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**“Hard-Hard-Solid! Life Histories of Samoans in Bloods
Youth Gangs in New Zealand.”**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of**

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Abstract

Although New Zealand is home to the largest Samoan population outside of Samoa, there have been few studies of Samoan youth in gangs in New Zealand. This study sought to establish *why* Samoan youth gangs have formed in New Zealand urban centres, and *why* some young Samoan males are attracted to these gangs. This study used Delinquency Theory to explore the reasons for Samoan youth gang formation, and Socialization Theory to explore both how the cultural and societal socialization of young Samoan males lead them to gangs as well as how socialization within gangs secures their commitment to high risk and potentially dangerous behaviour. Life histories were collected over an eighteen month period from 25 young Samoan males aged over sixteen years who were members of various Bloods gangs. Findings from studies of socialization experiences confirmed that various socio-cultural strains weaken controls and led people into gangs, where they are then 're-socialized' by their new gang peers. These life histories revealed gang members' reasons for both joining and for leaving gangs and the extent to which Samoan cultural values and practices shape gang values and practices.

This study also sought to establish whether these insights might suggest strategies which would make gangs less attractive and save young men from dangerous behaviour which impacted on their life chances in later life. A comprehensive overview of anti-gang strategies suggested that, in the light of these findings, some are likely to be more effective than others. It is recommended that a Pacific criminology should be developed to supplement existing theoretical perspectives on youth gangs and that a multi-faceted approach is required in order to address the Samoan youth gang phenomenon and to account for unique cultural factors of the local social context.

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