we played a few games together. Quinn (one of the older guys) arrived and I had been meaning to talk with him. I introduced myself and we talked about rap music for a while. "So you're writing a book about gangs," Quinn stated.

"Yeah, I've gotta interview about thirty people. It's hard finding people who'll talk."

"Yeah?"

"How do you think I should do it?"

"Well if you wanna finish this book, go for it. You are nearly down to the end of your book I think and it's no use if you don't do it, if you don't interview all these people it's a waste of time writing down all this shit."

"But how do you think I should go about it? Like I've got to the end of March..."

"Holy shit that's ages!"

"...to get about thirty more by the end of March. So I've got quite a bit of time, eh."

"Yeah, you have, you've got heaps of time. You've got bloody heaps. Yeah go for it man."

"So how do you think I should go about it?"

² Bad "as", rather than bad "ass" means as bad as anyone could be.

"Just try and be yourself really. I mean, 30 people means different attitudes, if you're talking about thirty people who've been into this set (gang) then just go easy at them you know, don't keep on bugging them you know. This and that, why and all that. They'll just tell you to f off, that's the one with a real bad attitude. But the ones that answer all the questions, that's it, that's the opinion that you need, that's the viewpoint that you need, that's sweet, that's it. [But] there are some other guys that will try and be cool you know. Blow arse too much, you know that crap and you'll probably get it and you'll go, ah yeah, thank you for your time, next."

It turned out that Quinn started C2S (Corrupt to Society) in 1988. As a veteran of the gang scene and a local community person, Quinn knew a lot about gangs. I asked him "What do you think was the thing that started off gangs in Auckland?" He replied, "Mainly TV, I mean the two largest gangs that were out, that I know, when I was young were Black Powers and Mongrel Mobs but it came from, Colours, you know the TV programme. Once it came to New Zealand, you know how New Zealanders are pretty lax about videos and all that. It just came on and everyone started getting with the trend. Over here it's a trend that's how it basically started, from that movie right there. Ice T rapping at the ending and that. Cause when I watched it I went ar man, blue, red...and then everyone started picking their colours really, that's my opinion. Corrupt to Society wore blue cause we were Crips. But now time's gone by they don't like wearing it so they just choose their own colours."

I asked "Why do you think it is that they kinda started off blue and then they changed?" He replied, "Aw it's just basically, I think one thing is fear. I mean if they wear a colour that everyone knows and they're the opposite colour, then dead meat. Cause then people look at someone wearing yellow or orange or something, they're like what the hell is that you know." Quinn pointed out that all the guys down at the courts were C2S. This was C2S turf. "This is great," I thought to myself, "I have found a gang!" Being accepted by Quinn was a key turning point in my research. I was welcomed into the community and given the impression that he thought I was doing something worthwhile. Quinn introduced me to all the guys with whom I had been playing basketball and my

identity became solidified as a researcher. That they seemed to accept this made me feel more comfortable about being in their space.



(Figure 6: The look).

Writing in my dairy, I pointed out the importance of the “unofficial” knowledge that I was beginning to obtain: “It is knowledge that you get from being there, knowledge not accessible through talking with officials.” Quinn prompted me to think about the difference between official and local knowledge. He could advise me about who to talk to as he knew the scene from an insider’s perspective. Local knowledge was however, just as much about doing as it was about collecting information . As I wrote in my diary, I often felt like I just wasn’t with it. I had come across another culture, a place where my social skills were not particularly useful, a place where I stumbled, made mistakes and generally looked a bit silly. Unlike an interview situation I was not in control. At the youth institution interviews were structured by the environment I was in and notably adults were always in control. When in the field I was unable to plan and often turned up at the courts not knowing what was going to happen that day: sometimes nothing happened and I went home without talking with anyone. Reflecting back this

uncomfortable feeling can perhaps be re-framed as a sign that I was trying to become familiar with a new cultural place, the field.

By becoming knowledgeable about the existence of a gang I had reached the level of understanding that most officials and health workers in the community have. I found it interesting that they know there is some sort of gang but don't give it much credence or kudos, "It's not a real gang." As one community worker said to me: "When we think of the word gang we think of a group of guys with black motorbike jackets and patches." The Crips and Bloods are not therefore viewed as "real" gangs, more just a bunch of kids that hang out and cause a bit of trouble together.

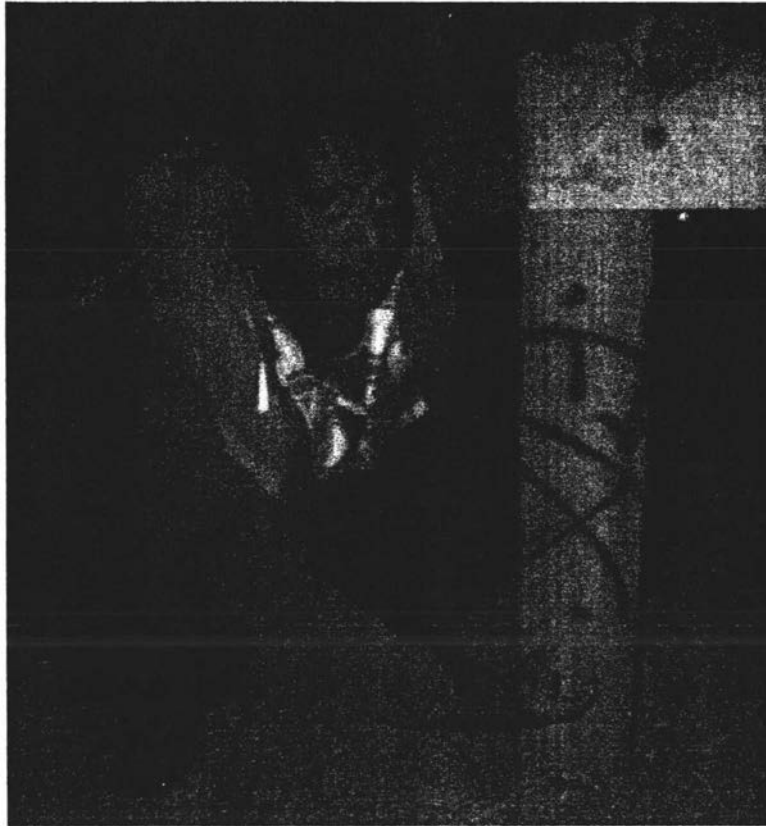
My acceptance became most evident in comparison to a man about my age, who turned up at the courts to join in on the play. He was a very good player but also very competitive and somewhat aggressive. The boys got angry with him and in a game of 3 on 3 started cheering for us and especially me, as if I was the challenger, their tall white guy versus this other tall white guy. I began to realise that I had been accepted.

To me the courts did not seem like a gang place as such. The guys hung out, talked about what they'd been up to, told jokes, laughed and played some ball, yet their common connection was C2S. Certainly the illegal aspects of gang life took a back seat to basketball prowess and the ability for comical verse. "Is this gang life too, or can gang life only be the bad stuff?" I thought to myself. In the eyes of officials and often gangsters too, the word "gang" generally stands for the bad things the guys get up to. "There's nothing good about gangs" was a common initial statement in interviews. Participants referred to "the boys" as the group which hung out down at the courts and the good things that may be associated with gang membership in general. The change from "the boys" to "a gang" is associated with the adoption of tagging (personalised graffiti with spray cans) and fighting. As Bugs articulated, "Three years ago C2S was just a bunch of friends, we didn't call us a gang, we just called us the boys. We were still Crips, we still hated Bloods."

“So what changed?” I asked.

Bugs replied, “We started tagging and everyone started getting to know us...So every time we tagged in someone’s area they marked us and we would come back and mark them and put a hundred percent Crips, so then they’d ask us for a fight...then we just started tagging some more, we were wearing our colours everywhere and getting our jumpers made, C2S jumpers, heaps of people started knowing us for our tags.” I began to realise that when they are down at the courts they are just “the boys” out for a good time but when they go out of their geographic community they become “the gang.” Participants initially confused me a little because they would say “there’s nothing good about being in a gang,” but they would of course exclude the benefits of hanging out with “the boys.” That is, “the boys” (despite identical membership to “the gang”) referred to what I originally conceived to be the good side of being in a gang and “the gang” tended to be conceptualised as the bad side.

One night some older guys had finished work and came down to the courts for a game before tea. The older guys grew up in the neighbourhood and the courts were a special place for them too. They joined in, commentated the play and generally functioned as the big brothers, the mentors. For the males at least, there seemed to be a sense of community down at the courts. The older guys connected to the group not through family or ethnicity but through the gang. Ex-members such as Quinn, were the Original Gangsters (O.G.’s) of C2S and turned up in support of the younger ones. Besides being fun, turning up to play a bit of ball with the young guys is one way they can show they care and actively support the younger members of the community.



(Figure 7: “We started tagging and everyone started getting to know us, C2S!” Bugs. This photograph was taken for me when I was not present).

In terms of “being there” the men seemed to be a valuable resource to the local boys. Quinn and I talked about gangs and the connection between C2S and the courts. Quinn stated that gangs, “Basically just mellow down to trying to be cool with your friends. Trying to get a name for yourself. So other people don’t mess around with you, [they would say] he’s a bad mother-fucker, he’s done this, that.”

I asked “If they can get that out of basketball then maybe they don’t need to fight so much?”

Quinn replied, “Yeah, that’s why it’s good to have this you know, community stuff. Keeps them out of trouble, but at night I don’t know what they get up to eh. I’m grown up. I’ve grown out of this immature thing.” To some extent Quinn did know what they get up to at night, he just did not know what to do about it. In a sense if he decided to take an anti-crime stance he would lose his prestige as an O.G.

I wrote in my diary “Gang members move within the community, some might even hang out there, yet they look the same as non-members so how do I know who I should be talking to?” Ideally I should have taken up residence in the gang community. Having very little money I stayed with my grandmother who lived 10 minutes drive away: too far for people to come and visit me. The gang community, however, was somewhat transient, involving many geographic locations. Members participated in a life separate from the gang, life that I had little access to, such as home life and school life. Collectively they probably spent more time in these places than with the gang doing the things outsiders might expect gangs to do³ such as tagging, robbing, fighting, and using and selling⁴ drugs. The courts were the only place where the boys were in control, and people went there on their terms. Consequently, I had from 4 pm until 9 pm (sometimes later) to spend with them each evening.

After playing basketball from 4 pm until 6 pm, one participant worked up the courage to ask what the others had told him he had to, and said “Erin do you wanna go to a Fifi night tonight?”

“What’s that?”

“It’s a culture night and it’s at Auckland Girls.[High School]”

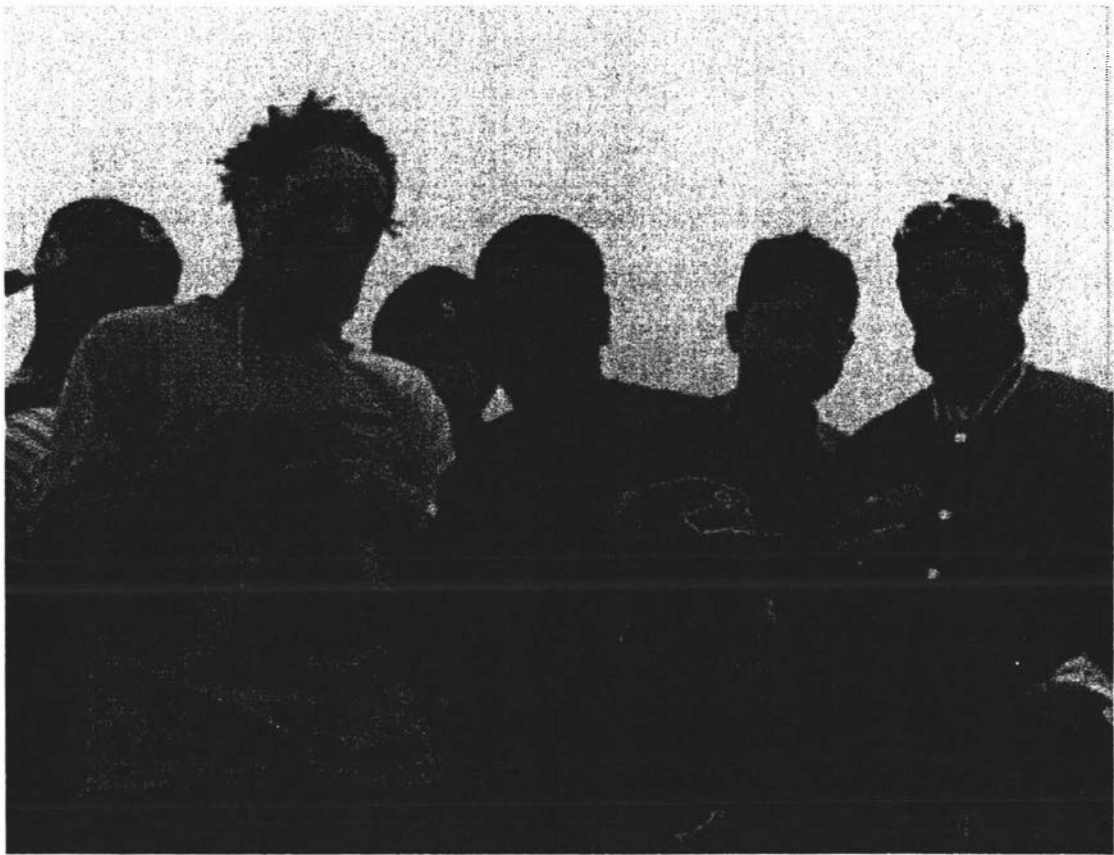
“OK,” I said. When it got dark and we couldn’t play basketball any more, as many as could fit piled into my car and we took off down to Auckland Girls Grammar School to watch their performance.

On the way down the usual cat calling of “Hey Sandy⁵,” and “How much?” was heard coming from my car as we passed women on the street. Going out in my car was a bonus for the boys, they did occasionally steal cars and go for joy rides but to have someone who could legally drive them around was great, just as it would be for any fifteen to sixteen year old.

³ Of course this is just one gang community and one quite different from other gang communities I observed and talked about with members. That is, time spent with the gang can vary considerably, both across and within gang communities.

⁴ Selling drugs tended to be an individual activity which only one or two of the 26 members participated in.

⁵ “Sandy” was the generic name given to women called out to on the street.



(Figure 8: This photograph was taken at a cultural day where we went down to support the local boys who were performing. One participant said, “For like cultural groups they will always come and support us and shout our names out when we are performing on stage. Just shout out C2S and that makes us hyper and we perform you know 100 percent. It’s cool when the boys are there cause you know you feel you know cool and that” Bugs).

The massive collection of Polynesian, Melanesian, and Maori cultural groups in one place meant that there were many opposing gangs yet the performance seemed somewhat neutral space. Three thousand people packed into the large auditorium and the show began. The two hour cultural extravaganza that followed incorporated performances which were from the cultural homes of all the guys I was with. It was a

fun time and one of the few times when such a wide range of people come together to support a common interest: culture⁶.

Why conflict emerged I am unsure, but the word was out that there was going to be a fight afterwards. It is not so much that the gangs create the conflict but that when the conflict emerges they want to be there to experience it. As many boys have said to me, “we don’t cause trouble but if trouble comes to us...” Well trouble had come alright! As the parents and families started leaving, the school kids waited; rather than emptying, the car park was filling up, the tension was rising, people were preparing themselves to fight, or at least watch. Groups started forming and C2S was one. Apparently one of the MAGS (Mount Albert Grammar) boys had insulted a girl with a very big boyfriend. He arrived with his “back-up.” Three big older guys arrived and came storming across the car park, anger in their faces and power in their fists. They were fighters, and they were revved up for a fight. Tension rose, the crowd awaiting the first flying fist or bleeding nose.

Realising there was going to be a fight, the local teachers began to disperse the crowd, telling people they were a disgrace and to get home before they called the police. The fight was off but the tension was still high. On the way home talk abounded about how one guy had a shotgun in his boot and those guys that arrived were of the BOYA tribe⁷, “a real bad as gang,” according to one of the boys. Driving up the road the guys felt a need to yell out their gang name all around town. “C2S,” “C2S,” “Get off the road you silly bastard,” “Whooooooooo hahahhhha.” Has was feeling great, he’d just got his drivers license and wanted to tell the world. So driving through Ponsonby he yelled “Wankers, wankers, I got my license today. Whaaa hooo.” The boys were “pumped.” This had been a good night. When a guy did the fingers⁸ to them Junior and Dee wanted to turn around and go get him. I decided to turn around but gave the guy a chance to

⁶ I attended three such shows with the boys including one full day festival.

⁷ BOYA tribe is an off shoot of a Samoan gang from Los Angeles.

⁸ In New Zealand the reverse of rising peace sign means “fuck off” and is called “the fingers.”

run, I stopped quite a way back. They jumped out and were off, "He's jumping it man."
"Hey!" Has waited in the car.

"Let's take off, I wanna go home." Then he said "Are you encouraging them, are you encouraging these kinda things?"

"Do you think I am?"

The others were back before I got an answer and Has asked, "What happened?"

"He took off," replied Junior. Even though the guy easily got away, looking back I guess it was a bad decision to stop but such are the kind of decisions the participant-observer is forced to make.

Dee was the last one to be dropped off and on the way I asked him "What are you doing tomorrow?"

He replied enthusiastically "Are you doing something?" in a way that really struck me and made me think about his life. Driving home, I thought to myself, on the one hand he has a guise of freedom to do what he wants, the free agent, the drifter. Yet on the other hand Dee was in the rut of unemployment; reliant on his family for food and shelter, doubting of his prospects for work and spending mornings asleep and afternoons and nights at the courts or on the streets. There was much boredom in his life and the idea that he might be able to do something with me, anything I was doing, sounded more appealing that whatever might be going on in the community.

After spending the day transcribing I drove back to the courts for whatever awaited me... "Erin's taking us for a drive tonight," Posca called out to the boys.

"Is he?"

"Am I?" The idea of going for a drive didn't seem altogether a bad idea. I'd be able to record what they said as well as see what they do I thought to myself. "Yeah OK, but we'll have to do some interviews first," I said, sensing a good time to strike a deal. "You can interview me first," Posca exclaimed, walking over to the car.

After two interviews some of the guys came over, "Can we sit in your car?"

"OK," I said, "I'm just going to go over to play some basketball. You can use the tape deck as long as you don't start the engine." I wandered over and played some ball while

the boys hung out in "their" car. At this stage I felt fine about them sitting in the car, even with the keys in it. Nevertheless I must admit I did keep an eye on them while playing! Returning after a brief game, I sat in the car as the guys kept talking. Has was playing with the tape recorder and decided to play a joke on the other guys by recording what they were saying. They thought that was great and got the idea of recording a rap. I was impressed with the vocals (below) and the beat, which they pre-recorded and dubbed over the vocals using my car stereo.

This song's comin' straight from central
 It's dedicated to my Niger's down in C2S, Yeah
 Gili R, Kenny K coming straight at ya yeah
 My name is Gili R and I drive a fast car, Yeah
 These Sound's dedicated to the east side to the west side
 And especially those Niger's down in central
 C2S is in the house
 Kenny K from Blockhouse Bay
 Do the damage C2S
 My name is Gili R and I drive a flash car
 And Nooki Tangitau he tags the fast car
 Malcom Street is where I live, down the road it is active
 We went to the bus stop waited for the bus
 Out of the blues came my street cuz
 Daniel's my friend, he tags Xkon
 When we got to the bus stop we all were gone
 Lani's the leader Meccas' older brother
 And our little friends, Dilo and Lafa
 One tags PK the other Sonny 2
 If you fuck with us be fucking with you

Chorus:
 Do the damage
 Do the, do the, do the damage (x2)
 Young Corrupt to Society

I'm a strapper a crapper a Nuian rapper
 Kenny K's coming cause he's the hard steppa
 Comin form the C side, that's right
 Not from the east side not from the west side
 Central is where I'm from
 When I meet a babe gonna always use a condom
 These are the words a from around the way
 Just listen to your main man Kenny K
 Couple a weeks there was a fight going on
 And we all went down just to see who's strong
 One was Gaston, One was King Kong

Out of the blues jumped in it was Xkon
3 on 1 it ain't quite fair.
But we looked at each other and we said who cares
There's only one word to remember C2S and that word has to be the best
(Chorus)

Pu Tang crew think they're the best
Fucking around with the C2S
Roni, Ali, Lasse and Lani hit so bad that it's not funny
Lucky for us they didn't get it on
Because central is where they're from
BSM Black Street Mafia
It's a new group that come to rap to ya

Chill will couldn't put a stop to us
cause I've got this niger named A+
Originally came from the C2S
He promised to join us in the conquest
Finding new brothers to join the clan
It was a mission just to find one man
Before we were gone then came the
Was another little guy named Antwon
We weren't quite done but we were on a roll
He got his older brother who? A Billy Coal
These two brothers were a brown colour
Because they're a gang lika no other

(Chorus)

He was Kenny K but now A+
Cause he done a hit on a yellow bus
Coming straight from central that's the place
If you dis me mother fucker I'll fuck you in the face
Cause C to the mother fucking S is the best
Cause you know enooki Tangitau
Was fucking a ho
....untranslatable.....
Yeah bring it on, fuck me, have no fear

(Chorus)



(Figure 9: I asked “What makes it a gang?” A member replied “Um, the bandanas we wear, the bad dudes we have, the trouble we get into and that” Jase. This young Crip is posing with a Crip sign.)

As I think in my mind comin' from central side
Thinking about the
Rolling/strolling high and proud
Playing man hunt at the community
Fucking around cause we're corrupt to society
But that don't matter it's a chit chatter
When I start to rap I turn the cap back
Cause it's time to attack these funky new beats that are hip to '96
Fucking it up with my niger fix

(Chorus)

While recording and playing back the rap, the guys became interested in some teenage girls on the swings. “I just saw that one in the black's tits eh. Look!” Everyone replies with a groan “Oohhh.” “But she was facing this way and I saw everything,” he added. “Take your clothes off please” called Kenny K. “Bend down a little more.”

“Go higher. Take off the shirt and lets have a look.”

“What you got underneath, you look beautiful, beautiful like me.” They begin to fantasise out loud, “Fall back and the top fly off.”

“I’ll take a picture.”

“If she bent over something and ripped her pants.”

“Ohhh”

“And she’s got g-strings on.”

“And you see her big butt.” Everyone laughed. There was nothing particularly different, odd or deviant about their interactions, they were just teenage boys doing teenage boy things.

After basketball six people piled into my car and we were off to New Lynn, Blood territory. “Part of my study looks at how boys in gangs talk, so...” I said.

“Well just leave the tape playing” said Posca.

“Is that OK with you guys?” I inquired.

“Yeah, no problem.”

“Just turn up here, I’ve gotta pick up the keys,” called Posca. “Bro, all these car keys to all these cars.”

“Hey bro, it opens any door to any car,” said Bugs.

“Saturday night we can grab any car and go for a cruise,” said Kenny K.

“You’s can go in the car, I go on the walk, I don’t feel comfortable in the car,” Bugs protested.

Kenny replied, “But we’re not doing any criminals, when we get that car, we’re cruising eh man.”

“Yeah brother,” Posca agreed, “I’ve got heaps of keys to heaps of cars.” I stop and from under a fence he grabs a bag of keys. They were labelled with the make and date of the car they fit. Naturally, this made me a little suspicious of the motives regarding the use of my car. While I really wanted to observe them away from where they hung out, I didn’t want to end up in prison as an accessory to the crimes they committed. “All these car keys, all these cars,” Posca repeated.

As we drive towards New Lynn the boys were cat-calling the girls and considering stocking⁹ the boys. "Starter Jacket stocker mother fucker," Bugs said, pointing at a teenager walking alone wearing an expensive American football jacket.

"Hey."

"Ohh, you wanna do a stock?"

"We'll just stop, stock him, jump in and off."

"You wanna?"

"Yeah."

"You ready brother."

"I'm ready for this shit."

"Is that a yes?"

"It is, trust me."

I keep on driving saying, "You don't have to do anything for me eh."

Kenny K replied "na we are doing it for ourselves. Cause I wanna jacket, I'll get a Starter jacket, I'll go give it here, boom, boom, boom" (meaning he would beat up the owner of the jacket).

I kept driving and then Bugs asked "Can we rob some cars?"

"You can do whatever you like, but I'm not helping you rob any cars," I replied. "Sweet as," Bugs added.

"Yeah bro," Posca replied.

I repeated, "Just don't do anything for me, eh," knowing that this was the exact ethical dilemma I did not want to get myself into. While it was not my place to stop them from doing crime, I did not want my car to become their "getaway" vehicle if their plans went wrong!

"Na bro, this is for us," said Posca and Bugs. "Yeah bro, sweet bro, man we're ruthless mother-fuckers," Bugs added. They were all getting pumped up about doing some crime.

⁹ Doing a "stocker," or "stocking someone" refers to stalking and standing over someone for money or clothing, which can sometimes mean being beaten up by the gang.

Posca exclaimed, "I'll put on my scarf, what's up mother-fucker!"

"Play the sounds man," said Bugs.

"Man when we went to Auckland Girls Fifties night the sounds in this car were booming," Kenny K added.

Bugs rapped, "West side Nigger's are the stinkiest."

Posca replied, "Central Nigger's are the craziest."

The excitement continued as the boys started talking about getting into a rumble down at New Lynn. "I wanna come down here and own this mother-fucking place," Kenny K called out. He talked about bringing all the boys down to rock the place, "I wanna take out New Lynn," he said. Kenny K exclaimed "I put on my blue bandanna, blue shirt, blue everywhere, then I just sit there. And some blood come to me: 'Hey Crip what'd you want?' 'I want New Lynn'. Haaaaaah, hahaha."

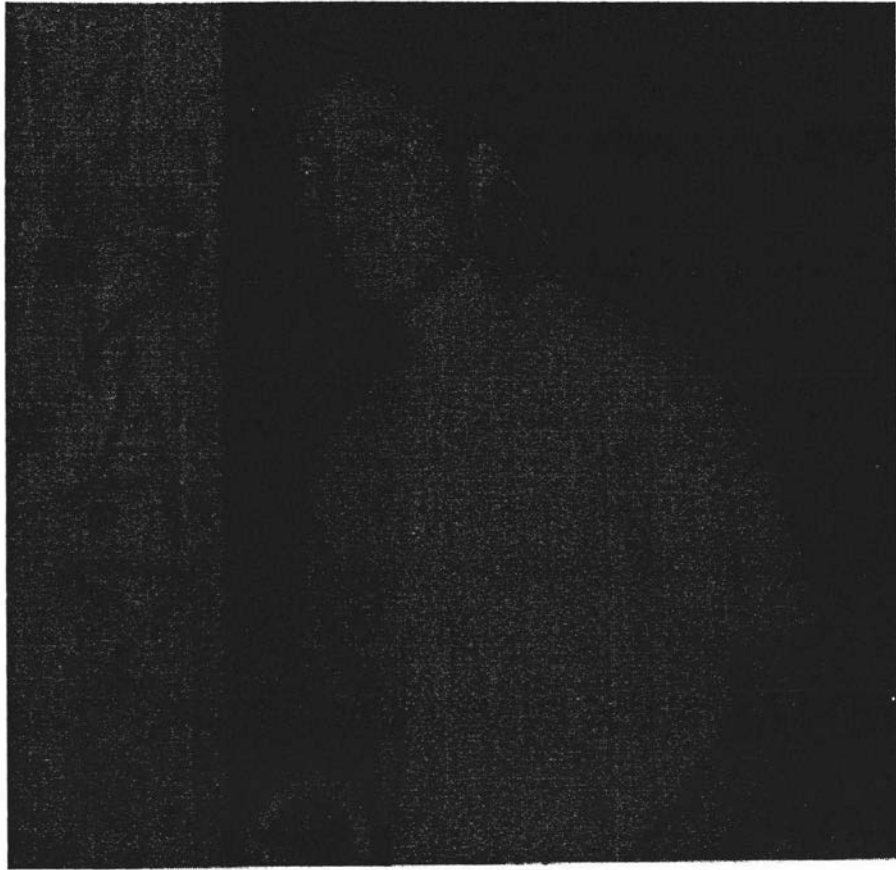
Their attention then swung to a couple of girls walking into the movies. Posca called, "Hey what's up Sandy? Mighty fine." He turned to the boys, "I want some of these bitches."

Kenny K inquired, "Do you share brother?"

Posca replied, "Any of you's touch her boom, trust me, boom."

"Even if she likes someone else?" asked Bugs.

"Hey then I'll boom her too," Posca replied.



(Figure 10: "Cause we are Crips, all of us, that's our favourite colour here. We hate red, we like fighting Bloods. We just see them and we ask them, you wanna go? We don't care" Posca).

"Hey look at that," Posca said pointing at a couple of boys in gangster clothes on the other side of the bus stop.

"Ooohhh," called the others.

Kenny K said "Hey I'm gonna hop out and say, 'Crip for life'."

Posca yelled out "Crips, Crips, Crips mother fuckers."

Bugs added "Central Side Crips."

Kenny K said to me "Erin start up the engine."

Posca jumped out and started yelling, "Crips man Crips are here. Crips, mother-fuckers. We're Crips, Crips will come down and own you. Crips will be here. Crips will come down from West Side and fuck you up."

The guys on the other side of the bus stop were getting a bit annoyed "Fuck you eh," one of them yelled back at Posca.

Suddenly Bugs realised who it was and called out to Posca, "Hey get in the car, it's Rocky, get in the car."

Posca replied, "Na, let's go over and smoke the fuckers."

Kenny K yelled, "Go Erin, go, just get the fuck out of here if you don't want your car to get smashed!" We took off.

It was getting late, time to go home. Driving down a dark alleyway on the "way home" Posca spotted some cars: "Hey, they'd be some nice hits, pull up over there." "Stop here." Not really knowing whether to stop or go I decided I could drop them off and drove to the end of the alleyway. Five minutes later they turned up huffing and puffing, stereos, money and clothes in hand. "Yeah"

"Check it out."

"Bugs! Hurry up!"

"Let's make a run for it."

"Na, let's do the vans."

"Na, let's go somewhere else."

"I'm going home so I'll see you guys later," I called out.

"Yeah, OK, see down at the courts tomorrow," they called back.

As I drove home I considered the ethical dilemmas I had experienced that night and over the past weeks. While ethics leading up to fieldwork were characterised by pre-planned executions of policy from formal ethical codes (Chapter Two), the ethical decisions while in the field were made on the spur of the moment and involved personalised responses to specific situations. Ethical decisions can be retrospectively analysed and criticised but on the spur of the moment, I only had time to go with what felt right. Such subjectivity brought me, the person, into the research and my experiences are therefore coloured by the personal decisions I made. Some such decisions limited my experience, particularly the illegal aspects of the gang culture, and others enabled entry and insight into social scenes and experiences I would not otherwise have known. For example, I chose to go driving with the boys whenever I got the chance, although I specifically requested that illegal activities did not occur in my presence. It was no coincidence that

I hung out with a gang that played basketball; I did so because I too shared an interest in the game. My personal preference to hang out with a gang that played basketball may have coloured my understanding of the gang world and may be profitably contrasted with the experiences of someone who did not hang out with a basketball playing gang. With further regard to ethical decisions, I chose not to intervene when I knew some gang members were going to beat someone up and take their money. I chose to stop the car when some members wanted to get out and chase someone who they thought had been rude to them. I chose to leave a crime scene alone rather than stay and see what happened afterwards. I chose not to accept invitations to go out tagging or mugging people. All these decisions coloured my experiences and perceptions. This has therefore been a story of my experiences with a neighbourhood youth gang and in ethnographic tradition may sit beside others.

6

Adolescent Talk on Rehabilitation: Reflecting on the Experience of a Wilderness Therapy Programme

During August of 1993 I attended Te Whakapakari Youth Programme with twelve young people as a participant-observer. I interviewed all twelve programme participants before they left the programme and as the first phase of the present study, re-interviewed ten of them during late 1994 through early 1995. As outlined in the introduction wilderness therapy research to date has predominantly concentrated on testing clinical objectives rather than more openly trying to learn from those who have directly experienced the programmes. The challenge for this chapter was to organise youth texts on rehabilitation in a way that did justice to their perspective. In this chapter I therefore present, summarise and seek to learn from, the talk of youth as they reflected back on their experience of a wilderness therapy programme and the year that has passed since returning. In order to do this I first describe how the programme operates; its objectives, participants, supervisors, and co-ordinators. I then summarise participant texts with a focus on rehabilitation, cultural development, experience of follow-up, and ideas regarding the optimal target population and programme duration. Through conducting thematic analysis with participant texts I found a cluster of healing themes around the concept of relationships. I outline such whaanau/family, helping, talking, working, listening, trusting, and respecting themes. In discussion I integrate the key healing and programme based themes of the chapter to clarify what can be learned from participant experience for the New Zealand context and in the wilderness therapy literature.

Overview of the Programme

Originating as a Maori Affairs initiative in 1977 Te Whakapakari Youth Programme on Great Barrier Island, New Zealand, brought together youth of many different cultures. The programme was run under Maori principles of life and promoted participants working together as a whaanau (extended family) in order to survive in their wilderness surroundings for the period of one month. Referrals came primarily from The Youth Justice branch of CYPS as a result of family group conferences. The \$1000 per

programme required for each participant was covered by Youth Justice. The goals of the programme as described to me by the co-ordinator were as follows:

An alternative to an institutionalisation: A few of the youth referred to Whakapakari were given a choice of whether to come, for others it was a choice between Whakapakari or corrective training and institutionalisation. Despite the ranging circumstances from which people came to Whakapakari, for most, their presence represented Social Welfare/Police/Youth Justice giving them one more chance before they started taking a harder line and this generally meant corrective training (for those under sixteen) or prison (for those sixteen and over). As programme director Hone Da Silva stated to the programme participants, "You are at a crossroads and this is your last chance!"

Whaanau¹: While nearly all Whakapakari participants came from families plagued by abuse and neglect, Whakapakari aimed to develop a positive whaanau during each camp. Whakapakari brought together youth with common problems into an environment where they all worked together, supported one and other, kept each other happy and importantly created a sense of belonging and association as a group and family; a whaanau.

Pride/self esteem: The facilitators aimed to promote the personal development of participants through experiential learning and healthy living. As one woman at the pre-trip meeting in Auckland told the participants: "You are special. You are going to become strong."

Removal from negative peer pressure: Rather than being badgered to go out and commit crimes or abuse drugs participants were taught that crime did not pay. Negative peer pressure was replaced with support and training in assertiveness.

¹ Whaanau is defined by Durie (1994) as "more than an extended family network...a diffuse unit, based on a common whakapapa, descent from a shared ancestor, and within which certain responsibilities and obligations are maintained" (p. 1). Alternatively the word "whaanau" has come to also refer to a cohesive group that takes on the model of a whaanau such as a support group at a job interview, church congregations, or in the case of Whakapakari a group of people who have to co-exist in a survival situation.

Trust: Whakapakari participants had nearly all been abused either physically, sexually, mentally or emotionally; their trust for others had either not yet developed or had diminished to virtual non-existence. They had learnt not to trust friends or family and to only look after themselves. Da Silva aimed to intervene on this destructive cycle by giving participants positive experiences and the chance to adopt constructive and trusting relationships with adults and peers over the course of the programme.

Anger management: On the streets the way to deal with anger was to fight and Whakapakari participants were well practised in that area. John and his supervisors proposed Maori methods for releasing anger including the use of the toko-toko (talking staff) and the haka (war chant).

Respect for the rights of others: While many participants tormented and abused the rights of others back on the mainland without reprimand, at Whakapakari the closed environment operates in such a way that people were able to both stand up for their own rights and receive feedback for disrespecting the rights of others.

Retreat-time out: Whakapakari provided "time out" where one could think about the past, what one had done and been through and also stop and make decisions about directions to move in upon return.

Maoritanga: Threading throughout the programme was an approach emphasising the Maori culture and way of doing things. This in itself provided a means for Maori participants to thrive and derive excitement from the positivity of their culture.

Staying off drugs: The isolated nature of Great Barrier Island promoted a period of detoxification and provided an environment conducive to making the decision to quit upon return. Staying off drugs links in with a holistic approach to health which stresses good food, exercise, work and play.

Programme participants were given responsibility and challenges in an outdoor environment, learnt a range of technical and cultural skills, became socially involved in a closely knit whaanau and were given the opportunity of confronting the problems of the past. Each day was spent gathering firewood and kai moana (sea food), preparing food and maintaining makeshift accommodation on an island five hours by boat from the troubles of the mainland. Whakapakari prospered through the use of positively organised peer pressure; it was a group event and therefore most suitable for those that could work as part of a team. In discussions I had with the programme co-ordinator about the philosophy of the programme he talked about trying to break the cycle of abuse. As he said to his participants, "Whatever you have done in the past, we don't care, you are here now to learn, develop and grow," a statement which translates the word "whakapakari."

While Whakapakari is a Maori initiative designed to help young Maori, particularly those involved in drug and solvent abuse, the programme co-ordinators accept participants from wide ranging cultures and ages. Participants ranged in age between thirteen and eighteen and suffered from a variety of problems including sexual abuse, physical abuse, substance abuse, neglect, and antisocial or violent tendencies. Participants had been in trouble with the law from an early age and had each spent time in youth institutions due to involvement in theft, robbery, car conversion, use of firearms or assault. One female participant attended the programme.

Whakapakari supervisors were primarily former participants who have graduated to the status of supervisor through spending extra time on the programme. On the programme I attended there were three paid supervisors (two male) and two trainee supervisors (both male). Hone and Willi daSilva co-ordinated Whakapakari together. Hone is primary facilitator of each programme. While not supervising a specific group of programme participants he maintained a directive role, organised activities, directed and advised supervisors and general management. Hone had an additional role as

counsellor. Willi was primarily based on the mainland and dealt with administrative issues, liaised with agencies and families of participants, and organised the components of the programme which occurred in Auckland.

Rehabilitation

In response to structured interviewing using subjective scales for rating the experience of Whakapakari (see Appendix A: interview two), five out of ten participants said Whakapakari made them think about where their life was heading, eight out of ten said it helped them overall, and five out of ten said Whakapakari was a special time in their lives. I pursued this information by asking whether Whakapakari helped them in any way, what it was at Whakapakari that made the difference over other methods, how Whakapakari was different from seeing a social worker, and was there anything that stuck in their mind about Whakapakari.

When asked if Whakapakari helped them in any way, participants talked about communicating with other people and relationships. Whakapakari taught them to respect others that in turn respect them, it helped control their anger, it settled them down, it taught them Maori culture, it helped them to decide that they did want to get back with their families. For example, Clive noted that “Before I didn't really do anything with others, stuck to myself.” Clive has become a great deal more integrated with his family and culture since returning. Alternatively Richard suggested that the programme was not particularly useful for life in the city. He said “It would have been all right if I had been living over there for ever.” Other more detailed comments regarding the question of whether Whakapakari helped them included:

It helped me to keep off drugs, alcohol and glue. I realised that taking those things fucks up your life, I don't wanna be a cabbage eh (Johnny).

The way Whakapakari made me work, knew how to work just never had worked. Had to be told to work, now I don't have to be told (Clive).

Changed my attitude, didn't like people. If I had the same attitude now I wouldn't be talking to you, I would have just walked straight past you. I communicate with people: I just think that they are all whaanau Gave me heaps of kaha² inside (Tawhai).

Helped me gain respect...someone in my auntie's family had died and that's what I sang, Totara Tree. Because I thought it was the perfect one for that occasion, because it was meaning one is born and one will come. There was a lot of people there and nobody had sung anything, I just jumped up and started singing. I wasn't ashamed or anything, I just wanted to show everyone, especially my auntie, she don't think anything of me, and after that I got a bit of respect (Rob).

Whakapakari therefore helped these participants by making them work, keeping them off alcohol and drugs, changing their attitude, and helping them to gain external respect upon return.

Reflecting back on their experience of the programme, participants described the things that made the difference for them as the people (and in particular the family atmosphere), it being a Maori programme, the strictness, the togetherness, having time out to think, and the programme being a confidence booster:

The people there: it was like another family for a month...the place cause it was quiet and gave me more time to think...some primo times over there (Clive).

Before I left the family home I never used to think Maori, but when I went back that's all I was thinking: Maori songs, Maori things...being free...doing something different (Rob).

Strictness...helped keep me in line...I didn't need it but it didn't do me any harm (Andrew).

Everyone was together and did things together, worked together and co-operated...got you fit (Anna).

Gives you time to think of what you've done, what you're gonna do when you get back and how you are going to get out of your troubles (Tawhai).

Gives you more confidence in yourself...not really to do with anyone else it is about yourself (Richard).

² Kaha means emotional or physical strength.

Time to think, time out (Johnny).

When asked why Whakapakari worked over other methods, participants talked about personal issues such as getting to know yourself; issues related to the pressures of the mainland such as being away from temptations and time out; issues related to the wilderness setting such as the work, for example having to light a fire for your food, having to do it all by yourself, not like prison, and poignantly: “There’s just something special about that place.” Participants talked about experiencing new things, the spirit of the whaanau, the strictness, and Whakapakari keeping them out of youth secure units. Participants described Whakapakari as different from seeing a social worker because it has qualities of learning, it was choice, and as one participant said, “It is just completely different.” While one participant stated that he would rather see a social worker, most found their dealings with the CYPS to be somewhat inadequate. This was especially notable for the more hard-core offending participants. At the extreme, Tama believed he never got to see a social worker in a helping capacity. Tama stated:

The only time you saw them (social workers) was at a family group conference and even then they were never there...at least the supervisors listen and do something for you over there (Tama).

Four participants emphasised the long term nature of the programme as important because it meant you had time to listen and the people were always around. As Anna said, “You know you will be there for a whole month...there are consequences of trouble, rather than getting shoved off to another place.” That is, the isolated and “no exit” nature of Whakapakari was a little scary but meant that participants did get some time to deal with their personal issues in an environment where their behaviour was contained and managed.

The things that stuck in the minds of participants were cultural such as the songs, culture, kapahaka³ and haka; the environment such as bush as far as you can see, looking

³ Haka is the traditional Maori war chant with actions. Kapahaka is haka training. Note there is no “s” in the written Maori language. Consequently English translations of plural meanings are sometimes

at the bay and the big bushes, the quiet, and “the day I left it felt like a special place”; the strictness and hard work such as Kevin making participants do 100 press ups. Participants remembered the people such as John and “the company”; fishing and the fish; the memories, the day they left, getting caught smoking some marijuana (which was smuggled onto the island), and relaxing. Regardless of whether they enjoyed the experience of Whakapakari, each participant had some very vivid memories of what went on there.

Cultural Development

Six of seven Maori participants said they have become more involved in their culture since returning from Whakapakari and five of those seven suggested Whakapakari was the impetus which made them think about getting into their culture. They talked about having the Maori songs in their head and culture being choice, doing a wiro (prestigious part of the welcoming ceremony to a Maori village), attending a Maori language and culture course, becoming involved in a kapuhaka (performance training) group, doing a Maori ambassadors course, getting taiaha (traditional weapon now used in performance) training, a carving course, and joining a kapuhaka group but not liking the hours. Clive thought the kapuhaka training sessions were “choice,” (very good) and elaborated, “I am into my culture, didn't keep me out of trouble much though.” Johnny thought the best part of Whakapakari was “teaching the kapuhaka.” He went on to say, “Culture? That was my main subject.” Looking back Anna said “My understanding of Maori culture is better,” and has since become more involved with her Maori heritage. When asked about the experience of culture on Whakapakari, Rewi said, “I joined a Maori culture group when I got back.”

As a “Pakeha” I was ill equipped to evaluate the cultural aspect of the programme, but as someone who experienced the programme as a participant-observer during 1993, I found it

difficult to distinguish from singular meanings. This is the case with the use of “haka,” that is “doing haka” refers to more than one haka. Similarly to talk about “Maori” generally refers to the ethnic group of Maori as opposed to a Maori person.

easy to understand at least the degree of enthusiasm concerning the cultural aspects of the programme. There was certainly something special and indeed spiritual, about living a traditional, subsistence lifestyle and practising the culture that goes with it. To produce a similar response in a non-isolated, non-subsistence environment would be very difficult. The difference between participant enthusiasm for their culture on the programme versus their enthusiasm at follow-up is perhaps evidence of this. Furthermore, while involvement in Maori culture was part of the programme, access to cultural resources back home required a degree of effort and a need to adhere to a new set of rules.

Follow-up

Seven of the ten participants suggested there was some kind of follow-up on their experiences while on the programme. As a group, however, they were completely unsatisfied with such follow-up. I think this may partly be because they did not feel the counsellor or social worker could relate to their experiences on the programme. The participants who did get some kind of follow-up stated:

My counsellor asked me what Whakapakari did for me and I said nothing because it was a lot of things (Rewi).

When I came back I just said it was good but I didn't like the supervisor (Johnny).

Just asked how it was (Richard).

Didn't talk much about it but was asked (Piripi).

Only a newsletter (Andrew).

[No follow-up] apart from someone asking me if it would be good for someone else (Anna).

While most participants expressed a negativity towards the youth justice system, I have little data on the nature of the service they received. From a participant centred perspective however, there is no doubt that the transition home was one of the most difficult aspects of

the programme and one for which neither the participants nor the social workers were well prepared.

Target Population and Programme Duration

The diverse mixture of participants is an underlying theme of Whakapakari, that is, bringing together the misfits, that have not succeeded in the pakeha world in a place where they may thrive. Participants suggested people somewhere in the age range of 11-20 could benefit from an experience of Whakapakari, with most participants stressing the earlier the better, as "they start getting heavy when they're too old" (Johnny). While participants generally do not believe ethnicity should be a determinant of who attends the programme, as a group they believed Maori participants would get the most out of it. Other suggestions included the programme would work best for people who don't know how to respect anyone. A few participants suggested that people should come from the Auckland area but most thought people from anywhere should be able to attend the programme.

In terms of programme duration, three participants suggested the programme should be less than a month, three suggested one to two months and four suggested more than two months. Two participants suggested the time should vary for each participant depending on their situation and the nature of their offences, with the most extreme response being a suggestion that the programme be twelve months for serious crime only. It is worth remembering, as Anna suggests "when you go away from your family for the first time a month is a long time."

Thematic Analysis: Healing Themes

Upon reading and re-reading the transcripts I repeatedly found each participant commented on the beneficial effect Whakapakari had on their relationships with others. All participants looked favourably upon Whakapakari as a time when relationships were

good. Participants described the benefits derived from the experience of whaanau, helping, talking, listening, trusting, respecting and disciplined working. Notably the thematic analysis below is inclusive of the diversity of participant perspectives, that is no one point has been removed because few participants endorsed it.

Relationships and whaanau: Whakapakari provided a fully functioning whaanau (extended family) with stable and appropriate role models for participants to look up to and draw from. Whakapakari has helped some participants to re-kindle familial bonds with family members who do care. Participants talked about Whakapakari as a family. Indeed it is a tightly knit group in which each person's goals are geared towards survival and the entire group shares in the successes and failures. This is very different from what most participants experience at home, yet indicative of the joining together, the spirit of family, the caring and belonging they would like to experience. For example, talk about family came up in response to a number of different questions:

How is the Whakapakari whaanau different from your whaanau at home?

(R).

We join together in one group instead of being broken up (Anna).

Describe Whakapakari (R).

Like a family tree that goes on forever and ever (Johnny).

What was it at Whakapakari that made the difference for you? (R).

The people there: it was like another family for a month....the spirit of the whaanau (Clive).

Did Whakapakari help you in any way? (R).

I communicate with people, I just think that they are all whaanau (Tawhai).

The concept of whaanau as experienced on Whakapakari is something that most participants still cherished at follow-up. While relationships with fellow participants within "the whaanau" were generally appreciated, positive relations with programme co-ordinator, Hone daSilva, were remembered as a particularly enriching experience. There was talk of respect for Hone and he was what some participants remember most vividly about Whakapakari. For one participant (the youngest at age thirteen) it seemed

his relationship with Hone was more important than with his peers. To some degree it is daSilva's presence which holds the whaanau together.

Further, unlike families/whaanau on the mainland, the Whakapakari whaanau is able to emotionally and physically contain participants. Instead of putting their energies into how they might get away participants are encouraged to openly address the issues from which they are running in korero toko-toko sessions⁴. As Tawhai suggests, Whakapakari is better than Weymouth because "you get freedom, you are far away from the mainland and you can't get away." Tawhai has done much running away in the past and this statement is indicative of the success of the Whakapakari whaanau in emotionally and physically containing him. As Tawhai stated:

You think about what you've done, what you're gonna do when you get back and how you are going to get out of your troubles.

Relationships and helping: It is apparent that daSilva facilitated a "culture of helping" in his programme. The culture of helping included talking, caring and supporting each other, all of which are encapsulated in the Maori term whakamanawa. While participants' recognised that it was OK to "help others out" on the programme, and revealed a repertoire of helping behaviours, few seemed to have continued to help others upon return. Perhaps this relates to the participant that said "there's something special about that place," and also that in the environments from which most participants came, helping is not a particularly functional behaviour. Regardless, the experience of being able "to help" was appreciated. The talk of one participant points to the idea that getting the help one desires promotes helping others:

It is good to be able to talk about anything and to help each other. He (supervisor) helped me, he told me what it was like inside (Rewi).

[Whakapakari] teaches you to help other people (Richard).

⁴ Korero is the verb "to speak" and toko-toko is a ceremonial stick that gives one confidence while speaking. During korero toko-toko sessions the stick was passed around the group to each speaker.

During the interview on the programme Andrew had offered the idea that he had learned to “help others out.” At follow-up he pointed to his statement regarding helping and said “not the try and help others out,” meaning after a year back from Whakapakari he was no longer interested in helping other people. The idea of helping others was incongruent with many of his behaviours and perhaps indicative that helping behaviours were not functional in his social environment.

Clive came back to the issue of caring. When we were discussing whether there had been any follow-up as a result of going to Whakapakari, he said:

Before I didn't care about anybody. I do now...but I just blabber on to social workers about nothing because they don't listen anyway....Aw they listen but ahhh...they don't care (Clive).

Arguably Clive was looking for the manaakitanga (caring) he experienced on Whakapakari rather than the listening that therapists are trained to provide (see Durie, 1987, for further evidence of this phenomenon). While western counseling psychology typically places an emphasis on the individual coming to an understanding about themselves and making decisions and changes as a result, Maori and other tribal cultures place much greater emphasis on the self as a part of a system. It is probable that Clive felt good about taking direction from his “elders” within the fully functioning Whakapakari whaanau and although he may want such caring from a social worker, he would be unlikely to accept it from someone not integrated with his life.

Relationships and talking: Participants appreciated being placed in an environment where talking was encouraged and safe. They found that Whakapakari both helped them to develop talking skills and gave them the confidence to talk. For example, Rewi had either not had the chance to talk or had not felt comfortable talking throughout his life. As he said about Whakapakari, “It is good to be able to talk about anything and to help each other.” Possibly it was the Maori way daSilva went about “doing talking” that gave him the confidence to talk. Being representative of a “hands on” culture, the

Whakapakari method incorporated movement (for example chopping wood, walking, fishing, or erecting a tent) with talking. For example, a dialogue I had with Rewi while chopping wood together:

Where are you from, Rewi?

Mangere.

Oh yeah. What tribe?

Ngati-Porou, we originally came from Kaikohe

(After chopping some more)

When did you come down to Mangere?

When I was ten and my father left.

Oh.

(Chop some more)

What whaanau do you have down in Mangere?

My Mum, my brothers, I've got three brothers, they're in the mob. My sisters are at home. My uncle and auntie are in Mangere too.

I see.

(After chopping some more)

Shall we take this load back to camp now?

OK.

(Walked off, talking as we went...)

Rewi's notion of talking about anything and helping other people is perhaps indicative of the success of the Whakapakari method in overcoming the inhibitions and shyness that come hand in hand with talking about one's feelings to a stranger. Unlike a one hour interview, Whakapakari involves an extended period of shared experience. Yet since returning Rewi said that back on the mainland "there is no one to talk to...don't talk to anyone." While he enjoyed the talking aspect of Whakapakari and made some positive steps in talking behaviour while on the programme, such developments did not continue on the mainland.

Tawhai has a similar story with regard to talking:

It settled me down. Changed my attitude; didn't like people. If I had the same attitude now I wouldn't be talking to you, I would have just walked straight past you. I communicate with people: I just think they are all whaanau. Gave me heaps of kaha (strength) inside eh.

It is apparent that Tawhai's "attitude" was still a problem in familial interaction. For example, Tawhai would phone home and hang up if Mum or Dad answered. He would only speak to his sister. Tawhai highlights "attitude" as a barrier or catalyst to talking, and attitude according to Tawhai's behaviour is dependent on context.

The interpersonal nature of Whakapakari did seem to affect the acquisition of talking skills while on the programme: it makes sense that practice at expressing oneself in a safe environment will increase expressive ability and willingness to express. At the very least Whakapakari was a catalyst which sparked the change in two participants. Andrew said, "I'm definitely able to talk with others better now," while Clive suggested that Whakapakari "helped me communicating with other people. Before I didn't really do anything with others, stuck to myself." While the skills may be there it is more tenuous to suggest that the behaviour has generalised to home environments.

Relationships and a disciplined work structure: The routine at Whakapakari was not easy: early rising, fitness training, hard mahi (work), cultural practice and little spare time provided a complete change from lifestyles in institutions and homes. Participants were pushed to succeed by firm yet fair leaders and most adapted quickly to the highly structured and disciplined lifestyle. DaSilva talked about "getting high on work instead of drugs" and it is evident that many participants did get a "buzz" out of the productivity and self discipline they experienced. Participants talked about the strictness, the hard work, getting to do work, the productive environment, gaining confidence for work, being made to work, working in together, how the work made them angry but as one participant said, "I got used to it," and finally how if they were running the programme they "wouldn't make people work so hard."

Andrew found the strictness "helped keep me in line, didn't need it but it didn't do me any harm." Andrew experienced such "strictness" after Whakapakari when he worked on a farm for thirteen months. Getting up early and going to bed tired after a hard days work on the farm requires a habit of self discipline. Whakapakari was the first place that Andrew experienced and lived with such a habit.

Rewi enjoyed working hard in a disciplined and productive environment and he especially liked the way that work was situated in a Maori context. The idea of working for himself and his whaanau fitted in well with his ideas about life. Back on the mainland he struggled to find the discipline and disciplinarians who could help him to find work and stay out of trouble.

Whakapakari kept me out of these places (Secure Unit). Keeps you out of trouble. You had to light a fire for your food, you had to do it all yourself. Not like a prison. Prison is easy, easier than Whakapakari (Rewi).

Clive said he knew how to work but never had to work until he went on Whakapakari which “made me work.” While on the programme he said he had to be told to work but when interviewed he did not have to be told. Whakapakari seems to have motivated him to continue with his own version of a work structure: he was attending a Maori ambassadors course, carving courses and working as a part time painter and carpenter. When I interviewed Clive towards the end of the programme he said, “You got to do work here, yeah hard out work.” At follow-up he stated, “At the time I hated it but I don’t really mind it now.”

Relationships and listening: Whakapakari co-ordinators and supervisors made time for participants and were prepared to listen. In turn participants were in an environment where they wanted to be heard. Importantly, while health professionals may have well versed listening skills, Clive suggested that he did not want to be listened to by social workers, listening for him was secondary to caring, and caring is not what health professionals are taught, nor paid, to do.

At least the supervisors listen and do something for you. You can talk to the supervisors on the barrier (Tama).

I just blabber on to social workers about nothing because they don't listen anyway (Clive).

Yeah? (R)

Aw they listen but ah, they don't care. I never saw a social worker or listened to one. Over there you had time to listen (Clive).

My family don't teach Maori and they never listen to me (Rob).

Participants indicated that being listened to fostered a respect to listen to others and be guided. The combination of respect (people viewed participants as people rather than problems), and space (both physical surroundings and time) was a special experience, and one the social workers and family would have difficulty emulating.

Relationships and trust: The culture of trust that three participants talked about was different from what they had experienced on the mainland. Two participants associated trust with feeling safe to talk and another simply suggested that he "learnt to trust people a bit more" (Tawhai). The idea of being unable to trust people seems to transcend peer and home environments:

It's much harder in the city life. In the city you can only trust yourself but there you can walk up to someone and talk to them. It wasn't every man for himself over there (Rob).

I trust nearly everyone. I wouldn't feel comfortable at home talking. Usually talk in tent at night (Andrew, 1993).

Before participants could develop the connectedness and belonging they say they enjoyed so much on the programme they needed to start trusting others. Yet why should they trust those who have hurt them before? And why should those they have hurt trust them? These wounds were not well healed, nor forgiveness sought (by all but one participant when his mother came to the island) before returning home. While the "here and now" nature of the programme functioned well to leave past troubles behind, participants generally returned to relationships where trust was tainted by past experiences.

Relationships and respect: It is obviously difficult to cope with losing the respect of one's family/whaanau and therefore the chance at a fresh start was inspiring for some

participants. One participant resolved that he would respect people who respected him, while another developed respect for helpful and friendly adults in her life. The respect for others that Whakapakari participants practice while on the programme has provided a model which participants may choose to follow upon return:

[It helped me in] respecting others that respect me (Clive).

I didn't really respect parents, teachers, police (Anna, 1993). That has totally changed. I've got respect for my parents. This has changed quite a lot. Police Youth Aid officer in town, Jim, he was really neat; I like him. He talked to ya not like other police officers. Doesn't see him every time I got into trouble. I saw him around town and that (Anna, 1994).

Discussion

The relationship centred benefits of this wilderness therapy seem central to life itself yet merely providing such life skills and attributes has not consistently affected their adoption upon return. Time in the wilderness in a special and spiritual place brought out the best in a group of people who were typically dismissed as remorseless, careless, unhelpful and generally unreformable. Reflecting back, participants recalled the good times of Whakapakari, both in terms of being "good" themselves (such as communicating with others, working, learning, and listening) and receiving "good" in return (such as being respected, having a family atmosphere, enjoying the activities). As Rewi put it, "It's good to be able to talk about anything and help each other." The problem has not been in uncovering this repertoire of pro-social behaviour but in maintaining and applying it to life at home. For example, Tawhai showed he was able to communicate with people yet did not use these skills to help mend his relationship with his parents, and as Richard said, it "would have been all right if I had been living over there forever."

"Coming home" is a stressful experience for participants, families and programme coordinators. Should I go back to my old ways? Should I give my son or daughter

another chance? Has the programme worked? While the programme may have facilitated personal, physical and cultural development in the wilderness the continued application of such development at home is typically understood by referring agencies as the desired outcome. While I can understand this expectation, participant experiences of return were clouded by a wide range of variables from which programme based change was difficult to isolate. For this reason I am drawn towards participant centred ideas of interpreting success. On an individual level participant development on the programme is an appropriate measure of potential for success. A visit towards the end of the programme by the participant's parent(s) and/or case worker would allow the participant to illustrate personal development and the care giver to know what to expect and how to plan.

The most clouded variable of post-programme success seems to be support. As Chapter Seven documents, personal motivation to change one's lifestyle did not work. Participants who made a transition away from crime, drug and fighting behaviours received the support of whaanau/family, social welfare agencies and additional community centred courses in order to do so. The omission of such support for some participants, characterised a disappointing homecoming. Resources to increase post-programme communication and co-ordination with other programmes would substantially increase the effectiveness of Whakapakari as a wilderness therapy programme. Participants suggested that follow-up from someone who can relate to their experience of the programme would be most useful. With respect to support for Maori, the experience of Maori culture and spirituality was an uplifting experience for participants, prompting five out of seven to become more involved in their culture upon return. It is important that such enthusiasm is nurtured and participants connected with appropriate services and organisations in order to optimise the outcomes of such potential.

The problematic interface between programme and home highlights the lack of indigenous health services in New Zealand and the difficulty in combining Maori an

western approaches to mental health. Indeed "the difficulty" may more accurately be conceptualised as stubbornness or institutional ethnocentrism that privileges the knowledge of western psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers over indigenous bodies of knowledge. While separate health services may not be ideal either, it is apparent that culture cannot be ignored. If Aotearoa is to become bi-cultural then it is crucial that Pakeha begin to accept and value Maori knowledge and financially empower and support Maori to theorise, create and run appropriate mental health services. For example, while Davis-Berman and Berman (1993) define the "therapy" component of wilderness therapy as something tailored toward the individual, such a focus may be inappropriate for Maori and other tribal peoples. In the case of Maori the whaanau (extended family) may be a more appropriate level for intervention.

When the unit of analysis is switched from the individual in a western setting to the whaanau in a tribal/collective setting, it is not only the number of people that changes - the respective cultural approaches to an appropriate intervention will be different too. In Chapter One a distinction was drawn between the terms "therapy" and "therapeutic" and it is apparent that Whakapakari is not "therapy" using this definition because it is not individually tailored to focus on a problem. Arguably though, an intervention which encourages and facilitates connection to the land and promotes the value of whaanau are crucially important aspects of a therapy which does justice to Maori. Further, while the word "therapy" may be a clumsy representation of a non-western approach to mental health, it seems equitable that such an approach is granted comparative status to equivalent western approaches.

Participant talk serves to validate and add to academic understanding regarding wilderness therapy. In the area of interpersonal skills, Sachs & Miller (1992) discuss an increase in co-operative skills immediately following a wilderness therapy programme and Berman & Anton (1988) illustrate that withdrawn or impulsively angry participants profited "most measurably" (p. 51) from wilderness trips. Relationships with others were an important part of Whakapakari for all participants. The direct experiential

nature of life in the wilderness requires effective forms of interaction to evolve and notably the outdoors is a place where feedback is immediately apparent (for example, getting lost).

Arguably daSilva's use of the Maori concept of *whaanau* (extended family) enabled participants to move further than just co-operating or positively interacting to actualising a "culture of helping." It is unlikely that a western approach to living in the wilderness could synthesise the *whaanau* like nature of Whakapakari. There are no rope courses, white-water rafts, or fancy team building exercises: Whakapakari is about a traditional (Maori) tribal method of living that has endured nine centuries. Every activity they do together promotes the health and survival of *whaanau*, the importance of which should be paramount in both tribal and western cultures. Half of the participants seem to have carried the talking, listening and "helping others out" home.

It is apparent that daSilva's disciplined and highly structured working environment, while disliked at times, was a very positive component of the programme. At least two participants who complained about the hard work used the motivation and work structure established at Whakapakari as a stepping stone to work or education back on the mainland. Participants suggested it was the combination of being made to work and getting the "buzz" out of productivity that was successful. Again the "real life" nature of Whakapakari seems greater than western efforts to manufacture motivation, hard work and team building through activities of little relevance to home⁵.

Lastly, success is a word not often associated with this participant population. While degree of recidivism most accurately measures programme success in eliminating community trouble makers, this was not the success that participants talk or care about. The participants of this study tell us relationship centred developments, such as the experience of *whaanau*, helping, talking, listening, trusting, respecting and disciplined

⁵ While western approaches to wilderness therapy may synthesise the stress of the urban environment, daSilva's approach teaches young urban Maori how to live in a rural setting. Notably though, urban Maori and Pakeha participants used the skills they learned to work and live on farms.

working, were equally important as a stepping stone to more healthy living. We would be wise to listen. While Phase One has focused on rehabilitation, participants did at many times during this phase of the research refer to the peer contexts in which they spent most of their time back on the mainland. Chapters Seven and Eight focus on youth gang membership and Chapter Nine addresses the way participants talk about the trouble which in a sense brought them to Whakapakari.

7

Belonging and Gender

In this chapter I summarise, describe and discuss themes of belonging (as in a sense of a secure relationship with which one feels comfortable) and gender (culturally determined socio-sexual identity) in the context of youth gang membership in New Zealand. The belonging theme is prefaced by a summary of what participants describe as the good aspects of gang membership. Participants talked about being together with their peers, having fun, getting famous, protection, money, drugs and crime. I go on to summarise the kinds of interventions suggested by gang members for gangs as they correspond well with the good things about being in a gang. The gender theme is prefaced by the participant texts which emerged from the question "how do girls fit into the gang scene?" In discussion I critically present the belonging and gender themes as they emerge from participant texts and compare these New Zealand themes of membership with youth gangs in the United States. Particular attention is given to the question of whether in New Zealand we can call such youth groups gangs.

Belonging

Good Aspects of Youth Gang Membership

When asked, "what are the good things about being in a gang?" participants talked about affiliation, protection, emotional expression, alcohol/drugs, money, material possessions, crime, history, accommodation, and being able to make their own rules.

Talk around affiliation, belonging and the more social aspects of the gang were overwhelmingly the most popular, with all 45 participants raising this theme. Of this group eight participants talked about the parties, the fun, going out and meeting girls. Eight enjoyed the togetherness and the friends, the "really good mates" and one of those described the gang as a "unity."

Umm, got lot of friends, umm and just like hanging out together and having fun, we just have heaps of fun. We always do, we do everything together (Xkon).

‘Cause I know all the boys that live around here, see we are all together, we live all close and all that stuff (Dee).

Well man you have good mates, like you get to know them, you get to hang around with them a lot. And they always make us laugh and get us into trouble, they get us into trouble and we have to all be in it, and we all you know...cause they get us and we're not involved and they nark on us and we get angry. But when we always come back we always talk about it and laugh. We always muck around together that's all (Has).

They help you out. Me and the boys we just talk about, ahh we don't really talk we just play, tell jokes, always go out (Bronx).

Aw it's like a second family if you need any help they'll be there. Need a place to stay, they'll be there. Need any alcohol, they'll be there (Drew).

Friends, doing things together, but like when you get in trouble and fight another gang you've got the boys (Jase).

First we go to the night club, drink up and spend up and get real wasted as. Then go do a job get some more cash, cruise back to the night club. Go do some drugs, find a couple of chicks. Cruise back to the wholesalers and take them back to our house and rage up (Henry).

Some participants indicated you could trust fellow gang members yet others thought of members as friends “but not to trust.” Seven participants enjoyed the social interaction in the gang such as talking, laughing, arguing, telling jokes, having good times and many emphasised meeting girls. Three talked about the gang as a second family and seven mentioned the help and support they got from the gang, as Has stated, “we help each other out.” Five participants mentioned the idea of popularity and talked about “getting famous,” getting to know everyone and receiving recognition. Participants in the neighbourhood gang placed more emphasis on the social side of the gang than the institutionalised sample.

Protection was a second major theme mentioned by six participants as a good thing about being in the gang¹. They said:

¹ This theme relates mainly to joining a gang and is addressed more specifically in chapter six.

You know your friends are there for you. You know if it ever comes down to a rumble they're all there and they won't back down. That's why I joined (Johnny).

...good things like backing each other up. You know brothers to brothers. If there is trouble, as I said before we don't cause trouble but if there is a fight we'll back each other up (Quinn).

Like if you ever get into fights or trouble and that, at least you've got boys to back you up (Bronx).

Getting into trouble (generally fights) with other gangs was perceived as a major threat and in turn the protective capacity of the gang was emphasised (see Chapters Eight and Nine for more detail).

Money and material possessions were talked about by five participants who described having money, clothes, shoes, and gears. Four participants talked about the easy access to alcohol and drugs and said the good things about the gang were "getting smashed," and "getting wasted":

I just remember having money on man, aw Rust used to have cash. I'm just referring to Rust cause he's a really good example. Just cash on all the time (Capone).

Money, heaps a money, if you're a druggie then drugs, alcohol (Johnny).

While access to drugs was easy across all the members, it was only the more hard-core criminal gang members who described having "money on"; that is, easy access to as much cash as they could spend.

Crime was understood by four participants as a major buzz and something good about being in gangs. They said they enjoyed the burglaries, learning to fight and learning "new tricks." Minor themes that emerged included tagging (see Chapter Eight), the history which members shared, the fact that you always had somewhere to stay and as the participant below suggested, being able to make your own rules and "do what we want":

It's just that it's choice eh. Get to do things, go places, cruise around in cars, whether they're stolen or legal. Parties, we just get to do what we want to do, not what everyone else wants us to do. It's like we have our own rules. No one can tell us what to do (Johnny).

Interventions Suggested by Gang Members

During the interviews one of my standard questions was whether the gang member thought gangs needed help. Generally the reply was affirmative, often inferring that some gangs, but not all gangs, needed help. I then asked them to suggest potential interventions that they thought would help. In general, participant texts promoted the theme of belonging, centring around the need for sport, social contact, and employment. Employment was stressed as a key way to help gangs: "Give them a job! Some of those guys are just wasted being in a gang" (Kitara). Some participants talked about mentors; that is, getting some "stars" to come along and help. Dee suggested that "basketball stars would change peoples' lives." Participants talked about coaching, travelling basketball teams, swimming pools, and team work. Three participants mentioned the idea of a twenty-four hour recreational centre with pool tables and indoor basketball. Participants would like a place they could call their own and some appropriate mentors to lead their activities. Three participants talked about the idea of a youth centre where "you can have little talks about why you are in a gang and stuff" (Jase). One suggested a night club for younger guys. Two participants mentioned the need for good legal advice and one talked about giving them money. Community work was a popular option. Participants suggested "just talk to them" (Jase), "just go along helping with gangs" (Dee), "just try and round up all the gangs, just talk. Try and ask everybody questions" (Posca).

Gender

Girls fitted into the gang scene as girlfriends. For example, if their boyfriend was in the gang, that made them part of the gang although, some participants added, only if they were pregnant:

Probably by their boyfriend. You see one of the boys in the gang he might have a girlfriend, a Mrs. or whatever and then another boy in the gang he has a Mrs.; and then, yeah, they're sorta part of the gang. Their boyfriend is in the gang and that makes them part of the gang (Denny).

And do you have any girls in your gang? (R).

We don't like girls to be in our gang unless it's girlfriends who are pregnant (Drew).

So how do girls fit into the gang? (R).

Aw like if you're like one of the fellas your Mrs. is part of the gang, but they've been in a long term relationship kind of thing. Mmm, but girls, some of them can just be for a one night thing (Drew).

Some of them or all of them? (R).

Most of them are. Some of them want to stay longer (Drew).

In the eyes of the members, girlfriends who did not want to be in the gang were more respectable. One participant stated:

Yeah, see girls on our own man, cause like we don't like seeing them in the gang, 'cause like if we get ugly ones, ugly then, all the guys are like, look at that girl man, she's ugly, she's putang, that's what the guys say. And like, if there is a pretty one they'll still put her down. That's why none of the guys like any girls; they just only, it's only good to get a girl if you are by yourself. The gang, you know, they'll put the girl down (Has).

Well, sometimes you know, well, girls if they are a girlfriend of one of the boys, they will always make fun of them (Bronx).

On the flip side, another participant talked about enjoying making guys look like real idiots by putting them down in front of their girlfriends.

Girl gangs did exist in Auckland, they include the ABC's (Auckland's Baddest Crips), the NLB's (New Lynn Bitches), and the NBB's (New Born Bitches). Girl gang members were seen by the boys as "small timers," and when asked if girls could be in their gang, a sexual ideology was used to say no, such as "aw the judgment everyone would wanna hop on her." Yet some boys recognised that girl gangs had similar initiation ceremonies to the boys:

Sometimes, the girls, like if it's a girls gang, they've gotta fight, Aw any gang yeah. You gotta walk the line. You gotta walk down this line, walk through them and they all beat you up, until you get to the end (Denny).

Girls who hang out with the gang are known as "bitches" or "ho's" and according to male members, tended to be around more often at night time. They did not get any respect from the member who, when asked what position girls have in the gang said:

Aw, I don't know, just probably going around being ho's for everyone else, they just go and fuck someone in the gang and then act like they are one of them. Na girls are fuckin' shit man (Mike).

Misogynist attitudes were seemingly "cool" to Mike and three other participants. Such gang boys talked about "one night stands...with rootbags" (Former).

...yeah we had bitches, just all sorts of bitches (Tama).
 Why are they called bitches (R).
 Fuck, what else are they? What else are they, man, they're fucking bitches, fucks sakes. Can't exactly call them ladies. 'Cause if they were ladies they wouldn't be hanging out with hoods like us. So they're fuckin' bitches. Besides, most of them, they like being called bitches, that's why they fuckin' hang around. Fuck, if I had my way man, no bitches'd be hanging around man I'd tell them all to fuck off. Yeah. You get the occasional dumb cunt that wants to root. Insists on having the ho's around fuck, fuck that man, I hate bitches. Fuck, any chance I get I beat them up. I'm not saying I'm a hard out girl basher or anything, but fuck, if they piss about, I'll smash 'em (Tama).

Alternatively, girls were talked about by some participants only in relation to sexual intercourse. One member raised the idea of trade, money and drugs for sex: "Ain't no girls hanging out with us for free, gotta pay the piper" (Brixton).

Oh, because you know, because we see a chick and then aw yeah, we'll pick her up and if she wants to come for a drink with us and after a while that's us, we're in her and then the next day we dump her and then Aw we go and find another one. But you fellas you think aw yeah, look at those fullas leaving that poor girl there, that's bad to you guys because you think they only want one thing from that girl, a fucking you know, ha, ha, yeah (Ed).

Gang-rape was described by three participants:

Aw sometimes, sometimes you get the old gang bang. Aw I've never done that. Hu Ha (Ed).

But it does happen? (R).

Yeah but they want it. They want it but then after a while they get embarrassed and they say aw they raped me. Haha. Yeah. Just like some of my mates in here you know. They are in here for rape and it is not here and they didn't even rape her (Ed).

Rape, yeah, gang bangs yeah. There was one over in Lynfield round about '91. They raped this girl. She was at a party and I think the guys were from the party. They drove past and, you know (Quinn).

We don't go with the same girls all the time 'cause we don't wanna be passing round all our germs. You see, to the other boys. Aw that's one thing we don't get into the old gang bang....Aw man, that's what you call sickening. They don't even wash themselves after the other one has gone through (Denny).

So who do you think it's sickening for? (R).

Both of them man. The girl and the boy (Denny).

So do you feel sorry for the girl? (R).

Yeah, I feel sorry. Sometimes they have no choice, eh (Denny).

Perspectives on gang rape were therefore divided between those that suggested the girls got what they wanted and then became embarrassed and those that thought it was sickening.

Some members thought girls hung out with the guys primarily for protection yet said the "gang will always be more important than a girl" (Posca). Indeed, the more girls hung out with the gang the less desirable they were: "...those stupid dicks that wear those massive jeans and Starter jackets, they're disgusting...to hang out with gang girls, that's the worst insult to yourself" (Capone).

In response to the idea of girls joining gangs one participant said, "What are we without girls?" (Kurby); yet the vast majority did not think girls should be part of gangs. They said:

It's only meant to be for guys you know (Lani).

Girls should stay home and relax man, they shouldn't be in the gang scene (Dee).

Yeah, it would be good having some girls around but boys would start to show off and they would argue and fight a lot (Xkon).

We're just boys; all boys, no girls (Posca).

Well, all the guys are into girls eh but, like um, when we are all together we are not really interested in girls, like, girls are all right but like we don't, none of the guys are like, you know we are not interested. Na, they [the boys] wouldn't, they wouldn't want a girl in the gang. 'Cause they're not gonna make us famous man. They're gonna go 'Our boys gonna come get you'" (Has).

That's just like the other gangs. Like new Lynn, RSP's, those guys man, too much with their girls. And we always go over, 'Hey man our boys gonna smash you' All this stuff (Dee).

Throughout such talk are ideas of girls as troublemakers for the gang, ideas of girls degrading the status of the gang with their presence, ideas that girls corrupt boys by turning them against each other, and ideas that girls should be at home as opposed to interacting in the manly gang space.

Discussion

Over-riding all gang activity seems to be a desire for affiliation and belonging, perhaps pronounced by the fragile sense of identity (Brown, 1986) that characterises the teenage years. Adolescents' quest for popularity² was met by youth gang organisations which purported to make new recruits "famous." Remarks included, "It [the gang] makes us famous", "I like [this gang] because it's famous", and "You get known, people get to know you if you're in a gang."

² Interestingly, Townsend, McCracken and Wilton (1988) found with an Auckland sample that while popularity and intimacy were both components of adolescent friendships, it was intimate friendships as opposed to popularity amongst peers which was most indicative of psychological well being.

While belonging related to family, church, school and sport were all potentially gratifying, gang members sought belonging in a peer domain, a place where ultimate authority was not in the hands of adults. As adults we may find this rather unnerving, especially given the crime, drugs and fighting that are emphasised as central to gangs by the media. To take the perspective of youth is, I believe, to downplay such factors and emphasise the social and belonging aspects of gang life. They talked about the parties, hanging with "the boys," girls, telling jokes together, laughing, meeting new people, talking, arguing and public recognition or "fame." If not associated with the gang all these qualities would be considered a "normal" part of adolescence. One consequence of gang life occurring in a domain controlled by teenagers was the emotionally charged and often physically confrontational nature of social interaction. As a cohort, teenagers are in the process of developing the social restraints and rules of interaction that guide the behaviour of law abiding adults. Gang members displayed a reluctance to take up such restraints. Positively, this included excitement, happiness, laughter, joking around and a general feeling of freedom to have fun. Negatively, there were the physical consequences of fighting which are addressed further in Chapters Eight and Nine.

While belonging stands out as a central theme of adolescence and youth gang membership, Sarnecki (1990) of Sweden, and many parents argue belonging and affiliation supported by "asocial networks" such as gangs is not where they want their children to satisfy their needs. Constructively though, one may hypothesise that if the community and local agencies got behind an effort to provide facilities which promote belonging and affiliative development (such as indoor basketball courts, rugby teams, youth nights and perhaps a swimming pool), they may increase such pro-social affiliative behaviour and decrease the incidence of troublesome behaviours.

Crucially, the affiliation and belonging that members talk about is youth controlled and directed. Therefore, the empowerment of gang youth to collaborate and control an action-research community development (Rapoport, 1987) may be an avenue to explore.

A further key may lie in the idea of becoming “famous.” Interventions need to promote friendship and being known for something which local youth consider “cool.” Unfortunately, as Chapter Eight makes clear, while needs of belonging and affiliation may function to pull young people towards a programme, the push toward gang membership (such as the perceived vulnerability and need for protection) are not well met by such interventions.

A “gangs are for men” sub-theme was offered in relation to talk about female involvement with gangs. Participants suggested that: girls should stay home and relax; girls should not be in the gang scene; gangs are only meant to be for guys; in a gang, there were just boys; and when with the gang members were not interested in girls. Gang members very rarely allowed girls or women (particularly women in their age cohort) to step into gang space in public. Further, the idea of girl gangsters as “small timers” promoted the idea that they would never be like the boys and possibly implied they should not really be in gangs in the first place. If the girls are “small timers,” then the boys were trying and wanting to be “big timers,” the notion of who they were was partly defined by who they were not: we are not women, we are men! The “gangs are for men” sub-theme enabled the gangster to construe himself as doing a man’s thing in a man’s space.

The idea that women need looking after was prevalent in some of the gender talk. Gang members portrayed a “caring for women” sub-theme when referring to girlfriends who were not in a gang: “It’s not a place to take your girlfriend, gang parties” (Capone). This idea was also used with girls who were pregnant to a gang member and are “looked after” by the gang, and girls who hang out with the gang for protection. Importantly, they “looked after” the women as associates and supporters of the gang but not as gang members. The ‘caring for women’ theme allowed the gang member to explain himself as a responsible and charitable man; he looks after the women. Those members who “looked after” their pregnant girlfriends suggested the gang was a safe place, a shelter

from the cruel world. One participant compared the way he “had to” get into trouble to provide the necessary goods which “rich people” could just buy:

...it's the only way they [gang members] can have fun but you know with rich people they have other things like driving 'round in their cars, taking their girlfriends out and all that, but you gotta have the money to do that (Dupris).

The gang was masculating because it provided opportunities for lower class young men to achieve the goal of providing for women like the middle class “rich boys” to which they aspired. Without the money that the gang provided opportunity to obtain, gang boys would not be in the position to take part in such a normal “manly” ritual as taking a girl out.

When I first began to interact with gang members I became sensitive to their use of the terms “bitches” or “ho’s” to replace the use of “women.” However, as time went on I came to understand that such degrading terminology was not fully interchangeable with the term “women.” Bitches and ho’s were gang slang for women who hung out with gangsters and the more association they had with the gang, the less respect the boys or “hoods” seemed to have for them. As Tama stated, “If they were ladies then they wouldn’t be hanging out with hoods like us. So they’re fuckin’ bitches.” Calling women who associated with the gang “bitches” functioned to degrade them to the level on which gang members placed themselves (“hoods”). In support of this, the rap artist “Ice-T” (1991) has lyrics about “bitches,” where he refers to some male gang members as “bitches too” and implies that a “bitch” is (or should) not necessarily be a women, yet is degrading.

I raised the idea of a “hoods and bitches” theme with an articulate ex-gang member. I said to him “I’ve got this idea that if the guys don’t think much of themselves...”

“Na, they don’t,” he interrupted.

I continued, “...then calling girls bitches or ho’s might not be bad, it might just be saying they’re on the same level.”

He replied, "Na it's not bad. That's true. Na, when you're in a gang you don't do anything, you're just bums. You don't feel like you are going anywhere."

One of the functions of the "hoods and bitches" theme was therefore to degrade women to a level at which gangsters feel comfortable using them as sex objects, or "rootbags" as one member put it. To make matters more complicated, such degradation did not simply come from the boys; gang women used the word "bitch" to name themselves. For example, two of the girl gangs I heard of in Auckland were called the New Lynn Bitches and the New Born Bitches. In support of this, those gangsters that had non-gang girlfriends did not bring their girlfriends to the gang. As one member put it, "The gang will put her down even if she's pretty." Having a girlfriend who is not on the gang scene and a life outside the gang allowed the gangster to interpret himself as above the gang scene, as someone with a future. It enabled him to define the men's world in the gang and the women's world out of it, a distinction that further promoted the degrading of women who did hang out with or join gangs.

While it is interesting and perhaps easier to conceptualise such sub-themes of boy's talk separately, a more accurate picture of their function is established by examining the interaction between such sub-themes as they functioned to construct an interaction template for gang life. The "gangs are for men" and "caring for women" sub-themes functioned as complimentary forms of exclusionary talk. While girls could very rarely join the gang, their peripheral presence supported the "maleness" of the gang core and for the men reinforced their ability to control the place of women with a sexual ideology that assigned them to the domestic arena. That is, boys defined the rules of where girls may step in the gang culture. If girls had value (such as sexual attractiveness without being easily sexually accessible) and obeyed the rules, they were protected and generally looked after. Alternatively, if they chose to disobey the boys and crossed the line to attempt to function in "men's space" (as tomboys), they lost their supportive and prized sexual value but were still forced into a sexual role by the boys who

conceptualised them as "rootbags" who could be used and abused without respect, with gang rape being the most violent and unusual example of this.

With regard to gangs as a man's space, it may be predicted that an escalation of violence committed by women would lead to greater violence and more extreme behaviour from male gang members as the parameters of men's activity is re-defined in accordance with the activity of gang girls. That is, female gangs, like female chief executives, challenge a space which is traditionally male and men squirm to do better, or worse. As Gregor's (1990) research suggests, similar sexist themes may have emerged if I had interviewed an exclusive male business club, rugby team or military organisation. Indeed Harris, Lea and Foster (1995) found less explicit yet obviously patriarchal, masculating and very traditional gender talk from focus groups with university students and staff in Cape Town. Blazak and Maneevone (1996) suggest that the gang enables members to have a job and provide for women in the traditional context, therefore defining members as men.

The concept of the exclusively male gang is supported by our cultural ideology that men must learn to be men from men; boys have little to gain from associating with women if they want to be "successful" men (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994). One consequence of the downplaying of traditionally feminine traits concerns the complexity of emotions within adolescence: the "fear, horror, sadness, isolation and especially pain and hurt are turned into aggressive actions and experienced as anger" (Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994, p. 143). Finding the forum to allow young men to explore and experience their emotions is a difficult yet necessary task.

Throughout the gang research phase I was overwhelmed by the predominate ideology from youth workers that they did not consider youth who emulate the Crip and Blood gangs from the United States to constitute "real gangs." It seemed that one had to have a "patch," which corresponds with Black Power, Mongrel Mob or other established New Zealand adult gangs to earn a reputation as a gang member. "Crip" and "Blood" gangs

in the United States do share many characteristics with Black Power and Mongrel Mob gangs in New Zealand. For example, members share common interests, they are associated with lower class areas, semi-secret, function with relatively little regard for the law, have leadership structures, are predominantly male, and use colours and gang symbols. It is questionable however, whether New Zealand “Crips” and “Bloods” are comparable to their American counterparts and perhaps could be labelled as “taggers” and “wannabes.”

Pure taggers are a persistent public nuisance to property owners but pose no threat of violence, yet tagging is a part of street gang warfare (for example, crossing out opposing gang members names as a threat of violence) and in the United States and New Zealand many gang members started as taggers, eventually moving on to become active street gang members. Klein (1995) describes the progression from “tagger” to “tagbanger” (where tagging crews oppose other tagging crews and become involved in violence) to “gang banger ” (the crew, or crew members become a street gang, or are absorbed into a street gang, and tagging becomes a subsidiary activity). Participants in this study described this phenomenon as the most prevalent point of entry into gang life as if becoming a tagger was a precursor to gang membership (this may have been the case for them, but I did not interview taggers who were not gang members).

Another group that needs to be excluded from the definition of gangs is “wannabes,” or “copycat” gangs, defined by Klein (1995) as groups of young people who are trying out gang life. American youth gang culture has been exported around the world through films, newspapers, television programmes, talk-back shows, MTV, and rap music and has created a generation of young people who are aware of how gang members walk, talk, and act. Some youth take on the stereotypical “look” of gang members (with the Starter clothing, baggy pants, basketball boots, and baseball cap on backwards), others make gang vocabulary mainstream (such as the use of the word bitch or homie), and still others try out the lifestyle of the gang member, by associating socially on the periphery of gang life, becoming involved with petty theft, wearing colours when convenient,

“throwing” gang poses and hand symbols, obtaining a street name, and becoming involved with gang tagging (all this could easily be done after school).

American cultural imperialism makes the first two stages “normal” in New Zealand, indeed some of my contemporaries may call their girlfriend “their bitch” in jest and to sound “cool,” and I often wear basketball boots and have Starter clothing. It is “cool” to try out the gang talk and gang walk a little. According to Klein (1995) “wannabes” become street gangs with organisation, a criminal orientation, use of firearms, serious violence (such as drive-by shootings), and a turf mentality. Using this definition 12 to 15 of the 45 participants could be excluded as “wannabes.” Notably, this New Zealand “wannabe” group does not seem to be equivalent to the Melbourne underclass youth described by Polk (see page 11) because the New Zealand “wannabes” are organised, relatively stable and based around a local turf. In the present study, Quinn observed a key definitive aspect of “wannabe” behaviour when I asked why the local gang changed their colour from blue to yellow:

Aw it's just basically, I think fear. I mean, if they wear a colour that everyone knows and they're the opposite colour, then dead meat. Cause then people look at someone wearing yellow or orange or something they're like, what the hell is that you know?

According to Clarke (1992) it is likely that gang members would be consistent and clear with the colours they wear regardless of feared consequences. Importantly, all interviewees came from active organisations in which there was at least a dedicated core of seriously violent and criminal members (perhaps the only ones Klein would define as gangsters) but some interviewees were not heavily involved with that side of the gang and two were ex-members. Further, while each participant came from an organisation they called a “gang”, the seriousness and volume of criminal and violent behaviour varied considerably between gangs. It would be unrepresentative of participant perspectives to rigidly apply definitions of gang members from the United States as there are aspects of gang membership here which relate to the history and culture of

New Zealand, such as the availability of firearms, and that youth gangs are still only emerging as a phenomena here.

The fact that in New Zealand there may be a lot of what has been called “baby gangsters” (Clarke, 1992) and even more “wannabes” is a very good thing, compared to the entrenched, pandemic, and seriously criminal, violent and destructive nature of some gangs in America. “Wannabes” are not “gonnabes,” and “baby gangsters” are not necessarily going to become hard-core members, but they will if life in the gang is more appealing than other options. Trying to re-define what this youth group calls themselves (such as calling a gang a “whaanau” as was suggested to me by a youth worker) will not change what they do. Accepting one’s community has a gang (as defined by local youth) may be the first step to community development. In planning developments which facilitate additional options for youth it would be prudent to draw upon the vast experience of North American youth commissions, gang research organisations and researchers³ while also enlisting the strengths of the local community to find solutions to local problems.

In summary, the most important point that the gender and belonging talk suggests is that the vast majority of youth gang members are not social deviants. Rather they seem to have mainstream middle class values, needs and goals.

³ Information on US youth gang initiatives are easily accessible on the Internet. E-mail the National Youth Gang Centre (nygc@irr.com) and access the http sites of the Texas Youth Commission (<http://www.state.texas.us/TYC/catalog.html>) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (<http://www.ncjrs.org/ojjhome.htm>). Alternatively, see Klein (1995), Spergel (1995), Huff, (1996), Decker and VanWinkle (1996), Palumbo and Ferguson (1995), Blenchman (1992), Thompson and Jason (1988), or Gilling (1994) for an example from England.

8

Vulnerability

While members enjoyed the belonging and affiliative aspects of the gang, such belonging cannot be understood apart from the “pushes” toward membership. In this chapter, I summarise participant talk on joining gangs, the bad things about being in a gang, what they had to give up, and gang leadership. Participants’ perceptions of vulnerability and therefore need for protection was a major push for gang membership and the integrating theme of this chapter.

Joining a Gang

Participants talked about tagging (personalised graffiti) as the most prevalent point of entry into gang life and the best way to get famous: “It makes us famous in front of all the people” (Has). Such fame was linked to the status one achieved from tagging in dangerous or hard to get to places.



(Figure 11: “You know what the biggest thing is why they start hanging is tagging. That’s why I started in the fourth form but I was tagging even before that in the third form. It’s tagging to get famous. That’s what they all want, to get famous” (Capone).

Three years ago C2S was just a bunch of friends; we didn’t call us a gang, we just called us ‘the boys’. We were still Crips. We still hated Bloods...[then] we started tagging. And everyone started getting to know us, C2S, all the other gangs. So every time we tagged in someone’s area like New Lynn, those are the RSP area, Bloods, Respect Samoan Pride, they marked us, and we came back and marked them and put ‘100 percent Crips’, so and then they asked us for a fight. So we

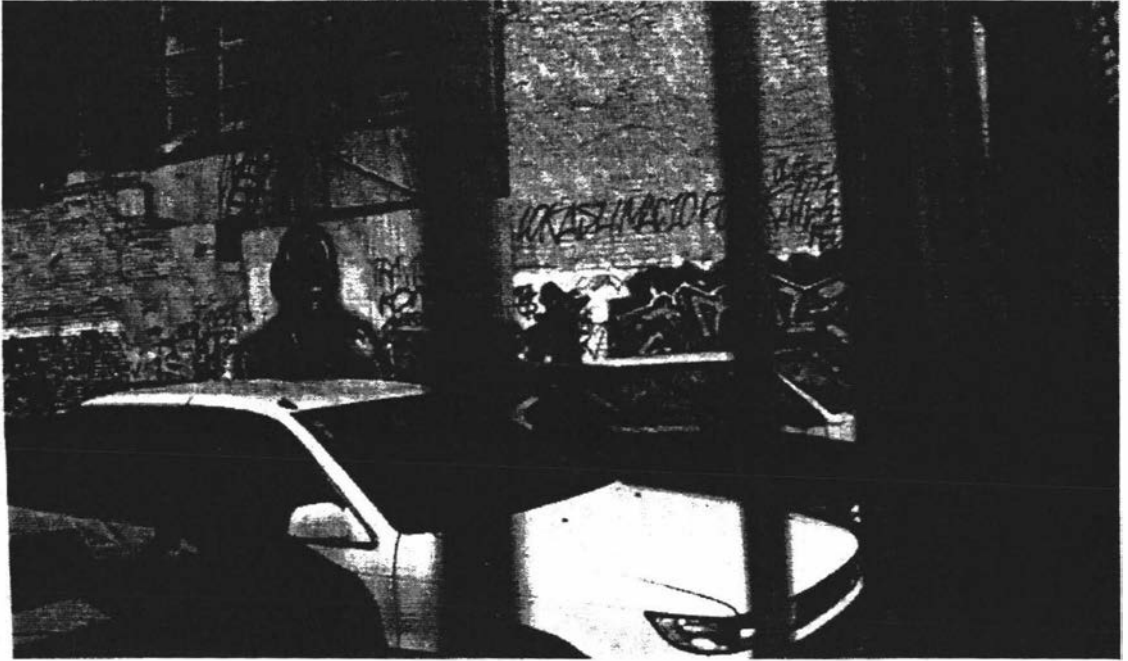
accepted but when it came to the fight we sorta like. 'cause it was the first ever gang fight we had, and we sorta dropped it cause we were sorta hiding in the bush waiting for them to turn up but they never turned up so after that we just started tagging some more, we were just wearing our colours everywhere and getting our jumpers made, C2S jumpers, heaps of people started knowing us for our tags (Bugs).

It's good [other members getting the gang famous through tagging] cause but now they should give it a rest 'cause we are already known now, Avondale knows us, New Lynn, west side, everywhere....'Cause like heaps a gangs are after us, 'cause there's taggers like Kenny and them, they go tagging, tagging on their fence and stuff and it makes some other gangs jealous (Has).

Tagging is probably the most common representation of gang involvement with which the public come into contact. This is not a coincidence. Tagging is about getting famous and one develops fame through both mass and exclusive exposure (that is, tagging in hard to get places). If one goes looking for gangs, the first thing one is confronted with is tagging. It became apparent that taggers were juniors in the gang scene, people associated with gangs and younger members. Some taggers were even non-members who were encouraged to tag for established gangs, as was the case with the JFK's:

We changed, maybe because we were in too much trouble with KOA and plus that all the little, we had heaps of little taggers that were using it. I don't know if you've heard of Bart and all them. They were originally KOA but what happened was heaps of their little mates, and it was just going too far. Because there was just too many people tagging it, and cause some of us didn't even know, it would just be one of our mates said to one of their cousins and they you know, and it just got too big...I asked that dude Nasty down the road, we were at Alchi's one night and the reason why we asked them was because they were hard core taggers and they go "Yep" (Capone).

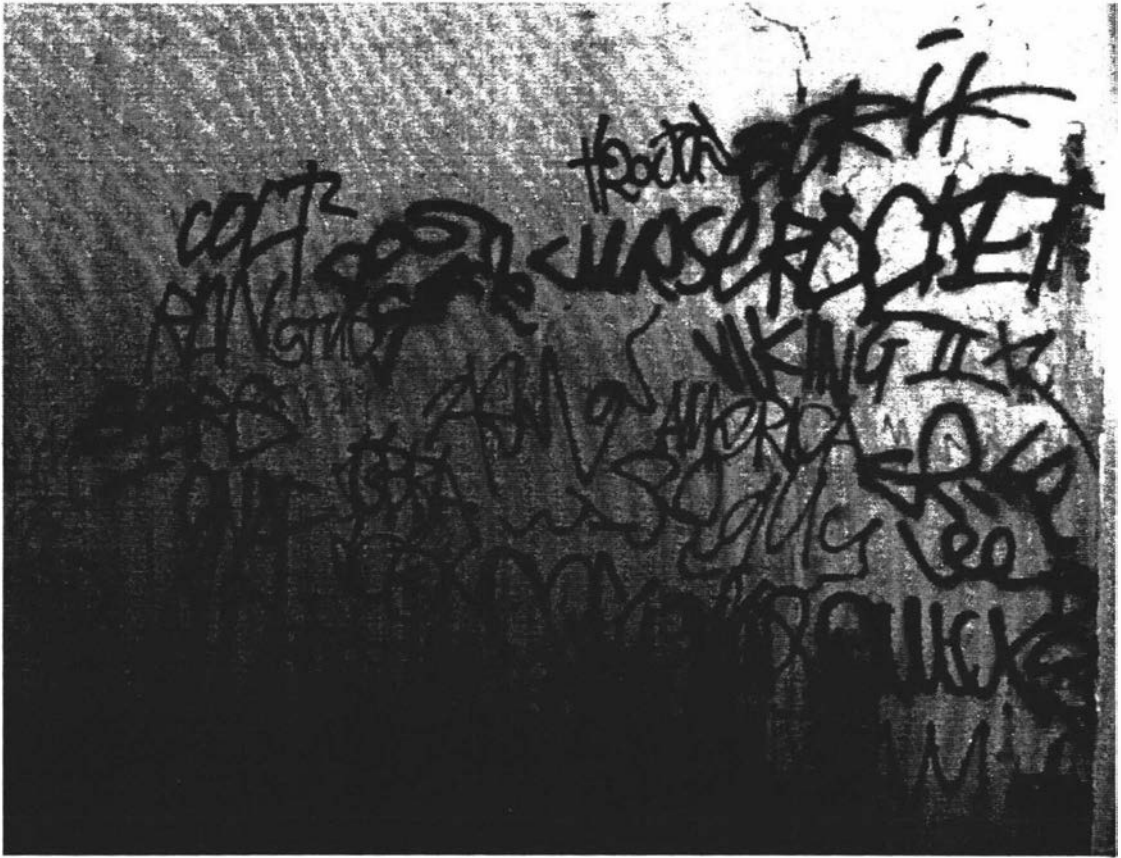
What Capone was trying to get across was that when his gang was called KOA they had a number of junior affiliates who tagged their gang name everywhere and it got a little out of hand. They started getting into trouble for tagging done by taggers they hardly even knew. KOA had become a prestigious name to be tagging.



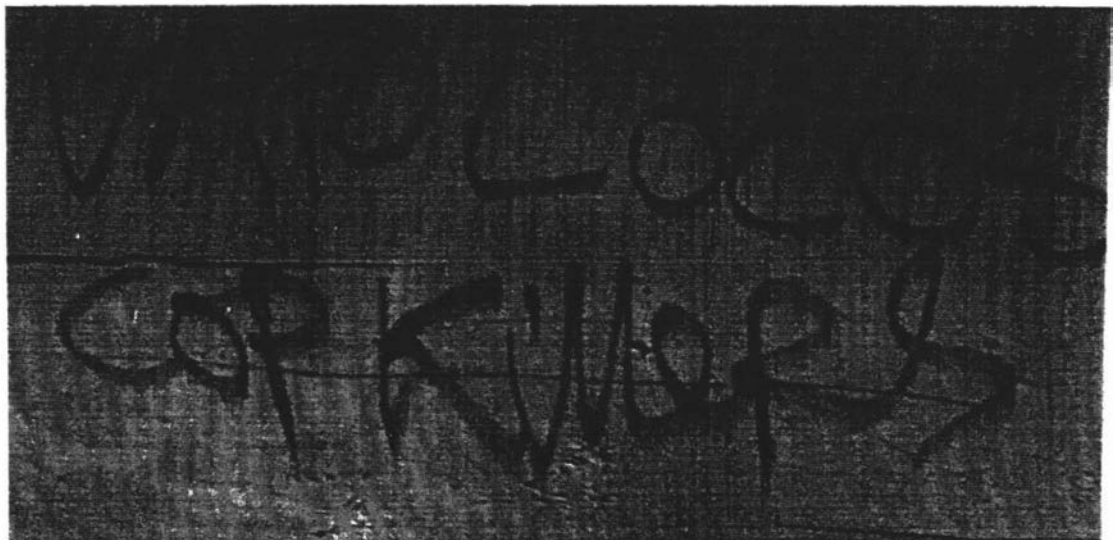
(Figure 12: Gang centred tagging does not involve pictorial art, such as the picture of Michael Jordan in this photograph. Graffiti artists represent the hip-hop, rapping and previously break dancing cultures and apart from graffiti are not into crime or violence).



(Figure 13: "We do whatever the fuck we want" Dean).



(Figure 14: This wall in Mangere displays tagging of names and could represent either tagger crews or gang tagging. Individuals from tagger crews will normally stay away from other tags).



(Figure 15: "With tags we get known like a menace and all that" Brixton).



(Figure 16: Even the work of graffiti artists is not sacred to taggers).



(Figure 17: While personalised, this is not typical gang tagging. It signifies someone involved with tag-graffiti, this is not to say he could not also be a gang member. Klein calls such members who tag art and are bordering on the gang sub-culture “tagbangers”).



(Figure 18: “’Cause like heaps a gangs are after us, ’cause there’s taggers and that, they go tagging, tagging on their fence and stuff’ Has).



(Figure 19: A sign of life path or just an easy target?)



(Figure 20: Another example of gang tagging. Note the crossed out names, particularly the bulls-eye around "b-real," "act" and "paris". In the United States, such "marking" is a sign of gang warfare. In New Zealand it does not always signify that violence will follow and is thus somewhat of a copycat phenomenon, yet as the quote on page 80 indicates it does create an added potential for violence).

Participant texts suggest that tagging has a sub-culture of its own, one not entirely connected to the youth gang culture. As the Figures above document there are taggers, graffiti artists and combinations of both. While the taggers and particularly tagging crews are likely candidates for eventually joining a gang, tagging appears to play only a minor role in the hard-core youth gang culture in Auckland.

Protection was emphasised as a key reason for joining. Two participants described how if you were small or weak you could be supported by the gang:

I think the other reason is for protection, I mean, some of the gangs out there, there are some weakling guys out there, they are not any good in fighting and all that and they need someone to back them up (Quinn).

Protection, it's good 'cause you get looked after in a gang. Especially if you are a little fella like me. I was just one of the smallest out of all of them and they used to look after us (Dupris).

Three participants suggested the physical release of violence would be appealing to others as reasons for joining but did not suggest they found it appealing themselves:

Why do you think people join a gang? (R).

Violence (Mack).

So they join a gang to get into violence? (R).

That's part of the reason. Like there's gang fights and some boys get into the gang just for the fights (Mack).

Robert talked about a discussion where he learned that he was "just sticking up for [his] culture" by joining the gang. He articulated:

And he told me what was the kaupapa of the [gang name] and he told me and really I'm just sticking up for my culture. Like see the [rival gang] they go under the white man's sign, you know the [symbol] that's actually a white man's sign. So I'm actually sticking up for my culture by joining the gang. People just make it out to be that they are just burglars and they do hard out crime and that. But they get to know their culture, you know, communicating with their own brothers and that. It teaches you to be a man in a way (Robert).

For Robert the gang represented his culture (in comparison to the rhetoric surrounding the rival gang) and fostered communication and gender development between men. Such qualities are admirable (participants of a church run cultural group may say similar things about why they are in that group), yet often condemned because they exist in the context of a gang. After talking further with Robert, I began to get the feeling he thought joining the gang was like joining a liberation tribe and making a stand against the dominant Pakeha (European) culture. Although Robert was the only person who voiced this opinion, being Pakeha myself may not have been conducive to such reporting.

Has talked about a member joining the gang because he dropped out of school. Others suggested they didn't really think about joining, they just did it, or in other words, why not join?

What do you think made him join? (R).

'Cause he dropped out of school and had nothing else to do (Has).

So do you think he left 'cause he was in the gang? (R).

Na, not really (Has).

Well, you don't just go up to some people and say can I join. Aw, some people do that but you know you got to live it first. Like you got to know the stages before you are in a gang. Like when I was younger, I come through all these boys' homes and that, you know it's in your younger days. You know I never had a good childhood. I just, you know, I'd always get a hiding from the old lady and the old man but you know that never helps. I'd still be bad but ahh, you know, then you start running away and then you are on the streets. Like I was on the streets for a while and you know, I just lived like a, by myself. And then after a while you just start doing crime, by myself you know...just to eat mainly then after a while you see some mates and like I met some fellas and just started hanging out and then you know, started to get into my crime worsen, you know like ahh sometimes I'd take the rap for them and all that. Like I end up in this place, well end up in Weymouth first and then get and they say you're all right, do you want to come and join us and I say yeah, why not (Ed).

Ed's description of the path to gang membership highlights that for him there was nothing sudden about joining a gang, it was more like a natural progression given the life he was leading at the time.

Bad Aspects of Gang Membership

Participants seemed to have more agreement over the bad things about being in the gang as opposed to the good things described in Chapter Five. Trouble, conceptualised predominantly as getting caught by the police for crime, was understood as a big problem. Participants described getting caught easily by the police, causing too much trouble, and talked about the gang getting them in trouble when it wasn't their fault. Fighting was also conceptualised as a bad aspect of the gang. Participants talked about "too much fights and all that man" (Dee), "fighting your own family" (Tanya), "beating up your mates" (Drew) and "fighting against other gangs" (Dupris) as all bad things about gang membership. Other bad things include:

When you're in gangs and that there is heaps of bad stuff you gotta do. Like there is probably, like someone will say I want you to go stab that fella cause he beat up my sister or something. Or one of your mates said na I'm gonna go stab this guy man 'cause he just beat up my sister or something like that. Then you go yeah, I'm in with that and then you're the one who actually does it. Like he sorta drops his nuts and you got the knife and you go hey did you beat up his sister and he goes yeah what are you gonna do. Just start stabbing away, just shoot him around. Like they're your friends, but you never trust them, aw I don't really trust them. Just pretend I do but naa. 'Cause arh never know what to expect, they might turn around and back stab you or something. If you know him from way back it might be sweet but still don't trust 'em (Denny).

Like you know, probably try and test you out see if you are down with your colour and say that's a nice car why don't you break into it. And then you know you'll stand there and try and get with the flow you know, you don't wanna say no, 'cause if you say no then they'll know that you are not down with the brothers. You have to do it, that's how they test how loyal you are to the brothers (Quinn).

Sometimes you can put your life at risk. And you could sacrifice your family just for being in a gang, you can give up your family just to join a gang. Like it could mean giving up your friends, the ones you've grown up with. Like you join the gang to make new friends, to go to parties, but

they put you in jail and get you in trouble. Sometimes you go back and hurt people who you have known for years and you are really close to but you have to do that because that's the gang (Tanya).

You know how you take your girlfriend out to town and all that, I was always scared man. Inside myself I was always scared. 'Cause you know what it's like when you catch one of their guys, smash him. Who wanted to get beaten up in front of their girlfriend? When you're by yourself you know, you think you're hard when you're with your gang, but that's when it really comes down to it when you are by yourself (Capone).

The fighting and all that. But I didn't do much fighting up in Auckland, it was mostly when I went down to Wellington. Had a big fight with these Bloods. For nearly two weeks for every single day (Henry).

Awe heaps a fights and like if you were prospecting¹ you just walk about the street with the person you are prospecting for and they can just tell you to do something and you have to do it to get your patch (Rapper).

The above participants described a wide range of "bad things" about gang membership. Denny commented on having to respond in retaliation or revenge to people who have been shown disrespect or have abused someone they feel responsible to protect. Denny also suggested it was bad that, although members were your friends, you could not really trust them. Quinn suggested that one was tested as to whether one was "down with the colour," meaning whether you would do anything for the gang. Tanya added that it was bad that you end up hurting people you have known for years. Capone suggested that although members were very tough when they were with the gang, it was very difficult to spend time away from the gang and not feel extremely vulnerable. This was especially difficult when he wanted to take his girlfriend to the movies.

Participants talked about crime in terms of "bad stuff you gotta do" (Denny) such as burglaries, robberies, stealing, doing drugs, hurting people and that you "start tagging all over" (Denny). Some only saw the consequences of crime as bad as Ed elaborated:

¹ A "prospect" was someone who was a junior affiliate of a gang (generally a large adult gang such as Black Power or the Mongrel Mob) and was under the control of a "patched" or full member. Prospects basically had to do everything their patched boss told them to. A person who was a prospect was said to be "prospecting."

...ending up getting the bash, say if you narked on someone. The bad thing is if you get caught that's you, you're gone. Look at me. I ended up in this place (prison).

Others suggested doing crime was bad, such as Junior who said :

Prospecting is pretty bad. You've gotta steal things for them. Cars, motors, radios, stereos, yeah. Then you do that for a couple of years before you are one of them.

Participants described their vulnerability as a bad thing about the gang. They talked about other gangs coming to their parties for fights, getting smashed by rival gangs, "getting jumped," and one said, "You are on edge most of the time." Others said:

Just walking the streets by yourself you worry that no one's got your back when you're on your own (Kurby).

But that's a really bad thing you know, it's cool when you are hanging out with your boys and all that even if you are not making trouble. But if someone just sees you, another gang sees you and then they see you by yourself they'll give you a hiding, take your shoes. But I never got stockered man (Capone).

Another bad thing about gang membership was the interpersonal rivalries that went on. Being bossed around, people getting caught and telling on the rest of the gang, making enemies, giving up friends because they are not in the gang, not liking some of the members, and "People get jealous of you and when they see you next, they try and jump you" (Dupris). As Mike said, the bad things are:

Having to listen to other dick-heads. Having them boss you around and all that shit.

What do You Have to Give up in Order to be in a Gang?

Family and friends were understood as the two main things being in a gang meant you had to give up:

If they had to go somewhere that day with their family they might have to give that up (Denny).

If you're a real good boy and you listen to your old lady all the time then you gotta snap out of that (Dupris).

G-funk mentioned rape as something being in a gang meant you had to give up because "It will come back on the gang: the whole lot get in the shit instead of one."

Leadership

Leadership in the gang was understood by many as dictatorship. Indeed this may have been the case for many of the "gangs" described by participants:

Yeah and if you say, if you say something smart to him or something like what you saying he'll smack you over. See you gotta take heaps of risks when you're in a gang eh (Denny).

What kind of things can he do because he's the leader? (R).

Aw he can do anything, anything he wants, yeah (G-funk).

So what kind of things? (R).

Aw he could just sit back and tell everyone what to do, eh (G-funk).

Can you think of a time when that happened? (R).

Aw I've seen it a few times, eh (G-funk).

So what happened. (R).

He doesn't tell me what to do (G-funk).

What happened? (R).

Aw I just sorta freaked out and wanted to tell him to do it himself (G-funk).

Does he have much respect? (R).

Yeah, he has respect (G-funk).

So he can tell people what to do and they'll do it. (R).

Yeah, they treat him good and he'll treat them good (G-funk).

Is he an older dude? (R).

Yeah (G-funk).

So what about the other guys how old are they? (R).

Aw most of my mates would be around the age of 19, 18, 17 (G-funk).

So what would be the youngest person in the group? (R).

Probably 17 (G-funk).

So you would be one of the youngest people that hangs out with them. (R).

Yeah (G-funk).

So how old would the oldest person be? (R).

Probably 20, 21 (G-funk).

Being beaten by the leader seemed to contradict a primary reason (protection) given by members for joining:

How often would you get a hiding? (R).
 Not often but when you do get a hiding it's pretty bad (Bart).
 Would it be once a month, once a year, what? (R).
 Depends (Bart).
 On what? (R).
 Depends on if the leader likes you or not. Some days you could be in his good books, some days if you piss him off he could beat you up (Bart).
 So are you saying that most of your hidings would be from the leader? (R).
 Yeah (Bart).
 So why would he give you a hiding? (R).
 'Cause he's the toughest (Bart).
 So you are in a gang for protection but you get a hiding from the leader? (R).
 Yeah (Bart).

As one might imagine in such a physically confrontational world, leaders could be overthrown:

Is there a leader of that gang? (R).
 Na (Kurby).
 No leader? (R).
 Ar there was but we all gave him a hiding. We gave him a hiding 'cause he was being all bossy. Picking on us and that. So we all got together and smashed him up. And he took off (Kurby).
 He went somewhere else, did he? (R).
 He took off and his parents moved somewhere else, just moved out, 'cause we went over there and smashed up his house (Kurby).

Participants were divided on whether or not a gang needed to have a leader. Sometimes the leader was not actually called "the leader," probably because "leader" has "toughest person" connotations; such participants said things like "...probably in almost every gang you got a leader." Participants in such gangs said they didn't have a leader but "We look up to one guy." As the quotes below outline, decisions in such gangs, while made spontaneously, were generally made by the collective:

...we look up to one guy, there's our mate, our fella Junior Jay, he's the oldest aw not the oldest but you know, everyone listens to him but he's not our leader you know. We don't treat him like. You know what I mean. He's the fella that we look up to but he don't treat us like Black Powers and that do to their prospects. We just want to be a gang. Aw there's plans but all of us think of it, not just one person (Ed).

Yeah, OK, so you don't have overall plans, it just happens on the day (R).

All of us think of it. Like we just ask aw yeah, what we gonna do today, whoever says aw yeah shall we do this and the rest say aw yeah that's good enough, and everybody just agrees with each other and we just end up doing it (Ed).

So it just happens on a day by day kind of thing? (R).

Yeah (Ed).

Leadership was perhaps conceptualised as "bad" based on the model offered by the older gangs, where the young ones were used as "bum boys," having to run errands and do what they were told. With regard to the younger group I interviewed, it may have been the feeling of not wanting to be a "bum boy" that drove their dislike for leadership:

Is there a leader of your gang? (R).

Nap no leaders. One of our guys went into an older gang, they were about 25. And they kept using him for a bum boy so he came back. And we were "Oh yeah, you came back, told you it wouldn't work" (Drew).

One small, very delinquent group of boys said there was no leader for their gang, perhaps because they all had what Hagedorn (1997b) described as the "New Jack"² attitude. Indeed the "Roughnecks" ran their group as anarchists who would not bow to any authority. While they called themselves a gang, the lack of organisation, formal leadership, and small size would negate qualifying for Klein's (1995) definition. I asked them whether there was a leader in their gang and as a group they responded:

There's no leader (Dean).

But there was one that brought it in (Johnny).

That's the guy you were telling me about (R).

Na there was two of us; there was me and him (Dean).

Aw it was both of yous (Johnny).

² Based on an e-mail communication with Hagedorn (1997) a "New Jack" is a current street term in the United States which was derived from the movie *New Jack City* (Mc Henry, 1991). The movie was about a dope dealer who would do anything to make money. Hagedorn made the point in our e-mail communication that "it is not that he has deviant values, but he has a one-sided focus on making money and does not care how he does it."

Yeah (Brixton).

There's no leader. You know (Dean).

Yeah? (R).

There's no leaders, never will be, never has been (Dean).

The day there be a leader is the day we're all fucking going (Brixton).

'Cause fuck going down to another mother-fuckers knees, eh (Dean).

The gang I spent the most time with did have a leader. His position was held predominantly because of his age and because people looked up to him. He decided whether members could be in the group and if they needed to take a "judgment"³. He did have a say in whether gang activities went ahead, but sub-groups in the gang, particularly the younger ones, did things without talking to him about it all the time. I was interested in whether the younger Crip and Blood gangs received any leadership from the older gangs, such as Black Power or Mongrel Mob. I found some connections but they were mainly related to family or acquaintances made personally, and younger gangs seemed to have no formal connection to the older ones.

In the United States gangs are blamed for a great deal of the drug trafficking, yet research has shown that such activity is made through individual connections and entrepreneurship, not as a formal gang activity (Klein & Maxson, 1994; Klein, Maxson & Cunningham, 1991). It would seem that organised crime involving youth gangs was not made through gang connections. Talk around this included:

Yep. I'm in the Bloods. Err not the Bloods but the Mongrel Mob but still them (Marie).

'Cause the Bloods kinda hangs out with the Mongrel Mob a bit eh? (R).

Aw all his family is Mongrel Mob. And he just wanted to start up his own gang. And he just called it the BFL's, Bloods for Life (Marie).

How does that connection work? (R).

'Cause most of the Mob from my area is relations and they wanted us to make up another gang but that symbolises the Mob. (Jed)

So when do you see those guys in the Mob? Do they have anything to do with your crime? (R).

³ A "judgment" was an initiation ceremony for gang membership. It involved "walking the line," that is each member of the gang stood in a line and the judgement was to walk down the line receiving a punch from every member. Alternatively the prospective member had to fight three other members and remain conscious until the end of the fight. Some gangs had stealing something (such as a car) or doing a robbery as part of the initiation.

Ar when we rage they just come over where we are raging or they just come over to where we are raging (Jed).

So there is a social contact? (R).

Yeah (Jed)

And what about fighting? (R).

One of his older cousins that is in the Mob, yeah (Jed).

Like if you burgled some goods and you wanted to sell them? (R).

Na I just give them to my relations, my stepfather and all that, and he just goes and sells them off (Jed).

So basically everyone that you know is into crime? (R).

Yep (Jed).

Is that fair to say that? (R).

Yep (Jed).

Can you think of anyone that isn't? (R).

Nap. Except for my little brothers (Jed).

Discussion

The gang was often talked about as a response to vulnerability. The gang was viewed as a powerful entity, one that functioned to protect people “versus always getting the smash” (being beaten up). As one participant stated “You know your friends are there for you. You know if it ever comes down to a rumble they're all there and they won't back down, that's why I joined.” The not “backing down” relates at least partly to members discussion about being under threat of extreme violence if they did. One participant talked about the gang representing fighting for his culture, alluding perhaps to issues of macro-vulnerability such as colonisation and acculturation.

To some extent the reasons for joining a gang were also what participants described as the good things discussed in Chapter Five. People talked about joining for the belonging and affiliative reasons such as they enjoyed being with their friends and could become “famous” through tagging, and they thought it would be “cool” (they thought it would be fun and they would be seen to possess desirable traits). The idea of being an independent “free-agent” seemed appealing to some; the gang was perceived positively as representing independence from one's family and the stresses of school, yet it offered the potential for fame and fortune, and an abundance of drugs and alcohol. While participants seemed to agree that becoming a “free-agent” was a good thing, what went with that was reduced ties to the family and often as some participants said, actually

giving up one's family. Alternatively, participants gave negative affiliative reasons for joining which relate to vulnerability, such as not wanting to be the odd one out, not being a loner, and gang membership as the only way to be accepted.

Notably, as members of a community, participants had developed a history of belonging and affiliation with local peers. They talked about living close together and having known each other for a long time. Beyond such an immediate peer group was a social network which laid down the models and connections for future affiliation. Older brothers and community mentors in their early twenties paved the way for the younger generation (a generation in their terms being defined as approximately the period of adolescence). As academics we may pose the question, "Why do people join gangs?" while for the gang member the question may have been, "Why not?" That is, gangs provided the things they wanted and if other options were offered they would consider them, too. However, a small number of participants talked about joining gangs as being "...no choice for some people" (Tanya). There was a small core of youth who, because of who they were, their upbringing, and the nature of our society, joined gangs.

A feeling of vulnerability within youth increased the likelihood of seeking gang based protection. In ironic contradiction, while gang members subjectively believed gangs were good protective agencies, joining a gang had a number of consequences that functioned to dramatically increase participants' need for protection and scope of vulnerability. Joining a gang created an instant enemy opposition (for example, Crips versus Bloods) and the number of enemies increased on a weekly basis. Gang members were under daily threats of violence from within the gang, rival gangs and other groups. Such threats functioned in a cyclical pattern to increase their need for protection and feelings of vulnerability and further affirm their need for gang membership. For example, looking back on his gang career one participant said, "You are always on edge...wondering who's got your back." Another said, "When you're in a gang you get around and people get jealous and when they see you next they try and jump you." Commonly the bad things about being in a gang concerned vulnerability with regard to involvement in fights. Participants were vulnerable to the emotional consequences of

fighting such as getting into trouble with your mates, sacrificing your family, worrying your parents, and bringing trouble upon your family. Furthermore, they described such physical vulnerability concerning fights as "you might die faster," "you can put your life at risk," and "you might get killed or stabbed, shot or cut up."

Intra-gang social process was an additional site of vulnerability. In many gangs the leader was the toughest person, someone who kept members in line with the threat of physical violence. To some extent leadership implied being bossed around by a dictator who ruled over the group due to physical strength or fighting ability rather than any specific organisational skills from which the group benefited. Alternatively, one participant talked about things being decided collectively, happening spontaneously, and according to him, without "leadership." I interpret this to mean leadership without dictatorial decision making.

In a short space of time a youth with a legitimate desire for protection could become a gang member subject to multiple threats, who had an overwhelming feeling of vulnerability and a disturbing presence in group motivated violence. Given this situation, it is understandable to question why youths join and stay in gangs. Yet it is important to grasp that the increase in violence, threats and feelings of vulnerability are coupled with a feeling of togetherness, helping, supporting and generally backing each other up. It is likely that the prospect of one fight alone may seem more scary than ten fights as a group.

Vulnerability is a theme of gang membership which is also common in the United States (Spergel, 1995; Scheilinger, 1994; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991) particularly, as Spergel (1995) has suggested "by males new to a particular community, school, or prison" (p. 92). It is plausible that the kind of threat described by Decker and VanWinkle (1996) exists in Auckland:

People in his neighbourhood might as well join the gang, because they will be perceived as a gang member anyway and therefore be a target of other gangs (p. 110).

If a young person dresses like gang members, hangs out and plays basketball with gang members, he could easily become a target for opposing members and end up seeking protection from the gang as a result. Less plausible in most of New Zealand (with the possible exception of South Auckland) is the concept of an actual threat to all young people in a community regardless of gang membership. New Zealand just does not have the crime rate that has been described by participants in United States gang studies. For example, one of Vigil's (1988) participants argued:

I was born into my barrio. It was either get your ass kicked everyday or join a gang and get your ass kicked occasionally by rival gangs (p. 154).

Sociological perspectives on vulnerability and protection have also been theorised. To paraphrase Moore (1985), one may hypothesise that the vulnerability they feel is as much socio-economic and educational isolation from middle class aspirations as a physically threatening environment. While I would not have expected 13 -17 year olds to talk of such macro-vulnerability there is evidence of such talk with one participant. Facing the world as a united group may hide such urban anomaly. Bourgois (1990) adds to the idea of isolation with his conception of underclass men as people who "are more than victims of historical economic transformations...they do not passively accept their fourth class citizen fate" (p. 627). The youth gang may therefore be viewed as a form of resistance to the lack of opportunity to achieve middle class aspirations and a response to macro vulnerability. One example of this concept in participant talk came from Dean: "We are just making ends meet the corrupt way." To take a more micro-perspective, Fleisher (1995) argues it is the bravado of street speech which "disguises the vulnerability of fearful boys by transforming them into fearless, brave street warriors" (p. 118). Therefore the violent gang behaviour, while creating vulnerability may also be considered as a stressed or traumatised response to vulnerability. Closely tied to such a dynamic, Capone talked about being very scared of getting beaten up when he was out with his girlfriend. Despite this he would look for such vulnerable

targets from rival gangs when he was out with his gang. The flip side of being protected by fellow gang members relates to Vigil's (1983) use of the Mexican-American term "machismo"; members must at all times be ready to fight.

While this chapter has focused on vulnerability as one push towards gang membership it is important to recognise that there are many additional "pushes." Notably, "the enforced leisure that is a consequence of the unemployment rate for minority youth" (Conquerhood, 1994, p. 54), family violence and distress, drug abuse, inadequate housing, educational disadvantage, adult unemployment (Klein, 1995), and as Fergusson (1995) has indicated, under-educated parents. New Zealand is a place where youth gangs (as opposed to adult gangs) are relatively new, a phenomenon not entrenched by the homelessness, ghettoism and segregation of a minority underclass as described by Moore (1985) and Vigil (1983) in Los Angeles, Decker & VanWinkle (1996) in St Louis, and Spergel (1995) in Chicago.

9

Trouble

This chapter summarises the many and varied ways young people talked about trouble. Talk was drawn from fifty five participants in both the gang and follow-up studies and most participants were gang members. Rather than try and fit youth into the diagnostic boxes mental health professionals have created, the aim of this chapter is to give youth the space to talk about their trouble, to try and tap their perspectives, contexts and motivations. While conducting the follow-up research, I made a point of asking participants about their crime, drug and fighting behaviours since returning from a month long wilderness programme (see Appendix A for interview questions). In the gang study I did not have any structured questions (see Appendix B) but found that trouble was something we talked much about, indeed trouble could be conceptualised as a theme of gang membership. This chapter examines trouble as a group phenomenon from the perspective of the individual. Participants define trouble, describe the social setting in which trouble takes place, the reasons why trouble is appealing, and the difficulties they have had getting away from trouble.

What is trouble?

At one level trouble was conceptualised as a process one went through when the illegal aspects of one's behaviour became known to the police. Using this meaning, participants did not perceive themselves to be "in trouble" unless they had an interaction with the police and had been caught. As Dean stated, "It ain't a crime if you don't get caught." In some gangs there are times when a fellow gang member may take the "rap" (blame) for someone else. As Tanya stated, "If I get in trouble most of them will take the rap for me or if they get in trouble I take the rap for them."

I asked, "How does that work?"

Tanya replied, "Like if they (the boys) get in trouble stealing cars or if they're too drunk and they all get snapped I just say I did it."

Has talked about, "Getting into a lot of trouble and it's not really your fault," and defined trouble as:

Getting into fights, stealing, getting in trouble with police heaps of stuff man. Like they get you into trouble and it's not really your fault and um they make gangs angry and we have to come along and fight for them. Fight for the guys, cause they come along and ask us for help cause we have to trust each other, as a gang. (Has).

Trouble was defined by Posca as the vulnerability one is subject to when involved in the gang:

You might get killed along the way sometime. Don't really know what's going on. You might just get stabbed, shot, dunno. Get cut up, but I'm not worried, I don't care (Posca).

Three participants talked about how other people thought they were trouble makers:

They think we're gonna steal and all that. Yeah, but we don't, it's their way they probably think eh, that we just hang around for trouble. We don't hang around for trouble, we just like when we go somewhere to St Lukes. We've got heaps of friends and they think like we're coming there to make trouble. Yeah. Think we're coming there to steal (Xkon).

We're just all bad cunts. Famous throughout the country, troublesome youths (Tama).

Trouble was often talked about in relation to adverse pressures brought upon the gang. For example, a common statement was "We don't cause trouble, trouble comes to us" (Dee).

My reply to such a statement was, "Maybe you guys hang out where trouble hangs out."

Responses to my probing included:

Na, it just comes to us...we look like gangsters but we don't act like it (Has).

As long as you know we don't make trouble, you know (Ed).

People always make trouble to us. They'll probably make trouble to us, 'cause we don't make, we don't usually make trouble, we just, it's probably 'cause we are hanging round in a big group they think we are trying to make trouble...like when we're in trouble, like some guys are going to come and beat us up. I mean like we'll all fight. Just so if one of us gets a hiding, we'll all fight. So we just fight if they want trouble. But we don't fight unless they punch us first (Xkon).

If there is trouble, as I said before, we don't cause trouble but if there is a fight, we'll back each other up (Quinn).

'Cause they're jealous, plus we're known and that...heaps of people don't like us (Dee).

We like white people, we're not racist, it's just when they cause trouble to us that we get angus (angry). We just used to hang out quite a lot, go cruising, and ah they don't get into trouble, but if trouble come to them, ahh...(Bugs).

When you're with heaps of boys, they think you are trying to cause trouble, they come at you with everything eh, baseball bat, machetes (Junior).

We don't cause trouble but if we've got trouble, we go right up to hard core (Bronx).

Many participants gave the rationale that people brought trouble to them. They were targets for trouble such as fighting:

And like, when you're in a gang and hanging out, you don't ask for trouble but it's always there. That's just, I don't know what it is, but you know. Awe, it is true that when you're in a gang and that people think they're tough and all that when there's all their boys around and they'll look for it. But you know, just hanging out and all that, there always seems to be trouble. Just cause you get roped into things that you have to do (Capone).

Na, just like if trouble comes our way (Jas).

If trouble comes to you? (R).

Yeah (Jas).

What is trouble? (R).

Other people causing fights (Jas).

So C2S has never ever caused a fight? (R).

Sometimes (Jas).

So trouble doesn't always come to you. Sometimes you are the trouble (R).

Yeah (Jas).

When I said, "But you do make trouble," Ed replied, "Yeah, but not with their ahh, not with the neighbours and that." Similarly in three discussions with Dee and Has I decided to have another try at challenging their idea of trouble just coming to them:

So gangs would cause you to get in trouble with the police for fighting? (R).

And stealing (Dee).

And tagging, you name it (Has).

Shoplifting, everything (Dee).

We don't cause trouble (Dee).

Trouble just comes to us (Has).

Yeah (Dee).

Is that right? (R).

Yeah (Dee).

That's what everyone tells me (R).

We don't cause trouble, trouble comes to us (Dee).

How does it do that? (R).

Jealousy man (Has).

Yeah (Dee).

Trouble doesn't come to me (R).

Yeah, 'cause they're jealous, plus we're known and that. Known around all those other areas, and you know heaps of people don't like us (Dee).

'Cause we always take the dance floor at the socials mate. They get jealous all the time (Dee).

When we always go socials we....(Dee).

So maybe you guys hang out where trouble hangs out? (R).

Na, it just comes to us (Has).

But how come trouble comes to you and not to me? (R).

'Cause you're different (Has).

You're different mate. Look at us! (Dee).

We look like gangsters but we don't act like it. And it just comes to us (Has).

Well man you have good mates, like you get to know them, you get to hang around with them a lot. And they always make us laugh and get us into trouble, they get us into trouble and we have to all be in it, and we all you know (Has).

So how does making you laugh and getting into trouble go together? (R).

Oh no, 'cause they get us and we're not involved and they nark on us and we get angry. But when we always come back we always talk about it and laugh...Like they get you into a lot of trouble eh. Like they get you into trouble and it's not really your fault and um they make gangs angry and we have to come along and fight for them. Fight for the guys, cause they come along and ask us for help 'cause we have to trust each other, as a gang. Yeah. We always get in trouble and we always get in trouble from the police. Yeah (Has).

So what kind of trouble do you guys get into? (R).

Aw tagging, some of them got in trouble for robbery 'cause they used to rob houses until they got caught. Lani got a fine. And Posca went to Tarawera for his, something there. And get caught tagging, 'cause we used to just go walking around tagging, we used to go around doorstepping (stealing things from people's doorways) and stuff. Na, when we go to socials and that we are friends and we just all dance together and we sometimes cause trouble but not all the time. Sometimes trouble just comes to us (Has).

Dupris gave a rationale drawing on macro-social factors. About joining gangs and getting into trouble he suggested that:

Sometimes like if you live in an area there's no gangs around but if you move into a place like Otara or some place like that you would get into a gang, 'cause like it's a poor place where poor people fight and do burgs and all that, and get into trouble and all that cause they're in a poor area.

So you think that's why they get into trouble cause they are in a poor area (R).

Yeah, and it's the only way they can have fun.

I had the feeling that participant talk about trouble "coming to us" was representative of a general feeling of being out of control of where one's life was heading, culminating in the denial of personal responsibility for their actions.

Trouble and social niche

In concurrence with the idea that "trouble just comes to us" several participants from both the gang and follow-up studies described crime as normal within the social boundaries of the street subculture:

I stayed out of trouble for a week [after coming back from Whakapakari] 'cause things had changed and it took me a while to get back on the scene (Tama).

I was just hanging around with the wrong people, just the wrong crowd. The guys I hang around with now, they're good you know (Lani).

What about a typical week for you guys? (R).

Just hanging out over here, doing car wash¹, we always meet every day, every week we probably steal something (Bugs).

And like when you're in a gang and hanging out, you don't ask for trouble but it's always there. That's just, I don't know what it is but you know. Aw it's true that when you're in a gang and that people think they're tough and all that when there's all their boys around and they'll look for it. But you know just hanging out and all that, there always seems to be trouble. Just 'cause you get roped into things that you have to do (Capone).

After a while you see some mates and like I met some fullas and just started hanging out and then you know started to get into my crime worser, you know like ahh sometimes I'd take the rap for them and all that (Ed).

So they just asked you to join, that kind of thing? (R).

I just went hard with them all the way and got a bit onto it and then ah aw not too onto it, not too onto it, just aw to get away from the law. In the crime ways yeah, I'm onto it. (Ed).

Shoplifting, sniffed once a day after I got out of hospital, got into graffiti, involved in a crowd that was getting into trouble. I was there when people were breaking and entering, I lived with them (Anna).

Drug use was understood as a normal part of the street culture and this was conceptualised by some as what made the street culture so appealing and by others as one of the main problems with street life. The clash of these two perspectives was evident in Johnny's story. Indeed the social pressure that is brought upon street youth to take drugs is

¹ Young members of this gang found they could make money by hanging out at intersections on busy roads and cleaning car windscreens when the lights were red. After cleaning the windscreen they would then ask the driver for some change.

tremendous. Johnny and others described the spiraling pattern that occurred with him with one drug leading to another in the peer group situation:

Didn't go out for a week then I went up town to get me some more clothes and that, get some new gears. I was offered a beer and some dak. No, that's alright. No. Then you say just one can. It's hard. I ended up on the youth benefit then got back into it. Couldn't pay for board and met up with my cousins: Black Powers. I snapped out of it after a while, robberies. I got back up here and got back into the drugs. Then I got into sniffing and got back into it and into drugs.

What do you think got you into that? (R).

'Cause everyone else was doing it eh. Drinking, and start drinking and you want another buzz, so sniffing (Johnny).

Then I just started getting in a whole lot of trouble and went straight downhill...being over in [town name] it was difficult to stay out of trouble. I came over to [town name] in September, and it has been the best place to be for staying out of trouble (Anna).

Whereas Jimmy saw his gang life as relatively stable and consistent, and talked about just hanging out and getting "wasted":

If someone said to you they were thinking about joining a gang but what's so good about it, would you say? (R).

Just hanging out and getting wasted all the time. We used to have a pad down on the beach it was a three storey beach house and yeah, it was choice (Jimmy).

Fighting too, was construed as a normal part of life within the social niche in which participants interacted:

Being on the streets means that you will fight. I still would be looking for a fight if I was on the streets...we would just jump them...[grabbing one and] cutting his face and stomping his head. If someone comes up to you and tries to take your clothes off you, I'm not gonna let them take my clothes off me (Johnny).

I've been 'round heaps a' gangs. Most of them been all right. I've got a few hidings when I was hanging round with the [gang name] man (Denny).

I just used to walk with my cousins and that but there'd be heaps of gangs hanging out in their set and they'd whistle out and try and you know, like 'come on let's have a fight! And I used to see them when they'd get pissed quite a lot. They used to get into trouble and have fights. And um, the worst thing about being in a gang, aw especially if they are drinking and all that they use this term called 'fuck the horse,' that means they just beat up each other really. The gang that I was hanging out with they used to do it. They used to beat each other up just over little things (Quinn).

What would you say would be the bad things about it? (R).
Aw always having to fight, you always having to fight (Bugs).

Any other bad things about being in a gang? (R).

Getting into fights and that. Don't really like fighting, don't really like fighting, don't really like violence (Lani).

So would you say that being in a gang means that you have to fight? (R).

Na, not really, it's up to you, you know, it's up to you if you wanna fight you fight. But if you don't want to you don't have to. No one is going to force you, that's good in our gang, no one will force you, but some of them they call you kinda drop it you know. They always say that, they pressure you and that. You know? (Lani).

Yeah. So if you didn't fight then? (R).

Yeah, they'll just tease you and that you know. Just put you down, say you are scared (Lani).

What about fighting - does being in C2S mean you have to fight? (R).

Nap. Well if one of yous is getting a hiding you all join in (Posca).

So sometimes you do have to (R).

Yep, you can't just let that guy get a hiding (Posca).

(Conversation with four gang members)

It sounds to me that the fighting is different. You can't say 'nap I'm not fighting anymore?' (R).

Na, no no no (Former)

No way man. If we go up to someone, you gotta have a back man. If someone runs away then (Brixton).

He gets it later, you know. When you're thinking yeah, yeah someone got my back and then turn around, no ones there, then boom (Johnny).

That guy that took off, he'll get his turn (Dean).

He'll get his turn (Brixton).

He'll get his smash (Dean).

Say if there was just two of us at the school drinking and some other guys, say 5 or 6 guys came up, we're not gonna back down, if they hit us first we're gonna go in and like we're not gonna run away, just stay and fight. And if we get a hiding, well you gotta get a hiding some day eh. Heaps a' hidings (Johnny).

Trouble was fun

Trouble was described by some participants as fun in terms of the buzz of crime and the fun that criminal trouble can buy through drugs, alcohol, parties, and generally what "rich people" are perceived to be able to go out and buy whenever they want:

Sometimes it's a fun thing to do, aw sometimes it's dumb like you might do heaps a' cars and get a little bit of money, but you might do some cars and houses and then you've got heaps of cash and yeah, choice I've got heaps a' cash, go get me some new clothes, go to the movies and then you've got heaps of fun with all the money (Denny).

So what are the good things about being in a gang? (R). Umm, there'd be nothing really good, it's just fun while you're young (Drew).

What kind of things would be fun? (R).

Parties, the criminal part of it. Yeah, it's fun when you're doing crime (Drew).

What's fun about it? (R).

I don't know, it's just a buzz but it's not fun when you get caught (Drew).

So you think that's why they get into trouble, 'cause they are in a poor area? (R).

Yeah, and it's the only way they can have fun but you know with rich people they have other things (Dupris).

Yeah awe they love me and all that but you know why'd you want to stick around for the family scene's not my buzz eh. Fuck that, I'd rather be out with the boys, drinking, smoking drugs, tripping out and harassing people. Making money and driving fuckin' flash cars around. I don't wanna be at home playing happy fuckin' families. Fuck. That's why I run away man. I never run away from home in my life 'cause I never had to. I've never had to leave home 'cause home's always been sweet. Just fuckin' can't handle it eh (Tama).

So if you weren't in a gang would you still do those things? (R).
Mmm, yep. Partly 'cause aw don't really have any family to go to and that and um, probably because it's sometimes a fun thing to do (Denny).

The idea of drugs as something enjoyable, something good, was implicit in much of the talk on drugs. Johnny construed drugs as something he enjoyed by indicating they were a treat for special occasions: "It doesn't hurt to have special occasions, eh. You know with drinking." However, in explaining his drug use Johnny recognised deleterious health effects by pointing out a friend who could not remember things well. These two opposing positions unveil the contradiction fostered by society that although drugs are bad they can also be good on special occasions. Johnny struggled to work out where the line for special occasion finished and personally harmful drug use started. Participants from the gang study, when asked if being in a gang meant you had to do drugs replied:

You don't have to, but I'd rather do drugs (Dave).

Na you don't have to do drugs, we just do it. Doesn't mean you have to do drugs if you don't want to, then don't. But arh, we just do it 'cause we like the buzz (Henry).

Trouble was easy

When one rarely gets caught doing crime it becomes an easy way to obtain commodities such as money, vehicles, clothing or alcohol. The high chance of at least short term success makes criminal behaviour an easy option, as opposed to working more hours or trying to find a job:

For a Crip, you can make easy cash, make money doing crime (Kurby).

I didn't get in trouble while...It takes about a couple of months before I get caught (Ed).

The normality of drugs within the youth subculture meant that drugs were easy to obtain. Indeed, one was exposed to drugs regardless of one's desire to take them or not. Participants talked about drug availability promoting spontaneous, generally social use:

Hanging out with the boys: you can always get drugs (Johnny).

At one stage every day but now every second day. Because there is more drugs around now. It's easy to get (Anna).

Trouble was money

In terms of quality of life, money is a major contributor to the kind of lifestyles that people lead and the kind of enjoyment people can get out of life. It is not surprising therefore, that many participants talked about crime as a way to get money:

It's all about getting paid. That's what a gangster is, you gotta support your habits. You just do what you gotta do to get your drugs and alcohol into your system (Dean).

I used to hang around with some of them but they never used to be criminals. They assault people, they stab people man but me, I never used to do that sort of thing, but them they just do it for fuckin' fun. That's why in here they realise that they could have been in here for something that made them a bit of money [like him] instead of getting high on fucking stabbing someone (Tama).

You see if I go out and do crime, and I'm going JFK like that and I'm making money on the side it's like sweet. I just go and take all my goods over to my Uncle, he's in the Black Power, and then I got money off him for all of my goods (James).

Sometimes they need, aw I sorta do crime every day but I do it to get money and that. I just wanted to get some money so I could just get a feed or whatever. Like if you're with your mates, if you are just by yourself then we all want some money for some piss or something we might go do us a stocker or something. If you want heaps a' stuff, then get some of your mates and do a hold up, get heaps a' money (Denny).

Like I do crime every day unless I got hulk money in my pocket (Dean).

Like if we need some money, we just go hit some houses take the TVs, stereos (Drew).

They usually do crime and that to get money. If you've got money it makes it easier cause you can buy more things and get more drugs, score some weed (Dave).

I get an income now [job search allowance of \$90 per week] so I don't need to do crime. It's just when I'm getting no income that I turn to crime. It's the money buzz that makes me want to do crime (Clive).

...But after that I needed money, so... (Ed).

Trouble was about being bad

"Bad" was a much used word when talking about trouble. Participants used the word bad in different ways. Some participants referred to less serious troublemakers as trying to be bad, others thought of themselves as bad, others conceptualised everyone as bad and gangsters as being true to themselves, still others used the word bad to describe the kind of trouble with which they were involved:

Trying to be bad

So would you say that the drugs was 'cause they are in the gang? (R).
Na they are just trying to be bad. Yeah, just trying to be bad. Yeah, just trying to be like everybody else. It's 'cause some of the people they hang around with you know, different, it's not 'cause you know, none of us drink and that, smoke dak and that, they just get it from other people....'Cause you know when you, it's not good being famous like that but you know little kids, not kids but when you're that age you thrive on it. Even if you get in trouble like it's a big thing, even if they get out, get let off or they've done their PD [Periodic Detention] it's just a big thing. That's what boys of that age go through. You know we used to go, 'oh we smashed them, oh we robbed them,' you know (Capone).

Sometimes when they have their guns they think they're bad. I think they're just little kids playing with guns (Tim).

We're bad

We're just all bad cunts. Famous throughout the country, troublesome youths (Tama).

You just feel like you got heaps a' hate in you, so you sorta like wanna bring it all out and then go after heaps of people and that, do bad stuff, do crime and that (Denny).

We're bad. We think we're not bad but when we go around places, you know, we are always involved in fights and that (Dee).

A further example of wanting to show people that "we are bad" was illustrated when I gave a film to one of my participants and he took some staged pictures. One included pointing a gun at someone (a fellow gang member) and the other holding a knife to a member's neck.

Everyone was bad

One of the more hard-core participants suggested that "everyone was bad" and that gang members were the only ones being true to their real selves:

'Cause everybody's bad you know. There is no point pretending to be good. Just be your real self. Everyone's got that evilness inside them eh. It's pure evil that's what it is. I wasn't born good. If I was born good, I wouldn't be here right now saying what I'm saying (Dean).

Getting away from trouble

Through experience in the youth subculture Clive, Anna, and Capone discovered for themselves that the paths they were traveling were incongruent with future aspirations. They each, in their own social circles, were able to exert control over drug use and find either work or courses which interested them. From their talk I got a sense of them growing up and deciding it was time to stop being in trouble. Notably, the decision to stop was well supported by family and, in the case of Capone, the gang:

Yeah man, others like the bad experiences, they think it's a better buzz. Yeah but for me it's just like you know, it's from then, I was getting to an

age when I turned 18 I just clicked in, you know, I'm too old to be robbing things now. Aw it depends who you are. Some people get hassled when they stop hanging out, they get called a traitor and everything. But I dunno, there was a lot of people younger than me so I was sorta respected in the sense that I wanted to leave. They started noticing it when we went to parties and I wouldn't smoke drugs and drink with them. They'd always offer though. 'Cause my best friend Poser, he was like, I dunno, he wasn't really a leader but if there was one it would be him. We stayed together for ages man, and I just told him how I felt and he respected that, that I didn't want to smoke drugs any more, a couple of bad experiences is all you need I reckon to get you off that buzz (Capone).

I gave up smoking because of the barrier [Great Barrier Island]. Not dak but tobacco. That really got me out of smoking: finding it made me fitter. I think it was that I slowed down my smoking on the barrier. It was the combination of Whakapakari, [cultural] courses and income that made me stop. Before [Whakapakari] I didn't care about anybody. I do now. I don't want to do drugs or burs. I feel a conscience for ripping off others now, remorse (Clive).

Gave up sniffing when I got back. Never started it again. Because of my boyfriend and because I wanted to. I gave up drugs for a brief time after coming back. I gave up marijuana and started reading the Bible. Then I stopped, got depressed because I had a fight with Pamai and then got back into marijuana. Now I am starting to slow down again though. Now I am not buying it, trying not to, not every day any more...Wanna get somewhere in life now. Get my own house next year, save up for a car, a job, have kids (Anna).

Discussion

Participants who say "trouble just comes to us" appear to suggest they are passive actors in their social world. When one considers some of the talk related to social niche it becomes noticeable that participants were "roped in" to many activities, some of which they may not have been so enthusiastic about. Such a position is consistent with the social facilitation model first used by Short and Strodtbeck (1965). As individuals, gang members are intrinsically no different from non-gang members in terms of delinquency or drug use, rather social processes are viewed as the major cause of such behaviour.

The talk around trouble being fun illustrated that some participants got a sense of excitement, a "buzz" out of their involvement in troublesome activities. One participant suggested that this was his chance to participate in some of the fun that he perceived to be had by "rich people". Further, there were comparisons made between family life and the fun one could have out with the boys. Participants described one benefit of the troubling social niche as the ease with which they met the short term goals of acquiring money and getting high. The possibility of long term goals was obscured by the negative consequences of short term success such as court cases, addiction and imprisonment. Some of the long term, "hard-core" members talked about trouble being money. It was all about getting paid so that they could have an easy life, get the drugs into their system, or just to amass cash. The idea of being bad was central to trouble talk. It seemed that it was desirable to be bad, participants talked about kids thriving on badness, playing with guns, and doing drugs. Being bad was seen as desirable by some participants but not by others who thought gangs were more to do with the hate inside you or that it was bad to be involved in so many fights. As Denny stated:

You just feel like you got heaps a' hate in you, so you sorta like wanna bring it all out and then go after heaps of people and that, do bad stuff, do crime and that.

From the trouble talk conclusions **could** be drawn that street cultural values are at odds with the dominant culture. For example, beating up a younger brother bolstered self concept in the peer sub-culture yet engendered guilt and remorse at home; stealing facilitated a desired lifestyle in the peer sub-culture yet engendered regret when institutionalised; smoking marijuana, while socially fun, incited guilt from the dominant perspective that conceptualises it as a bad habit. While such incongruence functions to construct "the rebel," it is a large theoretical jump to suggest that core values are different. Such adolescents went against the dominant rules of society, but they seemed to do so using a

short term approach to evaluating behavioural decisions. The majority of participants got into trouble in aspiration of a middle class lifestyle, such as being able to take a girl out for the night in a car, feeling financially stable, and participating in exciting activities. Alternatively a hard core group of participants talked about being evil because the world was evil, and aspired to be at the pinnacle of the criminal world, having no desire to participate in mainstream society. Such people correspond with what Hagedorn (1997) describes as the "New Jack." They don't want a job, are concerned only with money, and if they could change their lives would become more deviant, more rich and not get caught. As one participant stated "I do crime every day unless I've got bulk money in my pocket."

I just wanna be a criminal for the rest of my life. I wanna be an asshole to everyone for the rest of my life. I'm never gonna change, I'm never going straight, I'm just gonna be a fuckwit to everyone (Tama).

If you're a fake don't bother being in it you know. If you're real, cold blooded, cold hearted, evil minded use it, you know. I'm every fuckin good working, hard honest citizen's nightmare. Just call me a gangster man (Dean).

On the one hand such quotes as above could be taken out of movies like "Menace II Society" (Scott and Hughes, 1993) and conceptualised as an attempt to talk like the "New Jack". Yet it is notable that even if they did identify with the stereotypes of such American gang cultural icons they were also behaving like the "New Jack" in terms of the way they lived their lives or as one participant stated "We are just making ends meet the corrupt way." When asked if he knew anyone who he would aspire to be, one participant from the gang study replied:

Yeah I know 'cause I used to work in a few tinny [dope] houses and shit that's what I wanna be like the bosses that used to run that. Like them. The high life. Rolling in cash. They can't touch you, they can just touch the person below you. They can touch the next man but they can't touch you. Smoking your drugs without having to buy them. An ounce is there sitting on your table waiting to be sold. Yeah. You're running the shit.

The idea of life transition as more important than the short term gains that the street culture provided represented the gap between those participants who were moving away from trouble and those who had been unable to change. Participants who moved away from trouble had the support of their family and had made changes to their drug use following time away. The decision to get away from trouble was however, made well after intervening experiences and was made personally, with support but without counselling or therapy. Their talk about life transition legitimated the labelling of crime as a dead end or no longer necessary, drugs as a bad habit and fighting as a lack of control. Indeed they realised that such behaviours were incompatible with the goals of education, employment, home and family, goals which became more important for them as they got older. Spergel (1995) confirms that the end of adolescence was a crucial time for gang members in his study in terms of leaving the gang:

[The gang member] realises there are long-term negative consequences for being a gang member and that he can find an alternative, less stressful way to meet his social and economic needs. As a youth reaches the end of adolescence, he may feel that he is ready for a job and settling down especially if alternate roles are available to give him status and income² (p. 106).

Vigil (1988) found that peripheral or fringe members moved out of the gang earlier and easier. Alternatively, many youth may feel that their economic and social needs are met better in the troubling environment than anywhere else, and perhaps, as Horowitz (1987) has suggested, their sense of self worth is partly defined by their role in a gang. In the present study it is notable that even if a young person decided to stop doing crime or leave the gang they were still pressured to stay; an individual decision to change was often not enough.

² I am unsure whether such processes apply to female gang members. At least for Anna comparable goals such as having a family, getting a house, and finding a job were important.

It was suggested in Chapter Three that follow-up from someone who can relate to participant experience while on a wilderness programme would be most useful. This principle is important with regard to youth in trouble too. It has been illustrated that trouble is very often a social phenomenon and therefore an understanding of such sub-cultural systems is important in any approach to troubling youth. We can understand that it is difficult to make life transitions if one is constantly being invited and persuaded to participate in troubling activities, using drugs, and without foreseeable prospects for employment or money. Perhaps too, it is difficult to get coerced into trouble, do drugs, and need money for survival when one has a job. Support to assist escape from the world of trouble was crucial for those who wanted to change. For some younger people however, it was not yet time to "grow up" and work, and they did not or could not attend school. While they tended not to be serious trouble makers, it is noticeable that in New Zealand we really do not know what to do with such troublesome people in their early teens.

10

Conclusion

Across the history of the urbanised world, youth gangs and the moral panic (Cohen, 1972; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994) surrounding them have thrived. Historically practitioners, academics and lay people have focused on the associated crime, drug use and fighting in efforts to curb the involvement of youth in such groups. Such efforts have not worked. In fact based on the latest spate of "youth in trouble" television documentaries recently screened in New Zealand (Musgrave, 1996; Niccol, 1996a; Niccol, 1996b) it would not be presumptuous to say New Zealand is currently facing a moral panic about youth of similar proportions to the "Bodgie" (Manning, 1958) panic of the 1950's. Perhaps the panic is partly about fear that there are some very appealing aspects of youth subculture which families frequently can not provide. As Vigil (1988) argues:

The gang has taken on the responsibility of doing what the family, school, and other social agencies have failed to do - provide mechanisms for age and sex development, establish norms of behaviour, and define and structure outlets for friendship, human support and the like (p. 168).

Some participants attributed their life transitions partly to the development of family and broader whaanau related ties; however, the sense of belonging and affiliation extended through family or whaanau was not enough for participants. As outlined in Chapter Seven they wanted organised sport, sporting mentors, swimming pools, indoor basketball courts and places to socialise; they wanted control of their environs and personal prestige in a specific area, they wanted to be "cool." While there were facilities available (such as Youthtown in downtown Auckland and various well organised youth nights) they were scarce, and importantly, difficult to access without the help of adults. Furthermore many youth had become alienated from education and had neither the personal confidence nor practical knowledge to seek out and meet their education needs. As units which provided such belonging and affiliation needs within a peer controlled, physically challenging, "cool" context, gangs did serve a developmental purpose.

The first site in which I carefully read and attended to the spoken texts of youth concerned a wilderness therapy rehabilitation programme. Reflecting back participants recalled the good times of Whakapakari, both in terms of being “good” themselves (such as communicating with others, working, learning, and listening) and receiving “good” in return (such as being respected, having a family atmosphere, enjoying the activities). As Rewi put it, “It’s good to be able to talk about anything and help each other.” The problem has not been in uncovering this repertoire of pro-social behaviour but in maintaining and applying it to life at home. Obviously home was not a uniform environment across participants and this both reflects participant experience and clouds any overwhelming success to which the programme may aspire. Participants who made a transition away from crime, drug and fighting behaviours received the support of whaanau/family, social welfare agencies and additional community centred courses in order to do so. For some participants, the absence of such support characterised a disappointing homecoming. Importantly, low recidivism was not the success that participants talked or cared about. The participants of this study tell us relationship centred developments, such as the experience of whaanau, helping, talking, listening, trusting, respecting and disciplined working, were equally important as stepping stones to more healthy living. Participants cherished their experience on Great Barrier Island for it showed them how good life could be. In a sense it allowed them to enjoy being “good people,” and this was something they did not forget but I believe would have liked to get the opportunity to practice. Conceptualising Whakapakari (or any programme that removes individuals from their home setting) as a stepping stone may be useful because it implies that another stone will need to be ready for when the young person returns.

The second site in which I carefully read and attended to the spoken texts of youth concerned the perspectives, contexts and motivations behind their troubling behaviour.

Participants appeared to suggest that they were passive actors in their social world. When one considers some of the talk related to the social niche it becomes noticeable that participants were coerced into many activities. The talk around trouble as fun indicates that at least some of the activities for some of the participants were an exciting buzz. Fun in the street culture is often seen by adults as rebel behaviour. To be a rebel or in their language, to be "bad" seemed desirable to many young people. Older participants talked about "kids" thriving on "badness," playing with guns, and doing drugs. Despite wanting to be "bad" participants did not want to accept responsibility for their "bad" behaviour, saying "trouble just comes to us." In New Zealand, the social workers who run Family Group Conferences can be praised for attending to this point. A further component of trouble was about getting some money so one could be "normal" or have the opportunity to participate in some of the fun that "rich (middle class) people" are perceived to have, such as taking a girlfriend out on a date. Support, most obviously in the form of a job, was crucial for those that wanted to escape the world of trouble, yet for some young people it was not yet time to "grow up" and work, and they did not or could not attend school. While they tended not to be serious trouble makers it became apparent to me that in New Zealand we really do not know what to do with such troublesome young people.

Some of the more hard-core members, those described as "New Jacks" in chapter nine, talked about trouble as money. Life was about getting paid so that they could have it easy, get the drugs into their system, or just amass cash. These participants did not emphasise the belonging and affiliation in the gang. They were deviant in terms of being seriously violent, apparently without remorse, untrustable, and dedicated only to money, drugs and alcohol. In psychiatric terms these people possess high levels of psychopathic traits as outlined in the Psychopathy Checklist - Revised (Hare, 1990) and Antisocial Personality traits as outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1995) yet clinically I could only suggest that one

participant out of the 55 participants was psychopathic. Such a conclusion suggests that the "New Jack" is more a context centred persona than a psychiatric disorder. The talk and behaviour of "New Jacks" needs more specific exploration.

The third site in which I carefully read and attended to the spoken texts of youth concerned youth gang membership. I set out to examine gang members' thoughts about why they joined a gang and explore what they understood to be the central themes of youth gang membership. Participant talk on gang membership centred around belonging and vulnerability. Over-riding most gang activity seemed to be a desire for affiliation and belonging. They talked about the parties, hanging with "the boys," girls, telling jokes together, laughing, meeting new people, talking, arguing and public recognition or "fame." Such attributes of the gang could be considered "normal" to the world of the adolescent. That is, gang members did not seem particularly different to non-gang members or in any way deviant in their desire for social fun. One consequence of gang life occurring in a domain controlled by teenagers was the emotionally charged and often physically confrontational nature of social interaction. Positively, this includes excitement, happiness, laughter, joking around and a general feeling of freedom to have fun. Negatively, there were the physical consequences of fighting addressed in Chapters Six and Seven. Participants were vulnerable to the emotional consequences of fighting such as getting into trouble with your mates, sacrificing your family, worrying your parents, and bringing trouble upon your family. Furthermore they described such physical vulnerability concerning fights as, "You might die faster," "You can put your life at risk," and "You might get killed or stabbed, shot or cut up." In many gangs the leader was the toughest person, someone who kept members in line with the threat of physical violence.

In much of the talk the gang was perceived to represent a response to such vulnerability. The gang was viewed as a powerful entity, one that functioned to protect people

“versus always getting the smash” (being beaten up). As one participant stated “You know your friends are there for you.” “Backing down” related at least partly to members’ discussion about being under threat of extreme violence if they did. A feeling of vulnerability within youth increased the likelihood of seeking gang based protection.

In ironic contradiction, while gang members subjectively believed gangs were good protective agencies, joining a gang had a number of consequences that functioned to dramatically increase participants’ needs for protection and scope of vulnerability.

However, the increase in violence, threats and feelings of vulnerability were coupled with a feeling of togetherness, helping, supporting and generally backing each other up.

The prospect of one fight alone may well seem more scary than ten fights as a group. Research from the United States suggests that violent gang behaviour, while creating vulnerability, may also be considered as a stressed or traumatised response to vulnerability. Alternatively, sociologists theorise the gang as a form of resistance to the lack of opportunity to achieve middle class aspirations and a response to macro vulnerability such as acculturation.

While what I have presented coincides with sociological theory of key importance is the vantage point from which such conclusions emerged, that is from interviews and importantly direct participation in the field. As Knupfer (1996) has noted, at times being a participant with children and young people runs contrary to cultural norms. For example, I attended a social dance with the gang as a participant-observer while the adults looked on and laughed a little. Playing basketball and going driving were less marked example of this because adults were generally not present. Such events functioned to allow me entry to their world but as I note in Chapter Five my experiences in their world were inevitably coloured by who I was: my age, my ethnicity, my gender, my upbringing and values, and probably my mere presence changed the world I observed in ways I may never know about. In order to best represent the perspective of participants I have printed their discussion around my questions, and including their rap

and tried to visually contextualise the study with photography. I have integrated the talk I recorded when we were driving around in the narrative and elsewhere. As much as I can I represent them yet I inevitably also represent myself.

While I clearly elicited talk about gender I had no idea just how central gender was to gang life for both boys and girls in the gang. The “gangs are for men” and “caring for women” sub-themes functioned as complementary forms of exclusionary talk. While girls could very rarely join the gang, their peripheral presence supported the “maleness” of the gang core, and for the men may have reinforced their ability to control the place of women with a sexual ideology that assigned them to the domestic arena. That is, boys defined the rules about where girls could step in the gang culture. Further, the gangs are for men sub-theme enabled the gangster to construe himself as doing a man’s thing in a man’s space. Gangs were masculating because they provided the economic opportunity for “poor” boys to achieve the goal of providing for women like a regular middle class “rich boy” could. The idea that gang boys’ talk is similar to talk in male dominated clubs and men’s talk in broader society normalises what we may have labelled deviance: that is, sexism is normal. Indeed it may be enlightening to turn the spotlight onto ourselves, the culture we support through participation, and specifically the gender roles we make available to the children of our society.

The idea of re-integrating urban young people with their ethnic group as an alternative to youth gangs seems to be prevalent across some Auckland communities. Sadly, practitioners of this approach compete with the imperial and all encompassing power of another “culture”: the international mass media. Most notably the advertising related to the mass import of American films, television, video games and clothing is appealing to a wide array of New Zealanders not least young people who are struggling to establish an identity. Like their advertised idols, they talk with Americanisms, dress in American sports clothing, eat at fast food restaurants, play basketball, and carry knives and

sometimes guns. It is notable that many older youth refer to the gang film "Colors" (Solo & Harper, 1988) as the beginning of "Crips" and "Bloods" in New Zealand. While American cultural imperialism has been around a great deal longer than 1988, many contemporary youth are finding the American cultural icons to be preferable to their own. Is it that youth feel so alienated from their own culture or that the multinational advertising is so pervasive? This is a question for future research by more appropriate researchers than myself.

While many common threads of experience have emerged there is also a great deal of variation across participants. Most notable is the stark difference between the bulk of participants and the "New Jacks." At the other end of the seriousness scale both theoretical perspectives and empirical data converge in Chapter Seven to exclude 12 to 15 participants from the study as "wannabes" who do not as Klein (1995) suggests have a criminal orientation to life. Such individual differences can not reliably be situated as between-gang, or within gang processes based on this study because I only have knowledge of the full membership of two of the eighteen gangs from which participants were drawn. In order to compare gangs in New Zealand and develop a firm conclusion on the range of behaviour within gangs, future research should broaden the unit of analysis from the individual within the gang (as the present study has done) to the gang itself as the base unit. Based on my limited between gang experience I would hypothesise that there would be more significant between gang as opposed to within gang differences in seriousness of troubling behaviour. The difference between the predominantly "wannabe" C2S gang and the well established, actively criminal JFK gang is a good example of this.

Participants suggested that tagging is the most prevalent starting point for gang members, yet the current sample precludes those taggers who did not become involved in gangs. Future research could follow tagger crews and document what happens to

their members, do they become gang members and if not, why not? A focus on the younger age group may prove more useful than the present study in terms of intervention. Furthermore the difference between tagger crews and graffiti artists remains somewhat unexplored in New Zealand.

Discourse analysts could explore how American cultural stereotypes are used by youth in New Zealand. I was particularly interested in some of the “New Jack talk” which came straight from movies like “Menace II Society” (Scott & Hughes, 1993). As one participant said about his gang, “We are a product of society you know, created by all the fuckin’ evilness in the world.” His friend added, “Like a menace to society.” The link between ways of speaking and ways of acting would be interesting to explore. It may be that many youth are adept at “Talking the talk”, which they are fed by the mass media, but do they “Walk the walk”? That is, are they as ruthless and menacing as they say? While the menacing bravado of street speech sells movies, it may also “disguise the vulnerability of fearful boys” (Fleisher, 1995, p. 118), and as Moore (1988) has suggested, mark a feeling of isolation from middle class aspirations.

Future research could explore the rhetoric surrounding the idea of joining a gang to support one’s culture. In relation to this Fleisher (1995) conceptualises a child’s attempt to join a gang in terms of a struggle to gain recognition and acceptance within the “right” community group. Cultural rhetoric could be a powerful persuader that a gang is the “right” group to join. With further regard to culture the affiliation/belonging theme may relate to participants of different ethnicity in different ways. For example, how does the concept of *whanaungatanga*¹ (Durie, 1987) interact with peer group affiliation/belonging for Maori in youth gangs? Future studies could also examine the differences between adult and youth gangs in New Zealand, the permanence of gang

¹ I understand *whanaungatanga* as involvement, and a feeling of being in touch, with ones wider family and homeland.

membership across adolescence and early adulthood, and compare the themes of female youth gangs in Auckland with the findings presented in this study.

For the opportunity to conduct this research I am very grateful to the participants of this study. While participants could only be guaranteed that I would attempt to tell their story, they willingly provided me with talk and experiences of gang life. I learned much from my experiences with them yet gave little myself apart from assisting in short-term day to day matters (such as dropping them off around town in my car, providing cool drinks down at the basketball courts, and a decent basketball to play with, and taking a canoeing session with the institutionalised sample). I did nothing to effect a change in their circumstances; this was not the aim of the research. For future researchers however, I would like to suggest the possibility of conducting a small scale (community directed) action research project targeting a specific area of need. I believe such an approach would be more ethical and equitable for youth and importantly something tangible and potentially ongoing could be left behind when the researcher is finished.

Methodologically this dissertation is experiential and descriptive psychology combined with an ethnographic approach borrowed from anthropology. Looking back I have found the practical skills of psychology to be very useful within the participant-observation framework. While non-narrative based discussion would have been difficult without semi-structured interviews from which to gather quotes and affirm hypotheses, personal experience as an insider and an outsider, a researcher and a friend, added to both the interview and the contextualisation of it. I hope others will seek to further develop my understandings, provide alternative perspectives and most importantly use the youth talk presented here to promote youth well-being.

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Appendix A:

Whakapakari Follow-up Interview: Base Questions

Interview One: June 1993.

What do you like most about Mangati?

What do you like least?

What do you think of the whaanau idea that Whakapakari uses?

In what ways is the Whakapakari whaanau different from your whaanau at home?

Do you trust anyone here to talk about any problems you may have with life?

If so do you do it and how often?

Do you respect your parents, teachers, police and people like that back on the mainland?

Have you started to respect anyone here?

Do you think being off drugs/glue for the month has been a positive experience?

Will you go back to drugs when you get back?

Will you go back to other crimes when you get back?

How have you dealt with conflict and anger on the mainland?

Has Whakapakari changed the way you deal with conflict and anger?

If you could change anything about Whakapakari what would it be?

What do you think of kapuhaka training sessions?

Are you glad you came to Whakapakari? Why?

Do you feel a better person inside having been at Whakapakari?

What skills that you have learnt do you value most?

Do you think you often upset other people with violence?

Has Whakapakari changed the way you view others?

Have you made any friends here?

Do you trust your fellow applicants?

Describe Whakapakari using five or so key words.

Interview Two: August 1994 - January 1995

(First go back over questions/answers in interview one)

Has Whakapakari worked?

In what way, can you say some more about that?

Tell me about what happened when you came back?

Did you follow up on any cultural contacts after coming back?

Did Whakapakari help you in any way? List...

Have you made any changes in your life because you went on Whakapakari?

What at Whakapakari made the difference for you?

Since you got back how much have you been involved in crime compared to before you went?

1....2....3....4....5....6....7....8....9....10

heaps same heaps

less more

What kind of crime?

Same for for drugs/solvents, violence, family/whaanau

Rate Whakapakari on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = not at all, 5 = somewhat, 10 = completely/absolutely) for:

Helping me: when you think of helping you how has it helped you?

Changing my violent behaviour

Changing my criminal ways

Reducing my use of drugs/solvents when I came back

Making me think about getting into my culture

Making me think about where my life was heading

Being a retreat from all the hassles of the mainland

Being a special time in my life

What was it about Whakapakari that worked over other methods?

Is there anything that sticks in your mind about Whakapakari?

How is going on Whakapakari different from seeing your social worker?

What do you think of Whakapakari as an alternative to Weymouth/other institutions/CT?

What did you think of the supervisors?

How could they be better?

Target Population: What kind of people do you think should be allowed to go to Whakapakari? (talk about cultural background, age, where they are from)

Who would it work for best and why?

Programme Duration: How long should the programme be?

Follow-up: Has there been any follow up with you from anyone as a result of you going on Whakapakari?

Questions regarding proposed youth gang study:

(a) Does the participant know much about Auckland gangs?

(b) Is the participant involved in gangs?

(c) What do they think I would have to do in order that I might become involved in the gang, not as a member, but as a researcher? Would this be possible?

(d) Who would be some good people to talk to about this study and in particular getting in on the gang scene?

(e) Would the participant be able to help me to get in on the gang scene in any way?

For example, by introducing me to some gang leaders.

Appendix B:

1996 Gang Membership Study. Base Questions

The following “base questions” indicate the topics and questions I was interested in discussing before I started each interview. While we talked about a range of different topics and issues in each interview I explored these topics in every interview.

Topic: membership

Can you tell me about your gang?

What are the good things about being in a gang?

What are the bad things about being in a gang?

What kinds of things do you get out of being a gang member?

Can you get these things in other places? (If so, where).

Why did you get into gangs?

How did you get into the gang?

How are they chosen?

Do you have a leader in your gang?

If yes, what kinds of things does he get to do because he is the leader?

Topic: what does being in a gang mean?

What makes [gang name] a gang?

Does being in a gang mean you have to do crime?

Does being in a gang mean you have to do drugs?

Does being in a gang mean you have to fight?

What other stuff do you guys get up to?

What do you have to give up in order to be in a gang?

How much time does involvement with the gang take up?

What would be a typical week?

What would be a typical night out with the gang?

Topic: gender.

How do girls fit into the gang scene?

Would it be possible for a girl to join your gang?

Topic: intervention

Do you think gangs need help?

If you had a million dollars to help gangs what would you do with it?

Appendix C:

Table C1: Range of gang affiliation, age and ethnicity across participants

Gang ^a	Number of Participants	Age Range	Mean Age	Ethnic ^b Variation
Corrupt 2 Society (C2S)	8	14-17	15.5	Samoan, Tongan, Nuiean, Maori
C2S Affiliates	2	15-24		Samoan, Tongan
Roughnecks	3	16-17	16.5	Pakeha, Samoan, Maori
Just Fuckin Crazy (JFK)	4	15-20	17	Fijian, Maori, Pakeha
Forever Onehunga Boys (FOB)	1	17		Samoan
FOB Affiliate	1	17		Maori
King City Boys (KCB)	2	14-16		Maori, Niuean/Pakeha
Hutt Valley Crips (HVC)	2	15		Cook Island/Maori, Tongan
Original Black Knights (OBK)	2	15		Maori
Mongrel Mob Affiliates	2	14-15		Maori
Fucking Up Society (FUS)	2	15-16		Cook Island/Maori
Original Massey Boys (OMB)	1	18		Samoan
Tongan Crip Gang (TCG)	1	15		Cook Islander
Takapuna Street Kids (TSK)	1	15		Pakeha
City Crip Boys (CCB)	1	16		Samoan/Maori
Black Power	1	16		Maori/Pakeha
Ghetto Born Kings (GBK)	1	18		Tokelau
Morningside Krips (MSK)	1	15		Maori
Bloods For Life (BFL)	1	13		Maori
Original Street Crips (OSC)	1	13		Maori
Confidential	1	16		Maori
Non-affiliated	4	11-19	14.4	Tokelau, Pakeha, Nuiean, Maori
TOTALS	43	11-24	15.8 ^c	

Note. Phase two participants were male gang members or affiliates unless otherwise stated.

^a “Affiliates” refer to individuals who did not class themselves as gang members but did hang out with the gang on a daily basis.

^b Ethnic variation refers to the diversity of ethnics within the group or individual. Often individuals recognised dual ethnicity such as Samoan/Maori.

^c The total mean is calculated across all participants.