

THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF GANGS IN NEW ZEALAND

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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology at the
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Abstract

Although gang behaviour was in evidence in early colonial New Zealand, the advent of modern gangs can be seen to have occurred in the post World War II period. Since this time, gangs have been heralded as a significant and often severe social problem, particularly as they pertain to issues of law and order. Initially, concerns regarding gangs were focused on their anti social activities and the occasional violent episode, but as many of the gangs became more established this focus broadened to include organised criminal activity.

Whether it is images and stories of violent brawls, murders and rapes or, as has been more prominent in recent times, reports of profit driven crime, gang activity receives considerable media attention and thus gangs are afforded a high public profile. Given this profile, it is not surprising that gangs have been an important target for politicians and governments who have introduced various laws in an effort to counter them. Despite the attention paid to them, however, gangs have not been subjected to significant research in this country.

Using a wide range of historical documents, ethnographic research and formal interviews, this thesis seeks to examine the rise of gangs in New Zealand and track their evolutionary development. It also focuses on how the community has responded to the issue of gangs, and how, in turn, the gangs have responded to that attention.

The findings of this thesis will undoubtedly be surprising to many; despite gangs having a high profile, commonly held 'knowledge' of them has most often been learned by sensational media or political rhetoric and is consequently often removed from reality. Informed by many of the understandings gained from the plethora of international research, this thesis attempts to outline and give meaning to a hitherto untold story.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that gangs in New Zealand are an issue that requires considerable study and research, something that became clear to me in the late 1990s. In 1998, while studying for an honours degree, I undertook a small project on recently introduced laws targeting gangs, which, amid much fanfare and promise, had been passed the year before. My initial interest in the laws had been sparked during an undergraduate sociology course that I was taking, entitled *Crime and Deviance*. In one of the lectures for that course, Dr Greg Newbold explained that there was a dearth of research on New Zealand gangs. It seemed unusual to me that significant legislative changes were being passed that were not evidence based. Nevertheless, Dr Newbold, who became the primary supervisor for this study, was right. As an explanatory note to the Harassment and Criminal Associations Bill – the package of laws that had captured my interest initially – made clear, “there is no independent data or research about gang activities”.

After completing the initial project, I decided to set about making a contribution to redressing this issue; and in the tradition of the early Chicago

School sociologists, who inspired me as an undergraduate student, I decided to leave the classroom and enter the 'laboratory of the street'. The result of that undertaking is this thesis.

The major objectives of this thesis, which will thread throughout this work, can be broadly outlined in three interconnected themes. My primary objective is to plot and understand the genesis and evolutionary developments of gangs in New Zealand. In short, I seek to establish how and why gangs emerged when they did, and how and why have they changed over time. The chapters which follow uncover the internal dynamics of gangs that ensure their ongoing function and entity survival (or destruction), as well as the external factors that mould and shape their maturation and activity.

But these external factors, such as police activity, political responses, and media portrayals do not just help shape gangs; they also influence the public perception of these groups. Public perceptions of gangs have allowed, and, in some cases, driven, the enactment of significant legislative measures aimed at combating gangs; and these measures, along with police policy and other gang control methods, are the second distinct focus of the thesis.

Thirdly, an examination of New Zealand gangs would be largely bereft of meaning without an understanding of the context within which they developed. Gangs reflect the unique concatenation of circumstances within which they form, and they react and change according to the community's response to them. Therefore, a further objective of this thesis is to examine the social,

economic and political contexts within which the gangs have developed. The story of New Zealand gangs, then, is also in part a story of New Zealand society.

When first contemplating the shape of the thesis, I decided that it would be a history informed by significant ethnographic research. I came to this conclusion based on both personal and pedagogical reasons. From a personal perspective, I enjoy reading history and thus I believed I would enjoy writing one too. Secondly, a grasp of history is important to understanding contemporary phenomena in sociological ways. Mills (1959: p.146) summed up the importance of history to sociology, saying “all sociology worthy of the name is historical sociology.” The French Annales School historian, Fernand Braudel (1980: p.37) elaborated on this by stressing the important links between contemporary phenomena and their historical roots, explaining that “past and present illuminate each other reciprocally.”

Going one step further, Tosh (2008: p.140) has argued that historical sociology may not just inform the present, but help shape the future – by providing bedrock for a healthy democracy, inasmuch as a more informed citizenry will be better able to understand and engage with issues that surround and affect them. This final point is important as this thesis will challenge many commonly held perceptions of gangs, and seeks to give a clearer understanding of how such groups have been addressed in the past and how they might be better addressed in the future.

Although a sociological understanding of New Zealand gangs may not have the social impact of many of the issues or examples with which Tosh (1995) engages – for example women’s liberation and African nationalism – it nevertheless has important political implications, by way of policy development and implementation. Indeed, as Huff (1990: p.313) says about attempting to combat gangs without adequate research: “[T]here is nothing more inefficient or wasteful (of financial and human resources) than policies based on political perspectives and intuitive judgments. The realities of life suggest that complex socioeconomic phenomena such as gangs (or, for that matter, crime in general) usually defy simple intuitive explanations, and yet such explanations constitute the model response”.

A further reason for undertaking a history was rather practical, as I believed that many of the people who formed New Zealand’s most significant gangs in the 1960s and 1970s would still be alive, and thus their stories and insight might be recorded. The final reason was that the dearth of research on gangs meant that there were few foundations from which to launch a narrowly focused study, and I believed that a broad history would provide a springboard for future work. Indeed, the scope of this undertaking is unusual. As Covey (2003: p.14) states, “[m]ost American research has focused on individual gangs or ethnic groups and not gang prevalence or trends on a national scale”. In many ways, New Zealand’s small population and its lack of federal states – meaning that policy and laws tend to be applied nationally rather than regionally – enables a study of this type.

Although I believe that the breadth of this study is one of its strengths, in order to be able to canvass what I have considered to be the events and issues important to the history of gangs I have had to make often difficult choices about elements to exclude. I acknowledge that, in line with my intent of providing a broad basis for future research, at times, the depth of discussion has been limited so that the overall breadth of the thesis is maintained, a balancing act not unfamiliar to research of this kind (Gottlieb, 2006: p.51). Clearly there are specific issues that require more study, and, in response to this, I have proffered some thoughts for further research in the conclusion.

Gang Definitions

Although patched gangs have largely dominated the New Zealand gang scene, other types of gangs – most notably skinheads and white power groups, Asian gangs and LA-style street gangs – are also evident. The focus of this thesis, however, is primarily patched gangs, largely because of their dominance of the gang scene, but also due to practical restrictions concerning thesis length. Nevertheless, the non-patched gangs are highlighted within this thesis, but only in so much as to acknowledge their existence or when they somehow overlap with, or offer insight into, the patched gangs.

As will be discussed in Chapter Two, the issue of defining precisely what a gang is has proven particularly difficult. I outline my contribution to this issue shortly, but for now it is important to acknowledge that because of what amounts to little more than a quirk of history, street gangs in New Zealand have adopted the wearing of back patches, generally associated with outlaw

motorcycle clubs. Consequently, these groups have been traditionally grouped together under the heading of 'gangs', and as such, a history of these groups is necessarily interwoven. Although both forms of gang recognise each other as different, as will become clear, they see each other as sufficiently similar to be considered an internecine threat. Certainly there are important differences that separate these two forms of gang – and indeed there are often significant differences within these categories as well – but there are nevertheless broad similarities. Therefore, unless I refer to them individually, as either outlaw motorcycle clubs or patched street gangs – or, indeed, other forms of gang – when I use the term 'gang' I do so meaning both (or all) types of groups.

Notwithstanding the need to group all gangs together in parts of this thesis, particularly when discussing public perceptions or media commentaries, I believe that for reasons of both academic accuracy and in creating and implementing public policy, more specific definitions are of the utmost importance.

As a result of my research, in particular a combination of the findings of the literature review and, most importantly, my ethnographic research, I have arrived at what I believe are useful definitions, the desirability of which will be highlighted throughout the thesis. The definitions are as follows:

An Incipient Gang can be defined as:

A group of youths, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, with a loose structure, few formal rules, a common identifier (colours, a name, hand signals etc), whose activities are not primarily criminal but involve (mostly) petty crimes, and who see themselves as a gang and are identified as such by others in the community.

A Gang can be defined as:

A structured group (of five or more people) that maintains an exclusive membership marked by common identifiers and formal rules that supersede the rules of the state.

A Criminal Gang can be defined as:

A structured group (of five or more people) that maintains an exclusive membership marked by common identifiers, formal rules that supersede the rules of the state, and an organisational focus on profit through crime.

Explanations of the terms used in these definitions are as follows:

- *Exclusive membership* means that there is significant rigour in gaining membership – usually over a long time period. A person cannot just join the gang in the same way one can join a sporting or social club.

- *Common identifiers* are symbols that represent the gang and can only be worn/used by members. These may include, symbols such as back patches or 'colours', handshakes, hand signals/salutes, and tattoos. There may also be less formal identifiers such verbal calls or slang names.
- *Formal rules* may be written or unwritten but are known by all members. These rules are immutable and must be adhered to under any conditions. If the laws of the state clash with the rules of the gang, gang rules take precedence.
- *Organisational focus on committing crime* means that the gang aims to create profit for the club or its members through criminal enterprise. The criminal endeavours must be undertaken by the club, and not by single members, or small groups of members, acting independently. Also, this component does not include crimes that are undertaken where the activity is not primarily done to make money. For example, engagement in a gang confrontation would not qualify, nor would selling liquor illegally at a club house necessarily fulfil this criterion. If the primary function of selling liquor is to distribute it to members and associates for social interaction, then the profit motive is merely a latent positive outcome from distributing alcohol. However, if the alcohol was being sold in large volumes to people not close to the gang and for the sole purpose of making a profit, then by this definition the gang could be defined as criminal. Likewise if a gang was growing

marijuana for its members (and perhaps selling a small amount to those around them) then it would not be framed as criminal. However, if the primary function was to make profit from the sale of drugs, then they would.

Methodology: Building a History

Due to the breadth and nature of this research, as will become clear, it was necessary to gain data from a variety of primary and secondary sources using many different means. This was done to achieve what is called 'triangulation', a multifaceted approach to research that seeks to test and verify different stands of the data collected (Flick, 2007: pp.37-52). Furthermore, the relative dearth of research done on New Zealand gangs has meant that I have had to construct this study largely from scratch. I was, however, aided greatly by way of ideas and theory from international literature, and these sources, as well as the limited New Zealand research that exists, are detailed in two chapters to follow. This rest of the current chapter will outline where and how I gained information to construct this history as well as certain challenges I faced in doing so.

Research Methods

Documents and the Media

I gained a great deal of historical information for this study from documents and the media. These included, but were not exclusive to: newspaper articles, transcripts of parliamentary debates, government and police reports and

research, judicial rulings, and various documents stemming from gangs themselves.

My first significant source of media information was the archives of the *New Zealand Herald*, where I spent many days going through the *Herald's* archives and taking copies of every article, opinion piece and editorial that related to gangs since 1950. There were thousands of items, which I filed chronologically and then took notes from in order to identify recurrent themes. One of the most useful outcomes of this process was that it provided me with a basic timeline to identify the major gang events that had entered the media.

I subsequently replicated the data collection process that I had used at the *Herald*, at the offices of *The Christchurch Press*, as well as in Wellington at *The Dominion* and *The Evening Post*, whose archives were stored together after the two newspapers merged in 2002. As my research progressed, I also sourced items from other newspapers to gain information related to specific local events, or, for example when a newspaper undertook a campaign against gangs, such as *The Truth* did in the late 1970s.

The media reports that I gathered early in my research were also an important initial source of information about the response to gang related issues by the police and politicians. To further my knowledge of police and political attitudes, motivations and understandings of gangs, I obtained numerous police and political reports, which included those publicly available and some

confidential information that was provided to me by contacts that I made through the research process.

Historical police reports, which had been confidential at the time they were written, often offered detailed intelligence on certain gangs and as well as providing insight into police attitudes towards these groups. They also documented gang development over time. Examples of written gang material, such as minutes of gang meetings, which had been obtained by the police, were similarly given to me by police sources.

By systematically going through the indexes of *The New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, the official record of all parliamentary debates, to 1950, I filled a journal with dates of every occasion that the word 'gang' was mentioned in parliament. This proved to be a valuable reference from which to gauge political thinking on a range of gang events and political debates and reactions. Further political commentary came from select committee reports as well as various ministers' reports presented in the *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*.

Through the contacts that I established during my ethnographic research, detailed below, I also obtained copies of a number of documents written or compiled by gang sources.

Ethnographic Fieldwork

It is widely accepted that to gain a true understanding of gang culture, it is important to engage with those involved (for example A. Campbell, 1984; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Hagedorn, 1988, 1990; Jankowski, 1991; Klein, 1995; Spergel, 1995; Venkatesh, 2008; Whyte, 1943/1981; Yablonsky, 1967). Indeed, the greatest source of data for this study came from ethnographic research. At the beginning of this research, I could not have conceived that by its end I would become a welcome guest in many gang clubhouses around the country, and hold the confidence of numerous gang members. Like other such gang studies, gaining this degree of access took considerable time and a certain amount of risk (Jankowski, 1991; Venkatesh, 2008; Whyte, 1943/1981; Yablonsky, 1967), and, despite gaining some understandings from previously published works, I underwent a steep learning curve once in the field. Certainly the culture shock I was to be presented with did not match that experienced by Chagnon (1997) during his famous study of the Yanomamo Indians, but as Fielding (1995: p.157) forewarned, ethnographers working with any unfamiliar groups must quickly “learn the language in use . . . this not only means the jargon and dialect, but special meanings and unfamiliar usages of familiar words”. Moreover, I had to become familiar with appropriate ways to conduct myself and soon learned, largely through error, what questions were viewed as unacceptable – particularly early in the study. The process of gaining access, therefore, was twofold and can be described as ‘getting in’ by achieving physical access and ‘getting on’ by achieving and maintaining social access (Hornsby-Smith, 1993: p.53).

Throughout the course of my research, I established contact with 13 different gangs across the country, although my level of contact with each of these gangs varied greatly. I maintained significant and ongoing contact with several chapters of Black Power and the Mongrel Mob, encompassing large cities and small rural areas, as well as the Hell's Angels, and the Devil's Henchmen. These associations included staying at various club houses and members' homes for extended periods, attending parties and events put on by the gangs, and generally, as Fenno (1978) famously espoused, 'hanging around'.

I had shorter term research associations with the Epitaph Riders, the Christchurch chapter of the Road Knights, the Head Hunters' 'East' chapter, the Mothers, the Tyrants, and the Right Wing Resistance. I also had contacts with members of the Lone Legion, the Magogs, Highway 61, the Nomads, and members of various LA-Style Street Gangs. Many of the lesser associations were not because of lack of opportunity, but lack of time and finance to pursue ongoing contact. At times, I chose depth of study over breadth, but maintained a sufficient level of contact across the range of gangs to ensure that I was able to call upon participants for specific information when required.

Gaining access to gangs and their membership is not easy, not least because, as Yablonsky (1967: p.159) pointed out, the "generally suspicious cop-fearing gang member is not easily approached". As Payne (1997: p.12) discovered, trying to gain access by simply approaching a gang "cold" was futile because of the degree of suspicion that gang members have of outsiders.

I therefore set about meeting individual gang members, rather than gangs. I had no set method for establishing these initial contacts, and I gained access in numerous different ways and although it began slowly it soon 'snowballed', whereby initial contacts provided further participants (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996: p.57; Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003: p.34). My first contacts came through former gang members who had gained a profile in the media. I approached these people and, in turn, many of them introduced me to a current member, who then introduced me to their gang. These initial contacts were slow to form, but the longer I spent in the field the more numerous they became as gang members grew comfortable about introducing me to a wider group of people.

I met certain gangs because of their links with groups with whom I had already been associating. On one occasion, for example, I was attending the funeral of a Mongrel Mob member, which was also attended by five members of the Hell's Angels. I got talking to one of the Hell's Angels and from that initial contact I formed a long and deep association with that outlaw club; attending their functions, staying at clubhouses for days at a time, and socialising with certain members and their families – a closeness, as previously noted, I managed with many other groups and members.

As with the Hell's Angels, other initial contacts were equally due to happenstance. On one occasion, a friend of mine started a conversation with a woman on an aeroplane. She turned out to be the daughter of a Magog

gang member. After going to see her, I met him and was subsequently introduced to the gang. Perhaps the most unusual contact came when a Road Knight gang president confronted an associate of another gang that I was in contact with. Remarkably, although the exchange was heated, the gang associate came away with the president's phone number and permission for me to call him.

Mindful of ethical considerations, which I will address later in this chapter, I was always honest about my research intentions. I did, however, engage in certain forms of what is sometimes called 'deception' (Feldman et al., 2003: pp.41-43), but is perhaps more accurately described, in my case at least, as combining covert with overt ethnography (Fielding, 1995: p.159). Once I had gained access, although I did not conceal my role, I did try to minimise the true reason for my presence and just engage in behaviours of the group. This was to ensure I became accepted, and not so obviously appear as an outsider. This involved dressing in such a way as to blend in with the gang culture; as one undercover police officer told me, one wants to be seen as 'grey', or at the very least, not stand out in any way. Apart from dress, I grew unkempt beard when I made significant initial contacts with the large street gangs and shaved my head when I began associating with white outlaw motorcycle clubs. In this way I sought to "adopt a role or identity that meshes with the values and behavior of the groups being studied" (Cassell, 1988: p.97). Consciously and later unconsciously, my language, both in vernacular terms and in my increased use of profanity changed, too, something that became apparent to those close to me when I came back from extended field

trips. I also tended to avoid expressing firm points of view, even in general conversation, in order to avoid any form of disagreement, mindful that even “innocuous circumstances” can lead to violence (Lee, 1995: p.51). These purposeful behaviour modifications became less necessary as time went on and I became accepted by the groups with which I associated frequently. One thing I could not modify was my skin colour, and often with the large patched street gang I was the only Pakeha person in a room or at a clubhouse. And while my ethnicity was occasionally the brunt of jokes among the Polynesian gangs, it never caused any particular issues.

With gangs in my home city of Christchurch, contact was easy to maintain but presented its own problems. My initial contact was with the Devil’s Henchmen, but I soon gained access to two other outlaw clubs; the Epitaph Riders and the Road Knights. Although each group knew about my involvement with the others, and they were not at that time at war, none of these three groups were on ‘good terms’ and moving between them was sometimes awkward. When I was asked by one group about another, I replied firmly that I would not talk about it, in the same way that I would not discuss their club with the others. I was surprised at how easily accepted this was, and few members ever pushed the subject. Nevertheless, it inhibited the degree to which certain groups would talk about their activities. These difficulties in dividing my time between opposition groups in the same city did not, however, last long. Taking exception to a media article I had written for a local newspaper¹, the Epitaph Riders decided I was no longer welcome at their clubhouse and one

¹ The article was about white outlaw clubs and Pakeha tribes; it was commissioned by *The Press* following National leader Don Brash’s controversial race relations speech to the Orewa Rotary Club in early 2004.

of the other groups, the Road Knights chapter in Christchurch, disintegrated and lost their charter.

By circumstance rather than by design, my contacts with both the Mongrel Mob and Black Power were North Island-based, meaning that I did not further complicate my sample in Christchurch (although toward the end of my research I did gain contact with members of both gangs). I did, however, have early and ongoing contact with chapters of the Mongrel Mob and Black Power in the Napier/Hastings region, and on one occasion my moving between these groups, during one of my fieldtrips, was perceived as an affront to one of my primary contacts within the Mongrel Mob, who became enraged and threatened me with violence.

Threats made against me during my fieldwork have been many, particularly when gang members had been drinking, and were mostly came from members of the large patched street gangs. Handling these situations was a constant test; a balancing act between being fearful for my safety and not wanting to show weakness and risk losing the respect of my contacts. Despite these numerous threats, and several unsettling stand-offs – during one conflict a gang member held a knife to my throat – I never came to serious harm during the eight years of this research. In fact, there were only three occasions where I was engaged in violence. On one occasion, six outlaw club members and I were drinking in a bar when a group of Russian sailors began to sit on the gang members' motorcycles that were parked outside. Alerted to this, we went outside and a fight ensued in which I became involved. My

participation did not go unnoticed and helped to solidify my acceptance by the gang. On the second occasion, I was beaten by a gang member after I could find no way out of an escalating argument between us. Despite being soundly defeated in the fight, other members were impressed that I had at least attempted to stand my ground – as, too, was the member involved, with whom I maintained a close association until he left the gang. On the third occasion, just as I was concluding this thesis, I was punched in the mouth by a gang member who took exception to me questioning him at a large gang function. Although under no immediate threat following that, I waited what I deemed an appropriate time to demonstrate that I was not particularly bothered by what had occurred – although I was unsettled – and left. At the time of writing I have not since seen the gang member who hit me. Although I had not met him before the incident, I do not anticipate any ongoing concerns if we meet again as it will almost certainly be seen by him as it was by me: just one of those things that happen regularly at a Mongrel Mob party. If it had have occurred earlier in my research, I would have actively sought to ensure this was the case either by tracking him down or getting a message to him through the gang's leadership – just to make certain it did not disrupt my access to the gang.

As was the case in Jankowski's study (1991), in two of these cases, by fighting, I had managed to gain certain respect from the gangs involved, and it is this respect, and equally importantly, trust, that helped to build the necessary rapport between me and my contacts. As outlined by Spradley (1979: p.78), "Rapport refers to a harmonious relationship between

ethnographer and informant. It means that a basic sense of trust has developed that allows for the free flow of information". One way this rapport was achieved was through ignoring or displaying ambivalence to illegal behaviour. At numerous times during my research I witnessed or became privy to criminal acts, something I will outline in a discussion below on ethics.

Although crime and violence were present throughout much of my research, these actions and activities were punctuated by long periods where very little happened. In fact, for much of my fieldwork the issue was not overcoming fear, but overcoming boredom brought about by the mundane. The day-to-day activities of gang members, like the lives of most people, are repetitive and unremarkable. But it was during these periods of inactivity that I cemented bonds with many gang members as we worked on motorcycles, undertook maintenance at the club house or watched sport on television – breaking down the barriers between researcher and participant.

In fact, within those groups that I spent considerable time, once a certain degree of trust had been formed and my presence became normalised; members seemed either to forget or become ambivalent to my role as a researcher. In this way, I was able to get as close as possible to the gang member reality or, as Hagedorn (2001: p.51) described it, get "behind the facade of gang members denials of, or 'hype' about, drug selling and violence".

As is often the case with ethnographic work (Fielding, 1995: p.160), I found myself doing numerous favours for gang members. Most often these involved menial tasks, including participating in 'work days' to clean up clubhouses before gang events, helping out members out with problems they had with government agencies, retrieving historic media clippings for certain gangs, and acting as a 'bush lawyer'. Most often I performed these favours to both prove myself useful – just as fellow gang members do for one another – and also as a way to maintain contacts with members.

One issue that I had was recording data that I gathered during times in the field. Initially, I carried a small notebook and pen in my back pocket and when I discovered something of interest I would find a concealed place – usually the toilet – and scribble down notes. Carrying the notebook, however, was a constant concern to me as the risk of being seen taking notes was ever present; and to most gang members the only people who write in notebooks are the police and media – neither are viewed kindly. Although the gang members that I primarily associated with knew that I was undertaking research (in large chapters there were members and associates that were uninformed), as previously stated, I always attempted to minimise the perception of me as a researcher, and taking notes would compromise that. After I discarded my notebook, I began to use my cell phone to type notes to myself for later retrieval. By limiting the overt signs that I was a researcher, I became privy to conversations that, in the beginning, would not have been said around me. I became an accepted part of their communities.

The notes that I made in the field were then used to write up my field notes, which I did when I got the chance during long excursions in the field or when I got home after short trips or one-off events. Given that, when I was away from Christchurch, I stayed either at gang clubhouses or at members' homes, writing up field notes was often difficult because there was always the chance people would ask what I was writing. In order to minimise the risk of my notes being read, I always wrote them up when I was away from the gang or at times when I knew that I would not be disturbed.

Formal Interviews

In order to supplement my understandings about gangs from observational ethnography, I also conducted a number of formal interviews during the course of the research, most of which came out of my ethnographic work. In total, I undertook 54 interviews: 32 with gang members and the rest were made up of police officers, including two who had infiltrated gangs through undercover operations, politicians, lawyers, and a jury member from an important gang trial. Forty of these interviews were done face-to-face, while the remainder were done over the phone or via email.

The gang members that I formally interviewed were chosen because of their overall importance to the gang scene or because they were involved in particular events crucial to the study. I ensured that I had established a sufficient level of trust and rapport between myself and the gang member prior to formally interviewing them. Although I maintain that this was the best approach as it allowed gang members to share information with me more

freely, I discovered that it also carried certain risks. Indeed, I lost a number of contacts, for various reasons, before I was able to interview them. Gaining trust and rapport, however, did not guarantee an interview and particular gang members that I wanted to interview declined to participate in the formal interview process, despite engaging with me in the field.

I chose to use a semi-structured approach in the interviews with gang members to enable flexibility and also to ensure that the data collected possessed greater richness (Hornsby-Smith, 1993). Moreover, I wanted to explore new pathways of investigation not considered as part of the original interview (Gray, 2004: p.217). Standard preliminary questions included how the member became involved in the scene and how long they had been in the gang, questions that were as much about easing 'apprehension' (Spradley, 1979: p.79) as eliciting specific information. I then asked set questions that I had previously prepared which were specific to the interviewee or a particular event, and then allowed time to ask follow up questions and probe my informants generally about gang life. It was during the latter sections of the interviews that I often gained unexpected and insightful information.

Like the gang subjects, the non-gang interviewees were chosen because of their specific knowledge or because of their involvement in significant gang incidents. I identified the majority of these interviewees through secondary sources – such as media reports – and then sought their involvement. However, two of these sources – the jury member of a gang trial and a former undercover police officer – approached me when they became aware of my

research and thought that they could offer useful information. All of the individuals that I asked to interview accepted. As Jankowski (1991: p.16) found, many professional interviewees desired confidentiality so that they could speak openly. I respected their need for confidentiality in the same way that I did for gang participants.

All of the interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. Although some of the interview subjects became withdrawn and reticent when the tape recorder was on, others seemed to enjoy the interview process. Two of the interviews with gang members extended past two hours in duration. Most participants appeared to forget about the recorder after a short period.

Recording the interviews best enabled the information transfer to develop as naturally as possible because as Fielding (1995: p.146) has noted, pausing the conversation to record data by writing notes impedes the flow of the conversation. Transcribing was always undertaken at the soonest possible time following the interview to ensure nuances in speech or non verbal gestures could be recalled, and thereby ensuring greater accuracy and/or meaning was afforded to the recorded words. Swiftly transcribing the tapes also meant I could follow up quickly on any answers that needed further elaboration.

Because all of the participants were interviewed for specific information, it was unnecessary to code the data that I gained. In instances where I identified gaps in the data that required follow up with the subjects, either to clarify an

issue or provide additional information, I was able to contact the participants and ask further questions. This was one of the reasons why I tried to maintain contact with the interviewees, as well as other gang members, as I wanted to ensure that I could go back to them at a later date if necessary.

Issues of Ethics

The degree to which I became embedded within particular gangs was certainly the most vital element of this research, and one of its key strengths. But it was not without certain ethical dilemmas due to the often sensitive nature of the research. Renzetti and Lee (1993) define “sensitive research” as studies where there is a potential for negative consequences or implication, either to the participants directly, and/or for the class of individuals represented by the research. On many occasions throughout my field work the problems I faced were not in eliciting data, but rather in dealing with information that was sensitive and potentially compromising to both myself and my participants.

Before my fieldwork commenced, it was predictable that I would become aware of certain criminal activities or discussions. As someone who has been arrested during his fieldwork, Ferrell (1998: p.20) has argued that, “Researchers who pursue a strategy of deep engagement with criminal worlds...must be prepared to face numerous personal and professional risks, to confront and acknowledge the human consequences of their research, and to make difficult decisions about personal and professional responsibility”. From the outset, then, I had decided that the protection of my sources was

paramount and that any breach of trust would not only endanger me, my participants and my research, but also any future research in the area. Moreover, it is my firm belief that the benefits garnered via my research findings were more important than aiding criminal investigations.

However, I was aware that this position might cause me certain legal problems (Fitzgerald & Hamilton, 1997). Despite this, it is a position I have fastidiously upheld. I have never been called on by police for information, nor was I ever in a position where I had prior warning of violence against another person outside of the gang setting – something that *may* have entailed breaching confidentiality or meant intervention was necessary (Davis, 2008: p.108). Nevertheless, on occasions my ethical boundaries as both a researcher and personal moral code were stretched beyond what I had imagined before the research began, something upon which I will elaborate shortly.

I had furthermore decided before embarking on my field research that I would not intervene in gang affairs, actions or activities as I did not want my beliefs and opinions to influence how gang members behaved while around me (see Feldman et al., 2003: p.101). This stance too presented certain ethical dilemmas and moral challenges.

Some activities I became inured to, such as the consumption and dealing of drugs, brawls, property crime and racial prejudice. However, other behaviours continued to cause me discomfort, such as efforts to pervert the course of

justice, assaults on women, and in one instance, a gang member's partner consuming large amounts of liquor and drugs while pregnant.

As is often the case (Dane, 1990), certain issues arose that I had not foreseen. One issue that troubled me particularly in the field related to being privy to specific information about crimes. While, as noted, I maintained the strictest confidence throughout my research and have not divulged any of this type of information, my concern came from the possibility that such information may become known to the police, and gang suspicion would turn on me. There was little that I could do to nullify this threat; if I had stepped aside during certain discussions or activities, it would have irreparably damaged my 'insider' status, and made the gang members more conscious of why I was there. As I was not able to address the issues, it was something that I had then to accept as an inevitable research related risk.

In order to preserve the confidentiality of my sources and to ensure that I was not putting myself, gang members, or other sources at any unnecessary risk, I was careful with the information that I recorded in my field notes and my notes from the formal interviews. Where I was required to record sensitive information, I did not include individual or gang names. There was an ongoing challenge of making my notes sufficiently anonymous so that the particular gang or gang members were not identifiable, while still ensuring that the details were sufficiently meaningful. Certain sections of my field notes and interview transcripts, which contained highly confidential information, I physically removed and stored separately to the rest of my data. This was to

ensure that these excerpts could not be linked back to my general comments concerning members or gangs.

Furthermore, in writing up my research I have been conscious of the need to preserve the confidentiality of my sources. At times, I have attempted to make comments non-specific or non-identifying to protect my contacts. Given the violent and anti-social nature of some of my research participants, this is not just about protecting my sources but also my own physical well-being.

Structure of the Thesis

The main purpose of this thesis is to construct a historical narrative of New Zealand gangs, framed by the primary themes noted above. Its structure, therefore, is chronological. My research traces the development of gangs from the end of the Second World War across the following six decades; with particular focus on five crucial moments that I have called “pivot points”. Each of these marks an event or activity that resulted in a basic reconfiguration of the local gang scene, either through significant gang developments, major law changes, or fundamental shifts in public opinion.

Chapters One and Two review the literature related to gangs, and these form the basis for understanding many of the developments in the New Zealand gang scene that are discussed throughout the rest of the thesis. The first deals with the work of pioneer researchers in the early 1900s and the rise of the Chicago School of Sociology, together with the encompassing theoretical endeavours of the mid-century sociologists such as Cohen and Miller. It also

examines the key concept of 'moral panic', before concluding with an interpretation of the lull in gang research that occurred around the 1970s. The second chapter examines the explosion of gang research that began during the 1990s and highlights the changing nature of gangs and gang activities, primarily in the United States. It also deals with important research considerations that marked this era, including gangs and gender, gang definitions, and the important moves into international gang research.

Chapter Three highlights the rise of a teenage youth movement in the 1950s that can be seen as the foundation of modern gangs in New Zealand. This youth movement can be divided into two sub-categories of 'bodgies' and 'milk bar cowboys'. Within these broad trends, cliques of youth began to form gangs due to the unique social and economic conditions evident at this time. But despite these developments, I argue that these gangs were developmentally immature and failed to achieve longevity as they were unable to survive membership turnover.

Chapters Four and Five examine in the rise of the outlaw motorcycle clubs and the patched street gangs respectively. Chapter Four looks at the first pivot point with the emergence of the Hell's Angels in Auckland in the 1960s and impact this development had on the gang scene. It will be shown that this single event changed such all such gangs by introducing elements that made them more visible and more organised, and, in turn, aided them in becoming ongoing entities. This chapter also looks at New Zealand's changing social environment and how this bolstered the attitude and activities of 'outlaw

motorcycle clubs'. Chapter Five investigates the rise of patched street gangs and traces the beginnings of the Mongrel Mob and Black Power. Most importantly, it explores the social, economic and political contexts that aided gang formation among the ethnic minorities which largely made up these new gangs.

Chapter Six highlights the importance of conflict within the gang scene during the 1970s and the consequences of this conflict for gang development. Specifically it looks at three major events: the slaying of Highway 61 member Bradley Haora by the Hell's Angels and the effect of their incarceration at Paremoremo; the first gang war between the Devil's Henchmen and the Epitaph Riders; and the Moerewa riot, the second pivot point in New Zealand gang history, in which the Stormtroopers fought a pitched battle with police, creating tremendous public unrest and unprecedented political intervention.

Chapter Seven focuses on the New Zealand's most significant attempt at social policies targeting gangs that occurred during the 1980s. It plots the reasons why this programme was introduced, and then examines four issues or events that led to its downfall: changing political priorities in the post-1984 era; the 'success' achieved by Black Power; a police investigation into the government's funding of gangs; and the pack rape that occurred at a Mongrel Mob convention in 1987. The latter constitutes the third pivot point, dramatically heralding the collapse of the social policy agenda and transforming gangs into an issue solely of law and order.

Chapter Eight explores the evolutionary developments that had occurred within the gang scene by the late 1990s. It shows, that the gangs had become quasi-community institutions, that membership had become a long term commitment, and that due to these factors gangs formed what I describe and 'gang/community balance.

Chapter Nine examines gang moves in to profit driven criminal enterprises, via the drug trade and through a form of extortion called 'taxing'. It looks at the quasi-authority gangs formed within the criminal underworld and why this did not translate to outsiders or 'citizens'.

Chapter Ten casts new light on the politicisation of the gang issue and reveals the response to gangs since the demise of the social agenda of the 1980s. Specifically it examines the systematic political campaign launched against gangs that began in 1996. This 'pivot point' redefined the gang issue as one of grave and pressing concern, requiring the introduction of numerous legislative measures. The chapter focuses on these new laws and examines the effect that they had.

Chapter Eleven and Twelve examine the contemporary gang scene, the seemingly moribund state of patched gangs, and the rise of the LA-style street gangs – the final pivot point – as well as the specific gang activities that offer insight into the changing nature of gangs and the failure of authorities to come to grips with them. Finally it seeks to predict where the gang scene may move to in the future, and evaluates the measures being used to target them.

Chapter One.

A History of Gang Research: Part I (1898-1970)

Introduction

The systematic study of gangs stretches back over a hundred years. Of the early gang researchers, Fredrick Thrasher is seminal, and his ethnographic study maintains much of its relevance to this day. Notwithstanding this, his contribution was just one of many offered by Chicago School exponents in the early to mid-1900s. The work of these early researchers formed a knowledge base on which a number of academics undertook the ambitious task of constructing single theories to explain gang formation and action. In turn, these theories influenced, at least in part, policy makers to turn their attention to gangs. Indeed, public policy in the 1960s opened the way for a surge of empirical research, described by one researcher as “an explosion of gang knowledge” (Klein, 1995: p.52). Then, for a period after the 1970s, deflated by the failure of the gang theories of the 1950s to answer questions arising from new gang data, and changes in academic and public policy focus, interest in gangs waned. By this time, however, a significant body of knowledge had been formed.

The purpose of this chapter is to look at how this knowledge has developed by highlighting many of the important empirical and theoretical research contributions, beginning with the early pioneering studies and concluding with what is recognised as a lull in research in the 1970s. Throughout what follows, it will become clear that the history of gang research is “almost entirely American-centric” (Hagedorn, 2007b: p.14), a point that has been widely acknowledged (Klein, Kerner, Maxson, & Weitekamp, 2001). To a lesser degree, as will become clear in the following chapter, this remains the case today. Nevertheless, it is a theory from England, formulated in response to the perception of gang activity in that country, that has proven as important, and arguably more enduring, as anything formulated in the U.S. But it is to America that I first turn.

The Pioneers

Henry D. Sheldon, a professor of education and history at the University of Oregon, published one of the earliest examinations of gangs in 1898. Sheldon got nearly 3000 children to identify groups they had organised without adult assistance (Sheldon, 1898: p.426). Sheldon identified seven group classifications, one of which, ‘predatory organizations’, can be seen as made up of gangs and indeed many of the young respondents referred to their groups as such. The other categories were, ‘secret clubs’, ‘social organizations’, ‘industrial associations’, ‘philanthropic associations’, ‘literary, artistic and musical organizations’, and ‘athletic clubs’ (Sheldon, 1898: p.427). Although for boys, athletic clubs were the most common form of association, predatory organisations were second and Sheldon considered that they were

“liable to perversions” (Sheldon, 1898: p.428) and thus he dedicated some time to explaining them.

Sheldon found many gangs based themselves on their interpretations of bands of robbers, Indians and pirates (Sheldon, 1898: p.436). These young gangs lacked any notable structure, and the leader of such groups tended to be the strongest and most daring boy who could ‘lick’ his peers in a fight or throw a stone the furthest (Sheldon, 1898: p.438). Although Sheldon felt that these predatory associations were rather harmless, he recognised that if they persisted their members would begin to act out their fantasies and become “dangerous” (Sheldon, 1898: p.439). Sheldon cited a number of incidents reported in newspapers around the U.S. and concluded that, “Outrages by the gangs are numerous” (Sheldon, 1898: p.441). Sheldon believed that the cause of the problem was the “artificial conditions of the modern city” that did not allow for the “natural modes of expression” of youth and that, “Deprived of the natural outlet, boys and youths revert to the ideals and institutions of savagery” (Sheldon, 1898: p.442). Sheldon felt that if predatory youths could meaningfully express themselves through sporting institutions such as baseball, football and cycling clubs, then a move toward greater deviance could be averted. He warned, however, that such activities were not available to youths in many inner city areas (Sheldon, 1898: p.442).

In the early 1900s J. Adams Puffer, encouraged by ideas of Herbert Spencer’s Social Darwinism, undertook another pioneering study to produce a “scientific account of certain aspects of boy psychology” (Puffer, 1912: p.4-5).

Puffer believed that between the ages of ten and 18 boys establish themselves in gangs in “response to a deep seated but unconscious need” (Puffer, 1912: p.7). Moreover, because he found that all gangs were fundamentally alike, he believed “we should unhesitatingly ascribe their behavior to instinct. Without doubt, there is a gang-forming instinct set deep in the soul of boyhood” (Puffer, 1912: p.25). Puffer’s belief that gangs were based on instinct and innate human drives was evident in his explanation of certain gang activities like throwing stones, which he saw “as the direct result of his inheritance from some thousands of generations of savage ancestors who, willy nilly, have been doing these things all their lives” (Puffer, 1912: p.76).

As the 1900s progressed, Puffer’s idea that gang formation is based on a natural instinct dropped out of vogue as biological explanations of human behaviour made way for those derived from social causation, but he did make a number of interesting observations that would be shored up by later research. He found that gangs tended to adopt a territory (Puffer, 1912: p.33) and that gangs were more persistent in the lower classes than those from “well-to-do” homes (Puffer, 1912: p.28).

Unparalleled in early gang research is the work of Frederic Thrasher, and his large and encompassing ethnography of gangs in Chicago, published in 1927, is universally heralded as the true beginning of gang research. Given this, it is useful to put the research into context. In the early 1900s, the city of Chicago was undergoing tremendous growth, and significant social problems were rife.

Influenced by the groundbreaking ideas of Robert Park, academics within the new discipline of sociology at the University of Chicago set about using the city as a vast laboratory for investigating urban life by getting out of the classroom and on to the street. Derived from the ideas of sociobiology, it was the beginning of what became known as the study of urban ecology, or the Chicago School approach – and, as we will see, much early gang research is linked to this tradition.

Thrasher noted that “better type” areas of the city were “practically gangless” (Thrasher, 1927: p.20) and that gangs formed in poor and socially disorganised areas of the city – what he called ‘gangland’ (Thrasher, 1927: p.5-25). Due to rapid urbanisation, immigration and high population turnover, gangland ghettos formed, within which:

The feudal warfare of youthful gangs is carried on more or less continuously. Their disorder and violence, escaping the ordinary controls of police and other social agencies of the community, are so pronounced as to give the impression that they are almost beyond the pale of civil society. In some respects these regions are like the frontier; in others, like “no man’s land,” lawless, godless, wild (Thrasher, 1927: p.6).

Gang development therefore was not instinct-driven but area-related, and this became an important determinant of gang formation and behaviour. This idea was fundamental to the Chicago School, and was formulated most notably by

Ernest Burgess who, along with Park, devised the famous Concentric Zones Model of urban organization in 1925. This model suggest that a city can be understood by mapping it with concentric rings demarking six zones that correlate to different types of areas (Park, Burgess, & McKenzie, 1925). Between the areas of commerce and the different residential areas was the 'zone of transition', and it was here where social disorganisation was rife and crime most common. The idea that a city area could relate to criminality was novel and became extremely influential among Chicago School exponents.

Thrasher discovered 1313 gangs in the city with an estimated total membership of 25,000 members. Just twelve of these groups were female. Of the total gangs, he found 530 were 'delinquent', 609 were of dubious nature and 52 he thought to be non-delinquent. Subsequent early studies found that the majority of gangs were relatively harmless and Hardman (1967: p.7) points out that such discrepancies would have been cleared up by an iron-clad definition of what a gang is, something that was a problem of early research and, as we will see, remains a somewhat vexing issue today.

Thrasher found that most gangs had fewer than 30 members and more than half had less than 15. Furthermore, most gangs were ephemeral and were constantly forming and dissolving with few surviving more than a few years - but the dissolving of one would invariably lead to the creation of another in its place. He found that gangs were overwhelmingly youthful and that "marriage is one of the most potent causes for the disintegration of the older groups" (Thrasher, 1927: p.36).

Thrasher described the structure of gangs as having three elements. At the core of the gangs were the leaders and their lieutenants, outside of this core were the rank and file members, and further out were the occasional members or hangers on. He also found that many of the gangs had satellite groups made up of younger boys who were often siblings of older gang members. In a symbiotic relationship, the older gang would provide protection for the younger groups whose members would in turn act as errand boys for the older gangs.

Thrasher found that gangs provided an outlet for youthful expression and drive, but the groups would often evolve from playgroups to more serious conflict groups. This has been described as perhaps Thrasher's most well known finding (Dimitriadis, 2006: p.337). For Thrasher the gang "is an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict" (Thrasher, 1927: p.57). Accordingly, youthful groups did not become gangs until they "excite disapproval and opposition", at which point they would draw themselves closer together and form a conflict group (Thrasher, 1927: p.30). Furthermore, conflict groups may become stepping-stones for a graduation into adult organised crime groups (Thrasher, 1927: p.418).

Thrasher understood that accounting for gangs was not a simple undertaking. He believed that any understanding of gangs had to examine what he called the 'situation complex' whereby gangs are seen as part of a complicated web of social interactions. Without appreciating these interactions, gangs could not

be fully understood. Indeed, the situation complex, or the matrix of social interactions within which a gang exists, became – often without due credit to Thrasher - an important facet that explained differences between gangs in later research.

The Chicago School

As noted, Thrasher's study was part of a wider paradigm of sociological inquiry underway at the University of Chicago. Most notably Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay maintained this approach of urban ecology and social disorganisation in relation to gangs in Chicago, but it was also adopted during the same period by others around the country like Frank Tannenbaum in New York and William Foote Whyte in Boston.

In the early 1940s – building on their earlier work from the 1920s - Shaw and McKay (**Shaw & McKay**, 1942/1969) confirmed Thrasher's view that gangs and delinquency were concentrated and maintained within 'interstitial areas' of the city marked by slums and rapid deterioration, maintaining the Chicago School's tradition of social disorganisation theory. Working within the Concentric Zones Model, Shaw and McKay showed that problem areas tended to be those closest to the city centre and these areas were fewer further toward the outer suburbs. They also found links between gangs and other social problems that tended to occur in these 'interstitial' areas, such as poverty, alcoholism, morbidity, prostitution, family dissolution and organised vice. Shaw and McKay also linked delinquency specifically to gangs, saying that over 90 percent of delinquent theft offences were committed in groups. It

is unclear, however, whether the groups formed and then conspired to undertake theft or a common interest in theft was the foundation of the gang, but the high degree of correlation between crime and gangs was brought into question. Wattenburg and Balistrieri (1950: p.747), for example, in examining the records of adolescent 'interviewed on complaint' by the Detroit Police Department during 1946 and 1947, found that just less than 47 percent of crimes were undertaken by those in gangs.

Shaw and McKay were also challenged regarding their assertion that rates of juvenile delinquency were related to area and not ethnicity (Jonassen, 1949). They responded by saying that, while 'Negroes' may have higher rates of delinquency than 'white boys' "*it cannot be said that they are higher than rates for white boys in comparable areas, since it is impossible to reproduce in white communities the circumstances under which Negro children live*" (cited in Short, 1969: xxix). Contributing to the debate on ethnic variations and gang behaviour in the 1940s, Emory S. Bogardus (1943) isolated social pressures such as language difficulties, school retardation, differential methods of parental control, racial discrimination and low socioeconomic status as factors pushing Mexican boys toward gang activity in California. Ethnic minorities, it was concluded, have further social problems within their communities that therefore influence greater involvement in delinquency.

In New York in the late 1930s, Tannenbaum (1938), like Thrasher, found that youth gang activity started with playful exploits and that members began offending for diversion and excitement, but over time they progressed to more

serious crimes and became increasingly committed to the conception of themselves as gang members. While Thrasher had said that conflict with other groups aided gang development, Tannenbaum broadened this idea by incorporating conflict with the community at large. For Tannenbaum it was the interaction between the gang and wider community forces that transformed 'playgroups' to more serious gangs. This transition took place, Tannenbaum believed, through the 'dramatization of evil', a process whereby significant negative attention is brought to bear on gangs, and their youthful activities are seen in forcefully negative ways and repressed (Tannenbaum, 1938: pp. 19-22). Such repression results in gangs becoming more cohesive by causing them to generate their own value system that insulates the membership from the values of the community. The gang culture grows and the positive social forces that tie together the law-abiding community become weak - a situation that perpetuates itself as the gang attitude and code of conduct is passed on to younger members.

This latter point was steeped in a Chicago School idea developed by Edwin Sutherland between 1934 and 1947. Sutherland (1947) argued that criminal behaviour can be explained through 'differential association', a concept that explains that criminals learn criminal behaviour in the same way that non-criminals learn conventional behaviour. In other words, criminals are not under-socialised; they are just socialised differently.

Further advancing the Chicago School tradition was William Foote Whyte. Whyte's *Street Corner Society* is an enduring ethnographic study undertaken

in Boston in the in the late 1930s, and its most important contribution is its focus on gang dynamics. Whyte immersed himself in an area known as Cornerville, a slum district populated by Italian immigrants and their children. Whyte found that while the area may look socially disorganised to outsiders, it was in fact organised, albeit differently to middle class communities, and this was evident in the 'corner boys' he studied. The primary focus of Whyte's ethnography, the Norton Street Gang, was very different to other gangs that had previously been identified by researchers. This gang was older – members were in their twenties – and had a stable membership that survived past marriage, with a married man taking time out “one evening a week” to spend with his wife (Whyte, 1943/1981: p.255). For Whyte, the group commitment of corner-gangs was often built on long associations, with the nuclei of most of the gangs in Cornerville being traced back to boyhood friendships:

The gangs grew up on the corner and remained there with remarkable persistence from boyhood until members reached their late twenties or early thirties...Most groups have a regular meeting-place aside from the corner... The stable composition of the group and the lack of social assurance on the part of its members contribute toward producing very high rates of social interaction within the group. The group structure is a product of these interactions. Out of such interaction, there arises a system of mutual obligations which is fundamental to group cohesion (Whyte, 1943/1981: pp.255-256).

Yablonsky summarises Whyte's work well:

The "gang," according to Whyte, emerged because the boys could accomplish more together than separately. The gang gave its members a feeling of solidarity, or belonging. They participated in constructive activities, engaged in athletics, helped each other financially (when they could), and discussed mutual problems (Yablonsky, 1967: p.128).

A key component of the Norton Street Gang's internal dynamics was its leader, to whom most decisions fell and without which the gang would not survive. Although conflict between groups did arise, Whyte's study uncovered an *esprit de corps* within the group and the important and seemingly positive function the gang played in the lives of its members. In this way the study was unique, and it was a focus that few studies would subsequently uphold.

The Post War Period: The Rise of Delinquency and Gang Theory

The 1950s were prosperous and conservative years in America. Such prosperity allowed teenagers, through part or full-time work, the ability to purchase vehicles that gave them mobility and independence. It also allowed them to express themselves through new styles of clothing and purchase rock 'n' roll music and attend teenage films that often captured and inspired ideas of popular rebellion (Altschuler, 2003). The new visibility of the rebellious teenager, offered focus to delinquency, and shocked the conservative nature of mainstream America and caused much political and popular concern (James Gilbert, 1986). One consequence of these concerns was an

invigorated attempt to understand the nature of working class youth gangs, where the delinquency was seen to be at its most acute.

This period saw the rise of theoretical interpretations of gangs based around a sub cultural perspective. Academics of this generation did not enter the field like those of the Chicago tradition; instead, they tended to use general sociological theory in an effort to understand gang development. What these theorists had in common was a desire to understand the role that gangs played in lower-class delinquency. They also tended to see gangs less as evolving 'playgroups' and more as a reflection of frustration and protest. These theories proved popular and had significant value, but their accuracy in explaining delinquency or gang formation behaviour *in toto*, as will be shown, was later questioned.

Perhaps the most famous theorist of the era was Albert Cohen, whose work *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* published in 1950 became an important text. Cohen's work - termed 'strain theory' - was inspired by the idea of 'anomie'. Initially proposed by 19th century French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1897/1952), Robert King Merton (1938) developed the theory of anomie in the mid-1930s to describe deviant reactions that arise when the socially approved goals of society are out of reach to many people through socially acceptable means. Reactions often involve resorting to goal attainment via illegitimate and criminal behaviour. From this theoretical base, Cohen developed a theory of 'status frustration' to explain gang members'

delinquency. Unable to attain status through legitimate means, gang members define their own status in illegitimate activities.

In a pointed criticism of the Chicago School, Cohen said that proponents of 'social disorganisation' theory failed adequately to understand the state of lower class communities that were not akin to a "jungle" as they were often portrayed (A. K. Cohen, 1955: p.33). Furthermore, to say traits of delinquency were "handed down" from generation to generation "is but to state the problem rather than to offer a solution" (A. K. Cohen, 1955: p.32).

Cohen believed that within the social and economic system of the U.S., working class boys found themselves at "the bottom of the heap" and it was here that the delinquent subculture "was most likely to be found" (A. K. Cohen, 1955: pp.73 & 109). The reason for this, Cohen believed, was that class and social stratification led to 'status frustration' that would in turn cause 'reaction formation' via delinquency and gangs. For Cohen, "The hallmark of the delinquent subculture is the explicit and wholesale repudiation of middle-class standards and the adoption of their very antithesis" (A. K. Cohen, 1955: p.129). This manifests itself through aggressive behaviour, theft, and vandalism that is "socially legitimized and given a kind of respectability" by the group and thus perpetuated (A. K. Cohen, 1955: p.135).

The other significant advocates of strain theory were Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin who went further than Cohen by suggesting that those within the lower classes were not just blocked from legitimate means to achieve

goals but also from illegitimate means. For example, in a neighbourhood with a well organised criminal element, youths will have much greater access to criminal role models than those from criminally unorganised neighbourhoods (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960: p.163). Therefore, the types of relationships that a lower class youth experiences – as defined by different neighbourhoods – will influence his actions and activities. Cloward and Ohlin identified three types of delinquent gangs; Criminal (stealing), Conflict (fighting), and Retreatist (drug taking). If a youth is influenced by and has access to organised criminal groups then that youth will likely form a criminal clique, whereas those who do not are more likely to express their status frustration at their ‘double failure’ by becoming fighters or, failing in that, drug takers. While Merton’s influence is obvious here, Cloward and Ohlin attempted to merge the ideas of Strain Theory with Sutherland’s Differential Association, and the latter is expressed in explanations as to how illegitimate roles are transferred and thus maintained within neighbourhoods. Cloward and Ohlin concluded that “acts of delinquency that reflect sub cultural support are likely to recur with great frequency” (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960: p.10).

In what would become a reoccurring problem surrounding typologies of gangs, Cloward and Ohlin’s notion of a retreatist or drug taking gang was not universally accepted and received some criticism. Wilner and others, for example, had found that drug taking and ‘ganging’ were two entirely different motivational problems. Although they found that gangs whose members took heroin were less likely to be involved in ‘rumbles’ or fighting, this may simply have been a *consequence* of their drug talking. They found, “in general,

gangs who were involved in narcotics give up the kind of violent acting-out that would be likely to “bring the cops on their necks” (Wilner, Rosenfeld, Lee, Chein, & Chein, 1957: p.403). Indeed, they concluded that, “Delinquent gangs do not appear to play an important role in the spread of heroin use. To the contrary, in some ways typical patterns of gang activity discourage drug use” (Wilner et al., 1957: p.409). They found that drugs were least often taken by gang leaders (Wilner et al., 1957: p.405) and gangs less inclined toward drug taking tended to be more “lively, active, and cohesive” (Wilner et al., 1957: p.408).

A decade later, Yablonsky supported this finding saying that the retreatist sub culture defined by Cloward and Ohlin “is simply not a gang in any sense” (Yablonsky, 1967: p.147). Drawing on his own work as well as Chein and Rosenfeld (1957), Yablonsky concluded that drug addicts have limited gang status and are discarded by the gang because addiction is a solitary activity with few group implications (Yablonsky, 1967: p.147-8). This debate continued, however, when research such as that by Short and Strodtbeck (1965) in the mid-1960s and Moore (1978) in the late 1970s found significant drug use – including the use of heroin – within certain gangs.

In 1958, Walter B. Miller offered a rival theoretical perspective to the strain theorists. Miller had spent time at the University of Chicago both as a student and a professor and the influence of Sutherland’s theory of Differential Association is clear. Like Sutherland, Miller situated the problem of gangs in cultural circumstance and economic stratification, but he rejected Cohen’s

idea of middle class strain and instead suggested that gangs were simply a reflection of lower class values:

In the case of “gang” delinquency, the cultural system which exerts the most direct influence on behavior is that of the lower class community itself – a long-established, distinctly patterned tradition with an integrity of its own – rather than a so-called “delinquency subculture” which has arisen through conflict with middle class culture and is orientated to the deliberate violation of middle class norms (W. B. Miller, 1958/1969: p.333).

Miller compiled six components (which he called ‘focal concerns’) of lower class culture; Trouble, Toughness, Smartness, Excitement, Fate and Autonomy (W. B. Miller, 1958/1969: pp.333-342). For Miller, gangs are a vehicle for belonging and a means to gain status or “rep” (W. B. Miller, 1958/1969: p.344) and this is achieved by exemplifying those valued qualities of lower class culture. “One gains status within the group by demonstrating superiority in Toughness (physical prowess, bravery, skill in athletics and games such as pool and cards), Smartness (skill in repartee, capacity to “dupe” fellow group members), and the like” (W. B. Miller, 1958/1969: p.344). The gang, he concluded, could not survive if “buttressed primarily by negative, hostile, or rejective motives; its principal motivational support, as in the case of any persisting cultural tradition, derives from a positive effort to achieve what is valued within that tradition, and to conform to its explicit and implicit norms” (W. B. Miller, 1958/1969: p.348).

Furthermore, Miller saw different demographic features within lower class culture that were also crucial to the rise of gangs, namely single (maternal) parent families which lead to male peer groups providing the “first real opportunity to learn essential aspects of the male role model” (W. B. Miller, 1958/1969: p.343). Such youths therefore seek masculine identity through gang expression.

The idea of masculine striving was not unique and had been at the crux of another theoretical explanation for gangs proposed by Herbert Bloch and Arthur Niederhoffer (1958) published the same year as Miller’s work. Much gang behaviour, they concluded, was similar to any number of behaviours in a variety of cultures or even within different classes of a single culture – ‘hazing’ in college fraternities, for example, was seen as little different to certain gang initiations (Bloch & Niederhoffer, 1958: p.106). Bloch and Niederhoffer saw gangs as an adaptation of a universal striving for manhood and power.

Theory and Policy Merge – Action Research

As noted, the above-mentioned theoretical attempts at understanding gangs were inspired by a surge of public concern regarding gangs and juvenile delinquency in America in the 1950s. These problems did not just induce theorists, however, but policy makers as well. In fact, motivated by the ideas of the strain theorists that reducing crime meant giving greater opportunity to the poor, during the 1960s significant public funds became available to initiate programmes targeting problems of poverty. This merging of theory and public

policy brought about a fruitful amount of empirical research. Klein, who was prominent in research at that time, later suggested that during this period “more than half” of all reliable gang knowledge was obtained (Klein, 1995: p.52).

The dominant policy framework within which governmental authorities sought to address the gang problem was via detached street work (alternatively called detached work, detached youth work, or street work) which started, perhaps unsurprisingly, in Chicago during the 1930s and then spread to other cities in the 1950s and 60s. The specifics of this method and its outcomes will be addressed in a section below, but its influence was significant and Spergel's *Street Gang Work: Theory and Practice* (1966) became an authoritative text, an almost ‘how to’ guide to detached youth work. But the practice of detached youth work did not just attempt to intervene and guide gang members away from illegal and anti-social activities, it also provided gateways by which researchers could collect data through the publicly funded inner city initiatives. These data, however, did not confirm the various theories offered up to explain the existence and actions of gangs. Indeed, by 1971 Klein concluded, in *Street Gangs and Street Workers*, that:

The gang theories...have proven – to me, at least – unproductive guideposts. As one becomes familiar with the members of a juvenile gang, he finds that it contains Cohen-type boys, Miller-type boys, Cloward-and-Ohlin-type boys, and perhaps an equal number whose situations seem to refute the core of each theory. I very much fear that

the gang has been the theoretician's Rorschach in criminology – one can easily find what he seeks (Klein, 1971: p.viii).

Klein therefore felt that the data should “build *toward* theory more than from it” (Klein, 1971: p.viii) and in such an effort he summarised what he and others were learning from their work with detached youth programmes. Klein concluded that the ‘interstitial’ or transitional areas in many large cities spawned smaller, spontaneous gangs that seldom lasted more than a year or two, whereas the more “stable slums”, which allowed neighbourhood patterns and tradition to span over many years, produced large vertically structured gangs that often lasted much longer (Klein, 1971: p.59 & 64-5).

The typical gang structure involved core and fringe members (Klein, 1971: p.70) and although the demographic characteristics of core and fringe members were similar, core members were more committed to the group and more likely to be involved in criminal activity (Klein, 1971: p.74).

Gangs tended to be made up of ethnic minorities, reflecting the makeup of the ghettos in which they existed (Klein, 1971: p.76). Gangs tended to be youthful, and more stable gangs often had members ranging in age from ten to 25 (with the majority being teenagers), but smaller or spontaneous gangs tended to have just a two-or-three-year age range (Klein, 1971: p.76-7). Female gangs rarely started as independent and self-perpetuating units, but it was “quite common” for small and less delinquent female gangs to form as adjuncts to

male groups with whom they had sexual or familial relations (Klein, 1971: p.77).

Klein noted many attempts to define types of gangs (conflict, delinquent, violent, retreatist etc) but could not identify such neat representations, and he questioned whether or not these typological differences significantly mirrored qualitative differences within gangs or were merely nominal distinctions for the convenience of typologists (Klein, 1971: p.80). Leadership in gangs did not tend to be a position *per se* but a collection of functions undertaken by a number of members and, contrary to Yablonsky's (1967) influential assertion in *The Violent Gang*, the leaders were not sociopaths (Klein, 1971: p.92).

Klein found that gang cohesiveness derived more from external sources than internal ones (Klein, 1971: p.104). He based this on the fact that group goals were minimal at best, stability of membership was low, group norms were relatively non-existent, and gang roles ill defined (Klein, 1971: p.104-5). In contrast, external sources of cohesion were numerous and strong: the "perils of poverty" like low educational performance, few job skills, disrupted family relations and social disability interact with one another to generate common attitudes (Klein, 1971: p.106). Add to this were threats from rival groups, police attention and teacher disapproval, and gang cohesiveness results.

A further project that dovetailed on detached work was undertaken by Short and Strodbeck in Chicago in the mid-1960s. Their contribution, *Group Process and Gang Delinquency* (1965) is rich in data, and an impressively

thorough but turgid examination of the key issues surrounding gang dynamics and action. The book also tests the popular theoretical perspectives of the time. Like Klein, Short and Stodtbeck found existing theory wanting. Parts of the different theories could be shored up by data, but none stacked up in a conclusive way. Their data also fed Klein's findings in relation to the make-up and activities of gangs.

Short and Strodbeck found that gangs were a product of the working classes and they failed to find any examples of middle class gangs (Short & Strodbeck, 1965: p.16). They also found that gang members often had low social skills due to the narrow range of social experiences enjoyed within the family, and that youths from gang neighbourhoods were often ill equipped for job success or indeed "getting along" (Short & Strodbeck, 1965: p.236). Like Klein, they also highlighted the problems associated with broken working class homes. Added to this were high rates of school failure and unfavourable contact with police, courts and correctional institutions which compounded the problems of the youth gang member. And while the prospect of steady jobs was poor "despite their sincere desires and intentions" (Short & Strodbeck, 1965: p.222), if work was obtained, gang life often encroached on worker responsibility and it was the latter that most often gave way (Short & Strodbeck, 1965: p.225 & 230).

To compensate for their social failings, status and reputation were sought through the gang via conflict and sexual conquests. The gangs often defined such status subjectively. If, for instance, a gang lost a fight in the face of

significant odds, much could still be gained by the vanquished gang in their telling of the story - a process of 'status management' (Short & Strodtbeck, 1965: 201-202).

The First New Zealand Studies, Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs, and British Moral Panic

The problem of delinquency in the post war period was not confined to the U.S. In fact, inspired as they were by rock 'n' roll and other popular culture out of America, the youth trends in much of the Western World had a similar feel. Thus, in the 1950s, New Zealand tended to focus on teenage delinquency as a general problem, perhaps best exemplified by a governmental report (the 'Mazengarb Report') sent to all New Zealand families advising of the dangers of promiscuity and mischief among the country's youth. But the specific issue of youth gangs was sufficient to warrant two pieces of government-funded research that were both published in 1959. Undertaken in Auckland by A. E. Levitt (1959) and in Wellington by J. G. Green (1959), both reports portray an immature gang scene reflecting the relative lack of poverty, dense urbanisation, and social disorganisation evident in large American cities. The gangs were small, unstructured, caused little trouble and were fleeting in existence. Neither researcher, it would appear, sought guidance from American studies, but certain basic elements of commonality were evident; for example, gangs in New Zealand were largely of the working classes and members often had unsatisfactory home lives. These gangs, and this research, will be examined in detail in Chapter Four.

Throughout the 1960s in New Zealand, the term 'gang' was almost exclusively used to describe outlaw motorcycle clubs, which mirrored such groups in America. As will be outlined in Chapters Three and Four, the importance of these groups in shaping the New Zealand gang scene is difficult to overstate. Despite their prominence and public profile in New Zealand and America – and many parts of the Western World – they did not elicit academic interest. In fact, understandings of these types of gangs in the 1960s was dependent on popular books of varying quality, including Hunter S. Thompson's (H. S. Thompson, 1967) *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga*, Jan Hudson's (1966) *The Sex and Savagery of the Hell's Angels: The Full Story of America's Wild Ones*, and Michael McClure and Frank Reynolds' (1967) *Freewheelin Frank: Secretary of the Angels*.

Although, Hudson's account has been questioned in relation to its authenticity (he wrote under a pseudonym, his real name was George Henry Smith) (Osgerby, 2005: p.74), these works did offer a certain insight into the motorcycle gangs – specifically the Hell's Angels. They did not, however, attempt meaningfully to analyse the groups in a sociological manner – although Thompson did offer a limited explanation for rise and development of outlaw motorcycle clubs and several critiques of commonly held assumptions. Such works, then, offer little in the way of systematic research or theory. Arguably, given their wide readership, their most significant contribution was to hasten the rise of such gangs around the world, and certainly, as will be shown in Chapter Four, this was the case in New Zealand. Exactly why these gangs received no academic interest is unclear, but it would not be until much

later in the century that meaningful research would be undertaken, and these works will be addressed in the following chapter.

In Britain, public concern regarding teen delinquency was also surfacing in the 1950s, but gang research from the United Kingdom at this time – or before - is limited. One reason for this is that British sociology was slow to establish itself. Although already a major discipline in the U.S., the British history of sociology for the first half of the 20th century is largely limited to work undertaken at the London School of Economics, and did not become more fully embraced by academia until the 1950s; before receiving further impetus by the radicalism of the late 1960s (Halsey, 2004). Nevertheless, there is some work of note.

In 1950, John C. Spencer examined the ‘unclubbable’ adolescents – or youths unattached to organised youth activities. He acknowledged the media reporting on the nature of gang activity in London but suggested reliability of such reports “cannot adequately be tested in the absence of careful study and research” (Spencer, 1950:p.116). But if this was a challenge to his academic peers to undertake research, only a few took it up. Among them were John Barron Mays (1954) who engaged with Chicago School theorists in examining working class areas in central Liverpool, and Peter Scott (1956) who formed a tripartite classification of London gangs, as well as the early 1960s contribution of T. R Fyvels (1963) who undertook a vivid account of the ‘Teddy Boys’ phenomenon. But at this time research on British gangs during this period was skimpy at best. Indeed, in 1966 while addressing American

theories on gangs and delinquency and their relevance to England, David Downes, a London School of Economics Professor, bemoaned the “paucity of English work on the sociology of crime”, but he also noted that, “[r]esearch on delinquent gangs in England is a fair reflection of their absence” (Downes, 1966: p.100 & 116). Downes argued that England lacked the types of structured gangs evident in America, but was quick to point out that his conclusion was based on “a certain absence of evidence” (Downes, 1966:p.122). Some evidence on U.K. gangs would soon be provided by Patrick’s (1973) research in Glasgow, but it was not from the study of British gangs *per se* that a significant theoretical contribution would spring forth, but in that country’s response to gang activity.

The groundbreaking piece of research coming out of the U.K. was Stanley Cohen’s *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. Published in 1972, the book’s focus was on the social and political response to gang activity that was part of the wider – largely working class – teenage fashion trends of ‘Mods’ and ‘Rockers’ (S. Cohen, 1972: p.19) and more specifically to a series of disturbances – battles between the groups - that occurred at English seaside resorts from 1964 to 1966 (S. Cohen, 1972: p.20). It was a response, he said, of ‘moral panic’.

Cohen outlined the fact that the media overreacted to these disturbances and that their reports were highly exaggerated and told with unnecessarily emotive language (S. Cohen, 1972: p.31). Often, reports of incidents would be incorrect or distorted but upheld to highlight a perceived truth. Cohen cites

one example of a youth who told the Magistrate who had just fined him £75 that he would simply 'write a cheque', implying the penalty was of little or no consequence. Although the boy's offer was "a pathetic gesture of bravado" and he did not even have a bank account, this was not reported and the story gained significance and was used to highlight the idea that the youths were affluent enough that "fines couldn't touch them" (S. Cohen, 1972: p.33).

The issue quickly became framed as one of moral decay and the gangs became 'folk devils' around which a mythology was produced. Forged primarily out of the University of Chicago's 'second wave' of sociological thought, Cohen used Edwin Lemert (1951, 1967) and Howard Becker's (Becker, 1963) ideas of labelling theory – specifically primary and secondary deviation - to highlight that the youths sometime live up to the expectations that had been created by the media (S. Cohen, 1972:p.14 & 164). Moreover, the media representations had constructed the gangs as newsworthy and thus further incidents undertaken by the groups generated disproportionate coverage. This prompted an equally disproportionate response from police who felt pressure to act, as well as the Courts who imposed harsher sentences (S. Cohen, 1972: p.91 & 101). Informal control agents bemoaned the breakdown of 'moral' society and in turn politicians responded to the widespread concern by proposing political action be taken. From a series of localised incidents, the issue quickly became a national issue (S. Cohen, 1972: p.86). A type of hysteria had taken hold and created a frenzy of responses that all furred off one another until the issue eventually petered out. Indeed, by the time Cohen's book was published the Mods and Rockers had

largely faded from view as fashions and interests changed and the focus of attention shifted. But despite the issue diminishing, Cohen's ideas were generally applicable to similar situations.

For Cohen the moral panic involving Mods and Rockers was an example of general phenomena, whereby:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way the society conceives itself (S. Cohen, 1972: p.9).

Indeed, the theory of moral panic has been used to explain historic events like the European witch hunts in the 16th and 17th centuries, as well as more contemporary issue (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). In the early 1980s it was used in New Zealand by Jane Kelsey and Warren Young (1982) to account for a wave of public anxiety surrounding gangs in the aftermath of an incident at Moerewa in 1979. The violence at Moerewa will be covered in detail in Chapter Five, and the theory of moral panic will be drawn upon at different times throughout this thesis.

A Lull in Gang Research

In America, the attention paid to gangs via public policy, sociological theory and consequently empirical research in the 1950s and 60s did not last. In fact, gangs “faded from public concern...replaced by concerns over race, increasing crime, and urban unrest” (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996: p.12). This was reflected in federal funding priorities and resources for gang research began to dry up (Horowitz, 1983).

Furthermore, this lull in gang research stemmed from a tidal change in sociological ideas. Social movements that emerged in the 1960s drove this shift, at least in part. These included broad countercultural, anti-Vietnam war, and civil rights movements that prompted academics to focus on how deviance was defined and social control maintained, and consequently a shift away from sub cultural and strain theories. Replacing these were the likes of labelling and conflict theories, and with that, the focus went on the powerful and their role in society and away from the issues such as gangs.

Indeed many people began concluding that gangs were in significant decline, although they were unable to provide data to support such views (Klein, 1971: p.22). In 1976, seriousness of the gang issue was dismissed when The National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals stated that, “youth gangs are not now or [sic] should not become a major concern...Youth gang violence is not a major crime problem in the United States...what gang violence does exist can fairly readily be diverted in ‘constructive’ channels especially through the provision of services by community agencies” (cited in Spergel, 1995: p.9).

Not everyone was in agreement. Just the year before this statement, Walter Miller had undertaken a national gang survey and concluded that the gang problem was “of the utmost seriousness” (cited in Spergel, 1995: p.9). Nevertheless, public policy and the academic focus on gangs reduced before undertaking a dramatic resurgence reflected in published work in the 1990s. This lull is interesting as it highlights, at least in part, the fact that the public perception of gangs can rise and fall not because of gang activity but due to external forces such as the media or political bodies. As Miller would say when the resurgence of interest occurred, “Youth gangs aren’t ‘back.’ They never went away, except in the media” (cited in Klein, 1995: p.91).

Conclusion

It would be difficult to overstate the enterprise of Thrasher’s work and the importance of his findings. But despite the advances in knowledge made

since his and other pioneering studies, gangs have defied simple explanation. Single theoretical attempts at explaining gangs during the 1950s by the likes of Cohen and Millar can be seen to have fallen short, and at best offer windows of insight that may, at certain times, provide useful understandings, something that will become evident in Chapter Four. In fact, efforts toward a single theoretical explanation for gangs ended with the attempts of the 1950s

Empirical research has fared better, but such attempts also failed to draw conclusive data that could definitively explain all gangs. Moreover, during this period important gang developments, primarily outlaw motorcycle clubs, were neglected by researchers, and gang research remained largely an issue for American sociologists.

While empirical researchers uncovered certain elements of commonality among the gangs that were studied, largely around socioeconomics, family and community dysfunction, and issues of ethnicity, they just as often found significant differences between different gangs and gang neighbourhoods. Such differences raised important question that remained unanswered, including, why certain gangs persisted longer than others, why did similar communities have differing degrees of gang problems, and why did gangs appear to engage in different activities?

While many of these issues would remain somewhat vexing in the face of the significant body of studies to emerge in the latter part of the 20th century,

significant advances in gang research were made and it is to this period I now turn.

Chapter Two.

A History of Gang Research: Part II (1970 onwards)

Introduction

Notwithstanding a few notable exceptions, the dominant source of gang research – that out of America – was dormant during the 1970s. Driven by renewed community concern during the 1980s, however, such studies underwent a dramatic resurgence, best reflected in a flurry of published work in the 1990s and beyond – and eventually a greater international contribution.

Building on the knowledge base provided by earlier generations, this modern research era has delivered more studies than any time previous, and it has also significantly enriched our knowledge of gangs. But much like the growing body of research, gangs too have become more numerous and prominent. Consequently, many of these new studies are devoted to examining changes in the modern gang situation, including greater violence and drug crime, the growth of gangs, and the greater organisation evident in some of these groups. In highlighting these changes, many researchers have sought answers to the fundamental questions that escaped researchers of earlier eras, such as why and how gangs form, and what is it that makes them

attractive to join. And while significant progress has been made in these areas, simple explanations remain elusive.

Despite many questions still requiring further work, advances have been made in hitherto neglected areas of research. Most importantly, great progress is evident in research on outlaw motorcycle clubs, gangs and gender, definitional issues, and globalisation and gangs.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the important research that has highlighted gang changes in America since the 1980s, which have advanced our understanding of gang genesis, maturation and appeal. It will also look at areas of study that until recently have been largely ignored, and confront the issues arising from a new research milieu focusing on gangs around the world; a focus that has made the study of gangs literally bigger and, of course, more complex.

Understanding Changes in the U.S.

Given the wealth of gang research coming out of America since the 1980s and 90s, there is much to learn from these studies. Although it is accepted that different communities may produce different forms of gang, broad understanding that have become established in the U.S. offer valuable insights, comparisons, or contrasts to this study of New Zealand gangs; and many of the changes identified in gang research in America will be drawn upon throughout this thesis.

Growth and Gang Migration

Although the point is contested, it is possible that the percentage of people in gangs relative to the general population in established American gang cities, like Chicago and Los Angeles, might not vary greatly over time (Spergel, 1995: p.31). Less contested, however, is the fact that overall gang numbers throughout the U.S. have increased exponentially since the 1960s as gangs migrated or emerged in a greater number of cities across the country (Klein, 1995; Spergel, 1995). Klein (1995: pp.90-91) notes that since 1961 cities with gangs increased 74 percent by 1970, 83 percent by 1980, and 345 percent by 1992. Although larger centres are significantly more likely to have gangs, in recent times gang migration or emergence has also become evident in smaller cities and even rural areas (Howell, 1998b: p.3; Klein et al., 2001: p.3), although less populated centres tend to have less organised groups (Decker, 2001: p.36; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, & Tobin, 2003: p.190). In 1960, there were thought to be about 50 urban communities with gang problems in the U.S.; in 2000 one survey reported there were several thousand such communities encompassing more than 26,000 gangs and almost 850,000 gang members (Klein, 2002: p.244). Most researchers tend to be cautious of data regarding gang estimates (see section of definitions below), although there is some evidence that the rise in gang numbers peaked around 1996 and might be levelling off or falling slightly (Howell, Moore, & Egley, 2002: pp.4-5; Thornberry et al., 2003: p.2).

Changes in Criminality

Although the growth in gangs since the 1980s has been startling, increased criminal involvement has perhaps been the most significant issue of public

concern as well as the focus of much contemporary research. Although difficulties remain in establishing whether gangs create crime or criminals create gangs, the fact that gang members are more likely than non-gang members to be involved in criminal activities is well established. Indeed, “The observation that gang members, as compared with other youths, are more extensively involved in delinquency – especially serious and violent delinquency – is perhaps the most robust and consistent observation in criminological research” (Thornberry et al., 2003: p.1). Since the 1980s, however, the nature and seriousness of gang crime has changed. Moore (1978) was one of the first to observe this change beginning to occur in the 1970s. In her study of Chicano gangs in Los Angeles, she found that violence was regulated and there were informal rules of engagement between gangs. The arrival of gun use in the early 1970s was initially frowned upon as it changed the code of a ‘fair fight’ but by the mid-1970s was seen as more legitimate. However, firing a gun when a non-combatant (called “a mother”) was present was still deemed to be off limits (J. W. Moore, 1978: p.40).

This trend in the use of firearms appears universal and guns became common in gang violence in the U.S. throughout the 1980s and beyond and consequently gang conflicts have become more lethal (Fagan, 1996: p.43; Howell, 1998b: p.2; Short, 1996a: p.xi). By one recent estimate, firearms are ‘present’ in over 90 percent of gang homicides (Klein et al., 2001: p.4), another study found that approximately 74 percent of gang members carried a hidden weapon and 29 percent had shot at someone (Esbensen & Lynskey, 2001: p.105). As Decker says, “The proliferation of guns and shootings by

gang members escalates violence by creating the demand for armaments among rival gang” particularly because, “[A]ttacks by one gang against another quickly lead to retaliatory strikes” (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996: p.23). Interestingly, gang violence predominately occurs between gangs of the same ethnicity (Klein, 1995: p.106; Spergel, 1995: p.60) and inter-ethnic gang violence is often avoided (Sanders, 1994: pp.51-52). As will be shown throughout this thesis, this international finding has been supported by events in New Zealand, where the major gang wars have usually been between gangs of the same ethnicity.

Although violence and conflict have become more serious in recent decades, these elements of gang behaviour, in one form or another, were evident in early gang research (Thrasher, 1927). A somewhat new development concerns profit driven crime, primarily through the distribution of illicit drugs either by gang members or by gangs as organisations (Esbensen, Peterson, Freng, & Taylor, 2002; Fagan, 1990; Hagedorn, 2002; Howell, 1998b; Jankowski, 1991; Taylor, 1989). Reasons for such developments are explored later in this chapter, but these changes in violent and drug crime can be overstated and exaggerated (Klein, 1995). As Decker notes, “serious crimes – both nonviolent and violent – are a defining feature of gangs, but gang crimes seem neither as purposive, organized, or frequent as the popular (and official) mind imagines” (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996: p.144). Therefore, the ‘popular mind’ often gains a distorted view, primarily driven by the selective coverage given to gangs in the mass media (Covey, 2003: p.29).

Notwithstanding this caution, two important studies have highlighted certain changes toward greater organisation and profit driven crime. Perhaps the most significant contribution in this area was made by Jankowski in 1991. This study spanned three cities: Los Angeles, New York, and Boston. Much like Whyte (1943/1981) many years before, Jankowski's study offered up a new type of gang, much more sophisticated and mature than identified in other research. Spergel (1995: p.78) called Jankowski's findings of sophistication "exaggerated". However, his categorisation of a certain type of gang with "formal leadership structure, in which leadership categories are labelled and assigned a degree of authority" (Jankowski, 1991: p.64) that includes a president, vice president, warlord and treasurer, are essentially the dominant New Zealand gang model, and one that was – as will become clear in the body of this thesis – established early in New Zealand's gang history.

Jankowski reported that this type of organisation manifests itself in a rational interest in profit driven crime but, interestingly, he concluded that the majority of gang violence was not a formal gang activity and was largely undertaken by individuals (though intimately connected within the gang environs). Again, these findings were unusual. Vigil, for example, had found the reverse to be true, that violence was the gang norm, and that "Property related crime is more of an individual nature" (Vigil, 1988: p.137). This distinction between gang crime and crime committed by gang members is an important one and, as will be shown in later chapters, a point of considerable debate in New Zealand.

Evolving Gang Types

An explanation, at least in part, for such discrepancies between research findings may come from the evolution of gangs. Taylor (1989) in his study of gangs in Detroit showed that social and economic changes as well as the growth of illegal drug markets had changed the gangs and they could no longer be defined in traditional preconceived terms. For Taylor, gangs can be viewed on an evolutionary scale within categories he labelled 'Scavenger', 'Territorial' and 'Organised' (Taylor, 1989: pp.4-8). Scavenger gangs are defined by impulsive behaviour and crimes that are usually petty, senseless and spontaneous. These groups have no particular goals or purpose and often acts of violence are perpetrated just for fun. Territorial gangs stake out a 'patch' and 'rule' it. The territory is widely known to 'belong' to the gang and the gang polices it thus. The gang monopolises the criminal trade (usually drugs) in that area and wars with anybody who tries to enter their turf. Organised gangs are well structured groups that have strong leaders and the unequivocal goal of financial profit. Membership is based on service to the group and promotion is by performance, not personality. As will become clear, this evolutionary perspective is useful in looking at changes within the New Zealand gang scene. Moreover, Taylor's subdivision of gangs was influential in the creation of my definitions, outlined in the introduction to this thesis, and used throughout the body of my work.

While there have been some criticisms as to how Taylor arrived at his categorisations (Klein, 1995: p.134; Spergel, 1995: p.77), his format allows for an important and flexible interpretation of gangs as evolving entities. Viewed in this way, gangs may begin as 'play groups' as proposed by many early

gang researchers, but they can evolve to provide an alternative to legitimate work and thus become a quasi-career option. Taylor's findings have been supported by research undertaken by Fagan (1996: p.43) as well as Vandekesh (2008) who also identified corporate-type gangs, but comparative studies have shown that such well-organised groups are very much in the minority (Klein 2005 p142). Be this as it may, many experts now make the argument that the longevity of certain gangs has made them quasi community institutions (Fagan, 1996; Hagedorn, 2007c:p.2; Jankowski, 1991: p.43) and the cultures they uphold have, in many cases, "come to supplant orientation to the worlds of work and adulthood" (Short, 2007: p.328).

Age Changes

While findings of greater organisation and structure may not be universally true of all, or even the majority, of gangs, other changes appear more consistent, and this is evident in gang demographics. Covey (2003: p.27) states that, "Street gangs in the United States may be getting both older and younger in terms of the typical age range of members, as gang members remain in the gang longer, and as younger members are recruited to protect older members from more serious criminal penalties". Although Klein (1995, p.104) points out that preteen gang membership has a long history, he acknowledges that the upper age of gang involvement is increasing. Although adult participation in gangs is not new (Thrasher, 1927; Whyte, 1943/1981), there is widespread agreement that U.S. gangs in more recent times have been significantly extending their age range at the upper end (Covey, 2003; Horowitz, 1983; Jankowski, 1991; Klein, 1995; J. W. Moore, 1991; Vigil,

1988). While gang membership remained a predominantly a teenage phenomenon, in the early 1990s Fagan noted there were increasingly more gang members in their 20s, while others found examples of members in their 40s (Jankowski, 1991: p.323-4; Klein, 1995: p.104). A national survey from 1999 reported that 50 percent of gang members were estimated to be young adults (ages 18-24) a sharp increase from 34 percent just three years before (Howell et al., 2002: p.6). Again, caution is required when looking at these data, but a trend is evident, particularly in cities with well-established gangs where older membership is most common (Howell, 1998b: p.2; Klein, 1995:p.105). A further variable may relate to the ethnic makeup of the gangs. It may be the case that various ethnic gangs have differing age ranges. Using Jankowski's data, for example, **Short** (Short, 2002: p.xi) found the average (mean) age span of Latino and black gangs to be 12.5 and 12.3 percent respectively but just 7.6 years for white gangs.

Ethnic Differences

Age ranges of gangs of different ethnicity may not be the only variations between such groups. As Vigil and Yun (2002: p.162) have pointed out, "there are ethnocentric nuances and contours to the ways in which gangs have unfolded within each ethnic population. Every ethnic group's history (as well as every nation's!) differs in such important areas as time, place, and people – that is, when and where people settled, how their communities formed, and what distinguished them from other people in the city". While the majority of U.S. gangs in the first half of the 20th century were white (largely European immigrants), by 1970s four fifths were black or Mexican American; by the

1990s this number may have been as high as 90% (Howell et al., 2002: p.8; Short, 2002: p.xii). It should be of little surprise then that these groups have been the subject of the most gang research.

Although few gangs uphold an exclusive ethnic make-up, certain generalisations appear common within existing research. Mexican American gangs – variously described by different researchers as ‘Hispanic’, ‘Chicano’ or ‘Latino’ - have been found to be closely tied to their physical communities (Horowitz, 1983; J. W. Moore, 1978, 1991; Sanders, 1994; Vigil, 1988). Indeed, the neighbourhoods from which the gangs form are seen to be intrinsically and even linguistically linked, “*Mi barrio*” is used by members to refer both to ‘my neighbourhood’ and ‘my gang’ (J. W. Moore, 1978: p.35). Consequently the gangs are extremely territorial, ‘owning’ and protecting their turf. Drug use among these gangs is accepted (most significantly heroin) and many members disappeared into addiction (J. W. Moore, 1978). The organisational structure of Chicano gangs tends to be flat and diffuse with little formal rule structure (Jankowski, 1991; Vigil, 1988) and different age based *klikas* (cliques within each barrio) are largely autonomous (J. W. Moore, 1991). For Vigil (1988), such gangs come about due to ‘multiple marginality’ or a process of ‘choloization’ whereby Chicano youths are marginalised from mainstream society – and this occurred on different levels including the macro (group history), the meso (family history), and the micro (life history).

Predominantly African American gangs in recent years have perhaps become the best known and most renowned, primarily via two opposition gangs known

and 'Bloods' and 'Crips', which initially formed in the late 1960s or early 1970s, but proliferated exponentially from the 1980s. These groups tend to have certain loyalty to their 'sets' (neighbourhood-based subgroups) but may not be as closely associated to their own neighbourhoods as Chicano gangs (Sanders, 1994: p.140). Many of these sets have a more hierarchical organisational structure and, compared to Chicano gangs, may be more concerned with profit driven crime; particularly the selling of drugs (Howell, 1998b; Jankowski, 1991; Sanders, 1994; Taylor, 1989), and these activities are often undertaken by the group as a whole (Jankowski, 1991; Taylor, 1989). Although marijuana is widely used in such gangs, hard drugs – like heroin - are often banned (Taylor, 1989) and their use may lead to gang discipline (Sanders, 1994: p.141). Crossovers between such gangs and the music industry - via 'Rap' and 'Hip-Hop' - as well as popular Hollywood film depictions, have meant the influence of the Bloods and Crips has spread throughout the U.S. and around the world, and their global influence will be looked at in a section below.

Both white and Asian gangs have received much less study, although the latter have begun to build a certain body of work. In 1995, Klein (1995: p.106) said, "the white gang problem, although present, is not in any sense comparable to the size of the minority gang problem". It is for this reason, perhaps, that there is a paucity of American research on such groups. Jankowski (1991) found white gangs tend to have a hierarchal structure, and Spergel (1995: p.65) suggested "some [white gangs] are concerned with protecting turf or territory, less often with expanding it". Though tiny in

number, racist Skinhead gangs are evident in America – and, unlike most gangs are often from more middle class backgrounds – and these groups are an imported trend from England (Hamm, 1993). The growing body of work around Asian gangs suggest these groups too hold unique difference. Although Vigil's ideas of multiple marginality formed in relation to Chicano gangs appears useful in looking at such groups (Vigil & Yun, 1990: p.147), their study is made difficult by their tight and secretive nature (Chin, 1996: p.30; Klein, 1995: p.108). Although grouped as 'Asian' gangs, a simple single category belies the fact it incorporates numerous different nationality/cultures (that exist in separate gangs), making generalisations difficult. With this in mind, it may nevertheless be reasonable to tentatively conclude that such groups appear to be more involved in profit drive crime – most notably, property crime, extortion and prostitution – than other gangs are.

With these conclusions regarding differences between gangs of different ethnicities – and indeed differences among various gangs of the same ethnicity – it is not difficult to reach the conclusion that within “the United States, the combinations and variations in the American street gang seem at times to be endless” (Covey, 2003: p.56). Little perhaps has changed since Thrasher (1927: p.45) said, “No two gangs are just alike”. But these variations can perhaps be overplayed. As Klein (1995: p.108) points out, certain ethnic differences may reflect migration pattern as much as they do cultural patterns, “It remains safe to say that black-Hispanic gang differences, though notable, still pale in the face of their structural and behavioral similarities”. Vigil and Yun (2002: p.165) suggest that street socialisation blurs ethnic differences

“because remarkably similar things are learned on the streets where fear and vulnerability generate the need for protection, friendship, loyalty, and other routines and rhymes provided by the gang”. In short, differences may be easy to find, but gang similarities may be more prevalent and significant.

With this in mind, I now turn to aspects that may influence and maintain gang membership.

Understanding the Influences of Gang Membership and Action

Like researchers of earlier eras, modern gang researchers, as will become clear, have investigated gangs within their social and economic contexts. As previously noted, Thrasher (1927) talked about the ‘situation complex’, or the interactions between a multitude of factors that combine to encourage and maintain gang membership. As will be shown in this section, many studies are now identifying these relationships – some of which are new and unique and reflect modern economic and social changes; others appear more universal.

One significant explanation for gang developments in the U.S. in more recent times has been the emergence of what are called ‘underclass’ communities, particularly vulnerable to economic downturns. Whereas Thrasher and other early researchers looked at neighbourhoods that were unstable due to migrant movements, underclass communities are stable but mired in intergenerational poverty.

The effects of the underclass on changes to gang longevity and heightened criminality was championed by Hagedorn (1988) and picked up by others including Short (1990) and Klein (1995: p.194) who suggested the increasing urban underclass is the “foremost cause of the recent proliferation of gangs and the most likely predictor of its continuation”. Indeed, this thesis will show that intergenerational welfare communities have formed in New Zealand, and that this underclass has been critical to the development and maturation of gangs.

The underclass hypothesis is one of the few theoretical frameworks used to understand gang membership and behaviour in the contemporary era. Gone are the lofty aspirations of earlier gang theorists of the mid-century era who sought universal explanations of gang behaviour – although these approaches (social disorganisation, lower class culture, etc) are still often used and cited (Short, 2002: p.xii). In the early 1990s, one of the most famous gang theorists, Albert Cohen (1990: p.20), made a plea for a return to theoretical attempts at understanding gangs, but this call has been largely unanswered. Indeed, Maxson suggests that a lack of theory “is perhaps the most critical of our failures” (Maxson, 2001: p.302).

While the underclass theory has proven useful in looking at gangs in recent times, it fails to address why there are no gangs where conditions suggest there should be (Hazelhurst & Hazelhurst, 1998a: p.6) and why gangs emerge in smaller communities without such deprived economic environs. Nevertheless, economic changes in the American since the 1980s, including a

shift away from manufacturing and toward a service-based economy have created social conditions that have influenced certain gang developments (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Hagedorn, 2002; Spergel, 1995).

Moore captured such changes when she returned to the barrios of Los Angeles in the 1980s after her initial study in the 1970s. Despite improvements in 'Chicano' political representation, economic restructuring had meant that 'good' jobs had vanished and new waves of legal and illegal Mexican immigrants had created further pressure on the scarce number of low wage and insecure jobs that existed. Furthermore, the types of government programmes provided by President Johnson's War on Poverty were largely a thing of the past. In all, there were fewer opportunities for those who joined gangs to cut loose their adolescent ties (J. W. Moore, 1991: p.23). The gangs were more deviant and more violent, more isolated from other adolescent peer groups and less tolerated by adult communities (J. W. Moore, 1991: p.132). Moore concluded, "the gangs are no longer just at the rowdy end of the continuum of adolescent groups – they are now really outside the continuum" (J. W. Moore, 1991: p.132).

Similarly, Jankowski (1991) felt that structural conditions within U.S. society had helped gangs to gain greater longevity by offering fewer opportunities for working class males to enter the legal labour market and thus they tended to stay in the gangs for longer and move into profit driven crime. Taylor (1989) also linked economic and gang changes. For Taylor, the economic conditions of Detroit were a significant influence on that city's evolution of gangs and

their moves toward sophistication and profit driven crime. During 1980s, the unemployment rate in Detroit exceeded the national average as the city's large automotive industry suffered in the face of foreign competition. Without this industry to provide large numbers of jobs for unskilled workers, "urban gangs have replaced Ford, GM, and Chrysler as major employers. Social conditions created by industrialization are now producing criminalization" (Taylor, 1989: p.2). Similar to those conditions prevalent in Detroit, New Zealand underwent fundamental economic restructuring in the post-1984 era, and consideration to the impact of these changes is explored in Chapter Seven.

However, it is largely accepted that there should not be an over-reliance on socioeconomic conditions as a single cause of gang membership. Different communities have different cultures and some neighbourhoods with similar social and economic conditions have differing degrees of gang problems. Thus, it is argued, there is a multitude of factors within communities that either encourage or discourage gang membership (W. B. Miller, 1990; Short, 1996b). But an acceptance that gangs may be different depending on their social conditions should not mask the fact that there appears to be certain universal elements that aid and encourage gang membership.

Social and Psychological Influences of Gang Membership

Among such universal elements are the social/psychological influences of gang recruitment and membership, something that appears as relevant to New Zealand gangs as those in America. Carlie (2002), for example, has

described the allure of the gang in terms of needs fulfilment. Gangs, he says, fulfil:

- Lower level needs:

Physiological needs (hunger, thirst, shelter, sex, and other bodily needs); and *Safety related* needs (security and protection from physical and emotional harm).

- Higher level needs:

Belongingness (affection, belonging, acceptance, and friendship); *Esteem* (self-respect, autonomy, achievement, status recognition); and *Self-actualization* (the drive to fulfil one's potential).

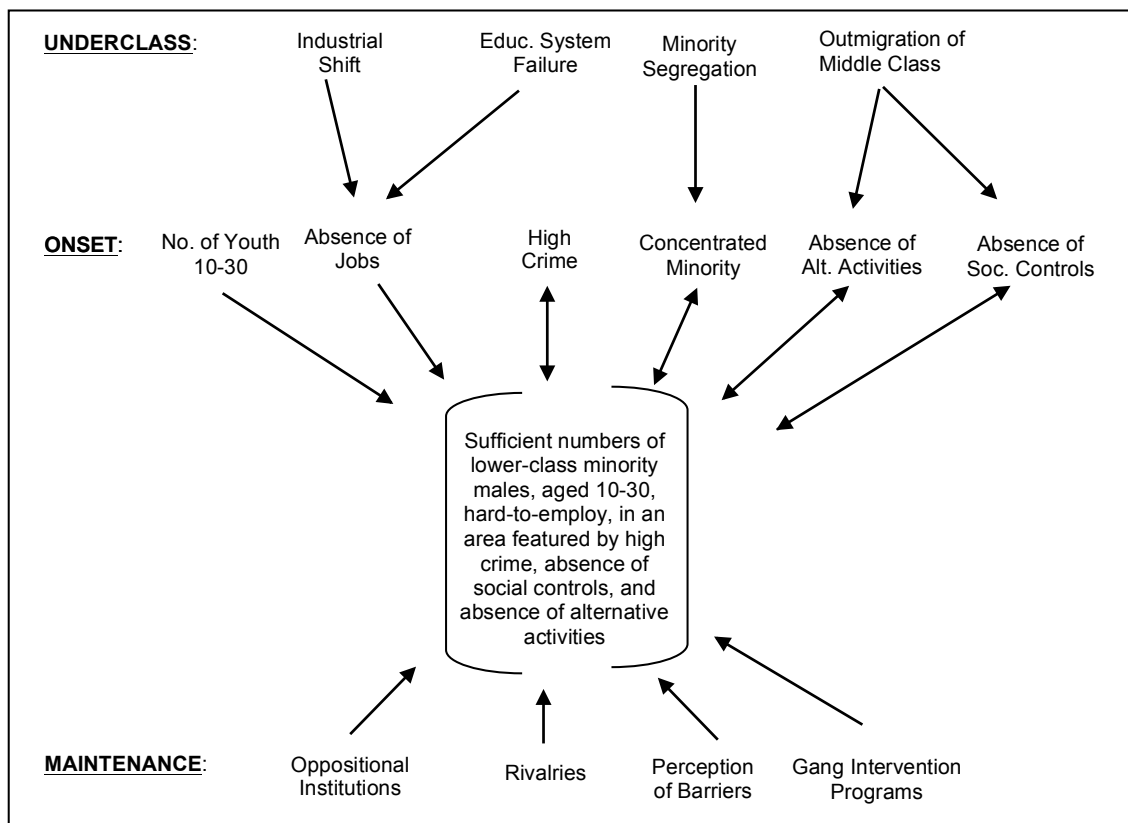
Thus, Carlie argues, gangs serve a purpose and are therefore functional. Their members “derive psychological benefits of recognition and respect” and gain in “self-esteem and in social status” as a consequence of acceptance within a gang (Carlie, 2002). Joining a gang, therefore, can be seen as a rational decision (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996: p.17; Jankowski, 1991: p.40).

In this regard, gang membership involves both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). The ‘push’ factors relate to external forces within the wider community while the ‘pull’ is the perceived benefits of membership. Expanding on this analysis, pull factors can be related to prestige, thrills, power, belonging and protection; while push factors can be seen as the negative social forces that are prominent in gang areas, such as

family instability, failure at school, poverty, life in new or unsettled communities, and having poor employment prospects. The motivation for joining gangs is therefore rather straightforward, the economically and socially deprived often face significant difficulties and hardships, to which the gang provides a remedy.

Klein's (1995: p.198) Structural Variables Model, below, highlights many of these issues:

Structural Variables Model



Thus, for Klein, structural 'Underclass' variables explain the emergence of gangs within young male minorities from working- and lower-class sections of

cities. Two other variables, 'Onset' and 'Maintenance', both contribute to the emergence of gangs; the former being structural and the other psychological (Klein, 1995: p.197-202). Of note, Klein says gang intervention programs – set up to alleviate gang problems – can act as a maintenance variable, a finding supported by Decker (2001: p.35).

Lafontaine, Ferguson & Wormith (2005: p.29-30) summarise the risk factors of gang membership within four domains: individual, familial, community, and school. Their research suggests that gang youth have more risk factors than non-gang youth in several domains. These are:

- Individual Risk factors:
 - Previous acts of delinquency
 - Negative peer associations
 - Pro-violent approaches to conflict resolution
 - Low self esteem
 - Lack of attachment to ethnic background
- Family Risk Factors
 - Poor family management
 - Low level attachments and poor supervision
 - Violent siblings
 - Parental involvement in violent activities
 - Abuse and maltreatment
- Community Risk Factors
 - Increased levels of criminal activity

- Gang presence
- Lack of opportunities including economic, social and recreational
- High drug trafficking areas
- School Risk Factors
 - Lack of attachment to school, including teachers
 - Negative teacher perception of the student
 - Low achievement
 - Learning disabilities
 - Negative labels on the student

As was the case in early research, for many youths, the initial contact with a gang or the desire for membership simply occurs out of a quest for enjoyment and belonging. Hanging about with a group of friends provides something to do, and in many areas associating with friends means getting involved with a gang (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996: p.14). However, once a gang is established in an area and begins to build a reputation, the fear it generates can force a defensive reaction. Easily exploited, isolated individuals may feel pressured to join a gang for their own protection (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996: p.23). At least two studies have found that the most common reason for joining a gang was for protection (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996: p.73; Esbensen & Lynskey, 2001: p.104). Often, then, gang membership begets gang membership.

Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs

Overwhelmingly, gang research has focused on street gangs. Outlaw motorcycle clubs (OMCs) in New Zealand, however, are widely seen as part of this country's gang scene. In fact, they are generally grouped together with street gangs to such a degree that both types of gang are viewed as a single issue. This is due to several unique characteristics of New Zealand street gangs that will be explored in the main body of this work, but, as will become quite clear, an understanding of outlaw motorcycle clubs is vital.

As noted in the previous chapter, despite being prominent in America after World War II and spreading throughout the world in the decades after, outlaw motorcycle clubs failed to gain the attention of researchers. Despite forerunner works including short articles by Montgomery in 1978 and Hopper and Moore in 1983, as well as a brief book by Harris in 1985, it was not until Wolf's study of the early 1990s and Veno's effort published in 2002 that this form of gang was the subject of detailed academic study.

Exactly why there is such a dearth of research into outlaw motorcycle clubs is unclear, but the issue was addressed in two of the three earlier publications mentioned above. Montgomery seems to insinuate that the biker gangs were seen as a trend – with the implication, perhaps, that they may not last – and were not taken seriously by academics: “To take the attitude that the subject is beneath the dignity of serious social scientists is to continue to abdicate the analysis of popular trends to journalists and Hollywood. Until now, no analysis of the subject has been provided by Sociologists” (Montgomery, 1978: p.332). While offering no explanation as to why, Hopper and Moore (1983: p.58)

noted that: “In spite of attention given to gangs generally, the outlaw motorcycle gangs have been virtually ignored by sociologists”. Interestingly, all three of the early contributions were undertaken by, or with the help of, insiders; Montgomery had been a member of a club called the Road Gypsies for one and a half years, Moore was a former president of an unspecified outlaw motorcycle club, and Harris was prominent member of the Hell’s Angels. So even in these few studies, academia did not move to investigate the gangs, the gangs – or at least members of them – had moved toward academia. Although the study of such of potentially violent groups can be dangerous (Lee, 1995: p.48-52), this has clearly not inhibited the research of street gangs. Perhaps a more likely reason for the lack of academic study, then, is the fact that, as will become evident, outlaw motorcycle clubs are generally well organised and closed subcultures with strict rules and discipline that may inhibit easy access to researchers. This does, at least in part, explain why the early studies were written or co-authored by current or ex-club members.

Looking at the studies in some detail, Hopper and Moore outline the highly organised and ritualistic nature of the outlaw motorcycle clubs, although their list of symbols used by the gangs such as 1% (signifying an outlaw), 13 (a drug user), and FTW (Fuck The World) were outlined in the 1960s books by Thompson (1967), and Hudson (1966) mentioned in the previous chapter. What this does highlight, however, is the uniformity of the outlaw motorcycle clubs over time. These symbols remain evident in the later works of Wolf and Veno. Hopper and Moore also outlined the central place that the motorcycle

upholds within these gangs. The motorcycle was seen as a focal concern, not just as a means of transport but of status. Those who were skilled in repair of their machines were regarded highly and in turn gang members motorcycles were heavily customised – usually stripped down to become ‘choppers’ (Hopper & Moore, 1983: p.60). Montgomery also highlighted the focus on heavily customised bikes as part of his overall effort to place outlaw motorcycle clubs within Bloch and Niederhoffer’s (1958) theory of masculine striving. Outlaw motorcyclists, Montgomery maintained, were expressing their ‘manliness’ through physical prowess, ‘obsession’ with and ‘boasting’ about sexual activity, and with a “big motorcycle which swells the rider with feelings of pride and power” (Montgomery, 1978: p.336-337). Furthermore, he concluded that the motorcycles’ “long front forks (ludicrously and unsafely extended by as much as three feet) are obviously phallic extensions resembling a chromed steel erection” (Montgomery, 1978: p.337). Dubious Freudian-like analysis aside, Montgomery outlined further interesting elements of outlaw motorcycle clubs such as ‘striking’ (a term often used in Canada for ‘prospecting’) and the hurdles to of gain membership of such groups. Even from these early studies, it was clear that the outlaw motorcycle clubs were better structured and organised than most street gangs. Although Hopper and Moore give a brief explanation to the rise of outlaw motorcycle clubs, this was the focal concern of Harris (1985) who looked at the working classes and the post war economy of Britain and America and then situated the rise of these gangs in historical context – and these issues will be further examined in Chapter Three.

Although these studies offered some insight into outlaw motorcycle clubs, the later works of both Wolf (1991) and Veno (2003) dwarfed their scope and detail. Wolf's book *The Rebels: A Brotherhood of Outlaw Bikers* was based primarily on a long ethnographic study of a Canadian motorcycle gang undertaken for a PhD. The work is impressive, detailed and thoughtful, and offers tremendous insight into such groups. Reminiscent of Miller's (1958) lower-class thesis, Wolf suggests:

The outlaw biker lifestyle constitutes a lower-working class bohemian subculture. The ideological foundation of the subculture accurately reflects the lower-working class origins of its participants. A man who enters this subculture in search of identity looks to the outlaw-biker tradition to provide him with long-standing values, behaviours, and symbols. What he will find are heroes and role models, a personal legacy that is consistent with what he discovered on the streets about the complete man. He will adopt attitudes and learn behaviours that gravitate around lower-class focal concerns with independence, freedom, self-reliance, toughness, impulsiveness, and masculinity, all of which will be embodied in a highly romanticized image of the anti-hero (Wolf, 1991:p.33).

Also reminiscent of the work of a mid-century gang theorist, this time Cohen (1955), Wolf held that the outlaw motorcycle clubs made up a working class subculture that seeks active resistance to "respectable identity" whereby members defined themselves as unshackled to convention (Wolf, 1991: p.58).

Wolf (1991: pp.35 & 327-328) also outlined the organisational hierarchy that outlaw motorcycle clubs maintain, both within a single chapter and also within multiple chapters of the same club. He also noted the importance of the clubhouse (p.171), the strict rules the clubs have and enforce, the democratic nature of the organisations (p.301), and the often-arduous efforts members have to go through to achieve full membership (Wolf, 1991: pp.171, 301 & 88-109). Of great importance to such groups was territory. Outlaw clubs, Wolf found, gained and held territory largely to give the group a “sense of legitimacy” but in some instances – perhaps a latent consequence – this was about monopolising an area for criminal profit (Wolf, 1991: p.320). Territorial disputes were the prime reason for inter-gang conflicts (Wolf, 1991: p.323).

What gave Wolf’s study its gravitas was his access to the Rebels MC, and it is similar access to a number of Australian outlaw motorcycle clubs that is at the heart of Veno’s work. Given the high degree of uniformity of such groups, Veno confirmed many of Wolf’s findings describing him as the “only other academic that I know of who did similar work with the clubs” (Veno, 2003: p.18). Given this, I will not repeat the findings but focus on some of the areas where Veno’s study is unique or particularly insightful.

Veno (2003: p.66) says: “The motorcycle clubs argue that unlike the apparent crime orientation of modern street gangs, they have a legitimate purpose – to pursue an alternative lifestyle through motorcycles”. And this argument he holds as legitimate, and much of his work seeks to highlight the non-criminal

elements of such groups, something that, as he points out, is incongruent with often myopic, though powerful, police and public opinions.

Veno does not dispute the fact that crime occurs within outlaw motorcycle clubs. Indeed, he acknowledges it may be one element involved in gaining membership: “To become an outlaw motorcyclist can require years of scrutiny by fellow club members, impeccable credentials as a biker and, in certain circumstances, even a requirement to commit an illegal act” (Veno, 2003: p.51). He also highlights numerous, and often high profile, violent and profit motivated crimes that outlaw motorcycle clubs and members of outlaw motorcycle clubs have been involved in. But Veno points out that crime should not be seen as a primary motivation for joining or maintaining membership to such groups; indeed the primary motivation is brotherhood, non-conformity and motorcycles. “When members,” Veno says, “call each other ‘brother’ they actually mean it. For many, the club becomes their family, particularly if they’ve come from dysfunctional homes” (Veno, 2003: p.112). Also, clubs are involved in legitimate enterprises and fundraising events (Veno, 2003: pp.120-122). Simplistic media interpretations paint a dim view of what he sees as legitimate and complex sub-cultural phenomena.

Indeed, Veno highlights instances whereby his views – clashing with common but incorrect popular assumptions – have seen him sidelined by police who occasionally became uncooperative during his research, as it appears they took his perspective on the clubs to be something akin to a gang apologist. This has stemmed in part from his belief that the clubs’ idea that the police are

just a 'big blue gang' has some legitimacy, and he notes occasions when the police's "need to be seen to be doing something overrides the rights of the clubs to go about their business unhindered" (Veno, 2003: p.213).

One further point from Veno's study is his estimate of an average age of an outlaw motorcycle club member to be 35 years. He also says that while membership is open to those over 18, it is "rare for someone to be admitted to an outlaw motorcycle club before they are 25" (Veno, 2003: p.66). From this study's findings, at least, it appears that outlaw motorcycle clubs' membership is much more mature than that of the street gangs that have been studied. Moreover, in 1983 Hopper and Moore (Hopper & Moore, 1983: p.58) found that the average age of club members they studied was 34, and "generally...between 21 and 45 years of age" and thus, it seems, outlaw motorcycle club membership appears to have been relatively mature for some time.

In recent years, research into the area of outlaw motorcycle clubs has increased further, supplementing the above works. The most notable works include that of William Dulaney, Tom Barker, and James Quinn and Craig Forsyth. Dulaney (2005) highlighted certain social and cultural factors that drove the rise of outlaw clubs, while plotting important events in outlaw club history. Similarly, Barker (2004, 2005a, 2005b) has made a number of contributions, researching the history of many leading outlaw clubs in America, as well as their spread around the world. But primarily his focus – perhaps unsurprisingly given he is an ex-law enforcement officer – is to

highlight the particular groups that have transitioned into organised criminal enterprises. Finally, Quinn and Forsyth (2009) have also added significantly to the rise and maturation of the outlaw clubs, making their most unique contribution by framing such groups as movements of resistance and countercultural forces steeped in symbolism and rituals.

Slowly but perhaps surely, the body of research involving outlaw clubs is expanding, although a lack of ethnographic research – Wolf and Veno aside – remains apparent.

Understanding Gangs and Gender

Like outlaw motorcycle clubs, researchers have also traditionally ignored women in gangs, but in recent times they have come an important focus of much gang research in the modern era. With few exceptions, studies before the 1980s paid little attention to females in gangs and, when they were addressed, they were largely defined in terms of their relationships to male gang members. One of perhaps three exceptions (Curry, 1998) to the male-centred stereotypes was Walter Miller (W. B. Miller, 1973), whose study of two female gangs in the early 1970s led him to a tripartite classification of female gangs: auxiliary gangs (affiliated to male gangs), mixed sex gangs, and independent or autonomous gangs (W. B. Miller, 1975). Although these classifications have been judged sexist (“because the gender structure of male gangs is rarely at issue”) and, like criticisms of early male typologies of an earlier era, they may be too simplistic, “no researchers to date have advanced an alternative typology” (Maxson & Whitlock, 2002: p.22). Indeed,

they have been, and remain, widely used in the field of female gang research, an area of study that became an important focus for many researchers during the 1980s and beyond.

Following Anne Campbell's (1984) groundbreaking and feminist orientated work *The Girls in the Gang* of the mid-1980s, there has been significant attention paid to gangs and gender. In fact, less than 20 years after Campbell's offering, Jody Miller (2002) concluded that it can no longer be said that female involvement in gangs is an understudied phenomenon. Indeed, Miller suggested that: "It is safe to say that we now have more information about girls in gangs, and from a variety of methodological perspectives, than at any point in the long history of gang research" (J. Miller, 2002: pp.175-176). Be that as it may, the findings from research on girls or women in and around gangs remain inconclusive.

While Campbell's pioneering study of three New York gangs (two auxiliary and one mixed) gave depth and texture to our understanding of women gang members, her female participants were nevertheless largely defined by their interaction with gang males. Although the role of the girls was more than just sexual, as had been commonly depicted in the majority of earlier research, "it could not be said their roles have altered significantly. They exist as an annex to the male gang, and the range of possibilities open to them is dictated and controlled by the boys" (A. Campbell, 1984: p.266). This secondary role played by females in gangs was supported by Mann (1984: p.45) who found the role of girls was "to conceal and carry weapons for the boys, to provide

sexual favors, and sometimes to fight against girls who were connected with enemy boys' gangs". In the early 1990s, Jankowski (1991: p.146) found that in every gang he studied, "women were considered a form of property".

Although this attitude was also prevalent in Moore's (1991) research, she documented numerous female auxiliary gangs that had certain autonomy and power. Moreover, she found a significant disconnect between how male members viewed female members and how female members viewed themselves (J. W. Moore, 1991: p.53-59), lending some evidence to the argument that researchers whose scholarly lens was focused on males may have been getting a distorted view of females in gangs (A. Campbell, 1990; Chesney-Lind, Sheldon, & Joe, 1996).

Certainly researchers in more recent times have begun to suggest that females may be more prominent and active in gang activities, reflecting increases in gang crime generally, although it is accepted that their level of offending is lower than that of males (Chesney-Lind et al., 1996). In Detroit, Taylor (1993) found that females were becoming active players in gang crime, particularly the drug trade. He concluded that: "A new attitude of female criminal independence is emerging. The male-female gang relationship is also being altered (Taylor, 1993: p.23). Similarly, Fisherman (1995: p.90) claimed that the females in an auxiliary gang in Chicago "have become more entrenched, more violent, and more orientated to 'male crime'". But whether or not findings such as these could be applied generally is unclear, and there

remained “a substantial variation both between gangs and within gang in the ways in which girls behave” (J. W. Moore & Hagedorn, 1996: p.206).

What appears to be clearer, however, is that female participation in gang membership, like gang membership generally, has increased since the 1980s. Although autonomous female gangs are extremely rare, auxiliary gangs are significantly more common, but the majority of female gang members are in mixed gendered gangs (Maxson & Whitlock, 2002; J. Miller, 2002: p.172). Maxson and Whitlock (2002: p.22) have suggested that while law enforcement agencies produce very low figures of female gang involvement (less than 10 percent), “it is reasonable to conclude that girls represent... probably somewhere between one fourth and one third of all gang members”. Similar conclusions had been reached by Moore (1991), but such figures are a tremendous increase from Miller’s (1975) estimate of 10 percent from the mid-1970s, although some think that figure may have been underestimated (Chesney-Lind et al., 1996: p.194). Curry (1998) has pointed out that much of the law enforcement data were unreliable because of issues such as incomparability of methodology, non uniformity of police definitions, failing to classify females as gang members, and the fact that not all delinquency is brought to police attention.

Other types of data collection, however, such as self reporting surveys, can also yield significantly different results depending on the age range of the samples under study (Maxson & Whitlock, 2002: p.21), and reason for this lies with differing gender demographics. Females tend to join gangs at a younger

age than males do, and they tend to exit at a younger age as well (Maxson & Whitlock, 2002: p.21). Fagan has suggested that the “motivations for ganging among young women may be weaker and shorter in duration compared to their male counterparts” (Fagan, 1996: p.71). He concludes that because the barriers to women entering the workforce are weaker than those facing men, there is an easier transition to adult roles and reduces the influence the gang has on their lives (Fagan, 1996: p.71-72). A further reason for females leaving gangs was put forth by Moore and Hagedorn (1996: p.211), who suggested that “responsibilities associated with child rearing may speed up the process of maturing out of the gang”.

Like males, female gang membership is a product of the social environment, but motivations for joining the gang may be different depending on gender (Maxson & Whitlock, 2002: p.31). Moore (1991: p.30), for one, has suggested that the personal biographies of gang women may be worse than that of men, and she and others have suggested that the consequences of gang membership may impact more negatively on the lives of females than males (J. Miller, 2002; J. W. Moore, 1991; J. W. Moore & Hagedorn, 1996). These conclusions should perhaps be treated with caution, however, until further research is conducted. As Maxson and Whitlock (2002: p.20) suggest, “Despite the recent contributions to our understanding of female gang involvement, we have not yet reached a level of knowledge to permit generalized descriptions of female gang members or to compare them with male gang members”.

Given the paucity of gang studies in New Zealand generally, it is rather surprising that female participation in this country's gangs has received any attention at all; albeit the contribution is a single study. This work, however, takes on added importance, as "there is virtually no literature on female gangs outside of the United States" (J. W. Moore, 2007: p.189). Sharing the name of the Campbell's pioneering work, Dennehy and Newbold's (2001) *The Girls in the Gang* reported that female gang involvement (as associates to New Zealand's traditional 'patched' gangs) is often driven by numerous negative social and psychological factors (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.148). Many women sought gang association for a sense of belonging, identity and feelings of security – although many found the reality meet the expectation. The emphasis that New Zealand gangs put on 'toughness' and 'staunchness' (unconditional commitment to the gang) were not seen by gang members as female qualities, and women were viewed as 'weak' and 'unreliable' (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.152). Gang association, then, became an extension of the negative lives women had led before entering the gang realm, and a place of subordination and sexual and physical violence. Despite this, many stayed with the gangs for long periods. Although many gang women were often complicate in male driven crimes, the moves toward 'male' criminal autonomy present in some American research is absent.

Definitional Problems

Although recent studies have illuminated a great deal in relation to our understanding of gangs, much of the research has highlighted – or perhaps accepted – that the complexity of the issue defies simple explanation.

Perhaps the most obvious example of this surrounds gang definitions. Like the status frustration theories of the 1950s, and outlined in the previous chapter, gang definitions have become a significant point of fierce debate for many contemporary gang researchers. Indeed, to this day, how a gang is defined – surely the most fundamental issue of such research – remains contested. It is from this contestation, and based on my own research, that I have formulated the definitions outline in the introduction to this thesis.

The issue of definition is not merely one of academic interest or musing. How gangs are defined has significant implications for gang statistics, public concern, and subsequently policy. (Esbensen, Winfree, & Taylor, 2001; Spergel, 1995: p.17). Studies show that different definitions produce significantly different results with regard to accessing gang numbers and gang crime (Covey, 2003: p.25; Maxson & Klein, 1996). A definition that is too narrow will exclude relevant data and underestimate the issue, and one that is too broad will elicit too many data and exaggerate it. The implication is that a single community under study can be seen to have a significant or benign gang problem based not on what is happening on the street, but on how the issue is defined. The impact on policy is somewhat obvious: overestimation may lead to moral panic, and underestimation a denial of the problem – both outcomes have an impact on how the issue is addressed (Spergel, 1995: p.17). Unfortunately, however, gang experts have failed to agree on many issues surrounding definitions (Ball & Curry, 1995) and the arguments are such that they can only be touched upon here.

Early gang researchers, for example Thrasher (1927) and Short and Strodtbeck (1965), never agreed on a precise definition of the term 'gang', but often used descriptions of the process by which they formed, describing unsupervised youths developing cohesiveness through conflict. In 1971, Klein wrote: "Practitioners, researchers, and theoreticians alike have used the "gang" sometimes inconsistently, sometimes loosely, and sometimes in direct opposition to each other, but never in concert" (Klein, 1971: p.8). Recognising this, it was both he and Miller who most notably attempted gang definitions that could be universally applied – their approaches, though, were quite different.

For Klein (1971: p.13), a gang could be defined as:

[A]ny denotable adolescent group of youngsters who (a) are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others in their neighborhood, (b) recognize themselves as a denotable group (almost invariably with a name) and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighborhood residents and/or enforcement agencies.

Now contrast this with Miller (1975: p.9), who defined a gang as:

A group of recurrently associating individuals with identifiable leadership and internal organization, identifying with or claiming control

over territory in the community, and engaging either individually or collectively in violent or other forms of illegal behavior.

Looking at these two definitions, Klein's is broad and encompassing (Sanders, 1994: p.9) and could quite easily include, for example, rowdy college fraternities and other groups that are not readily perceived as gangs (Esbensen et al., 2001: p.108). Miller's definition, on the other hand, is detailed and specific, and if we accept that many gangs of the time tended to have fluid internal organisation and informal leadership (Klein, 1971: p.92), we must accept that this definition would exclude some groups of interest. Even without these criticisms, however, which would have been valid at the time the definitions were devised as they are now, it is perhaps clear that both would have needed modification in light of recent changes to the gang scene, and thereby raising the possibility that any definition may have a fixed usefulness. Gangs are no longer solely the domain of 'youngsters' as outlined in Klein's definition, and, for example, Taylor's (1989) 'organised gangs' no longer make claims to a specific territory as per Miller. However, what these definitions held in common – and it was something that remains central to many definitions since – is the inclusion of illegal activity as a key definitional component.

Although, as Klein pointed out, both he and Miller saw crime as just a small part of gang life, he nevertheless felt criminal orientation was a crucial 'tipping point' that could be used to distinguish gang from non-gang (Klein, 1995: p.27 & 29). Such a position has become widely but not universally held, and during

the resurgence of gang research since the 1980s, it has become a point of focal concern. The exponents of definitional criminal inclusion are many (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996: p.31; Klein, 2005: p.136; Sanders, 1994: p.11; Spergel, 1995: pp.22-23), but it appears that in recent times these ranks have swelled significantly. Klein (2005: p.136) says the 'consensus Eurogang definition' – that includes a criminal caveat – “is agreed on by more than 100 gang research scholars in the United States and Europe”. I will examine this definition shortly.

Although they find themselves holding a minority position, researchers who reject the idea of a criminal component in a definition like Hagedorn (1988), Moore (1991), and Short (2007), do so primarily because a research investigation becomes a tautology; one element a researcher seeks to explain (crime) is a priori in the definition. Short believes that “including law breaking in the definition creates a circular argument. Definitions cannot explain, and if we want to understand gang delinquent/criminal behaviour, such behaviour must not be part of the definition” (Short, 2007: p.321). A further reason opposing having criminality in a definition is that in doing so one raises crime to a position of prominence that is unwarranted and unreflective of reality (remember that even Klein and Miller recognised crime to be a just small part of gang life). Moreover, and consequently, by defining gangs as criminal, such groups become regarded as an issue of law and order rather than as an entity in themselves, creating a tendency to look at the symptoms of the problem rather than at the problem itself.

An example of a non-criminal definition is provided by Hagedorn (2005a) which he initially devised in 1988:

Gangs are organizations of the street composed of either 1) the socially excluded or 2) alienated, demoralised, or bigoted elements of a dominant racial, ethnic, or religious group.

In looking at such a definition, it becomes quite clear that the exclusion of a criminal component appear to significantly change the focus of the gang issue.

In 2007, just two years after Klein announced more than 100 researchers had accepted the 'Eurogang' definition aimed at definitional uniformity within and between the U.S. and Europe, Hagedorn, produced a new and ambitious definition that sought to encompass all of the world's gangs. Given that, as will be shown in the following section, globalisation processes and their impact on gangs had become a popular subject around the turn of the millennium and beyond, an attempt at a global definition was not in itself startling. What was surprising, however, was the fact that Hagedorn, one of the leading champions of non-criminal definitions, included a criterion of criminality. He did not, however, totally relinquish his original position. Hagedorn (re)defined gangs as follows:

Gangs are organizations of the socially excluded. While gangs begin as unsupervised adolescent peer groups and most remain so, some

institutionalize in barrios, favelas, ghettos, and prisons. Often these institutionalized gangs become business enterprises within the informal economy and a few are linked to international criminal cartels. Most gangs share a racialized or ethnic identity and a media-diffused oppositional culture. Gangs have variable ties to conventional institutions and, in given conditions, assume social, economic, political, cultural, religious, or military roles (Hagedorn, 2007a: p.309).

He supplemented this definition with a diagram (below) that categorises gangs across dimensions of organisation and ethnicity (Hagedorn, 2007a: p.310):

	Type		Ethnicity	
	Dominant Group or Ethnicity	Oppressed Group or Ethnicity	Dominant Group or Ethnicity	Oppressed Group or Ethnicity
Interstitial	Industrial-era U.S. ethnic gangs; most European male and female gangs and all unsupervised peer groups of dominant ethnicities		Most black, Latino, & Asian male and female U.S. gangs; German Turkish, British Bangladeshi, & New Zealand Maori gangs; most Third World gangs	
Institutional	U.S. "Voting Gangs"; Triads in Asia; Hindu mandals in		Chicago and LA "super-gangs"; NYC Latin Kings;	

India; U.S. mafia and	U.S. Tongs; some South
Russian mafiya; Japanese	African Black, Colored, and
Yakuza; Colombian &	Indian gangs; many prison
Nigerian cartels	gangs

With this typography, Hagedorn (2007a: p.310) extends his “old argument...of the need to reframe the gang problem outside of the criminal justice matrix”. In defending this assertion, he says:

To see most gangs as interstitial is to say that most gang members still are unsupervised groups of juveniles. But to say that other gangs are institutional means that they must have at least a degree of legitimacy to survive. To say institutional gangs are similar to other organizations of the socially excluded demands a political and social treatment of these institutions as well as a criminal justice response where warranted...To define some gangs as institutionalized is to understand them not simplistically as organized crime but as social constructions that cognitively organize reality for their members and environment” (Hagedorn, 2007a: p.310).

Indeed, Hagedorn makes a compelling argument that his thrust to see gangs in a holistic way remains the same, given his new definition has taken a significant step back from a position he had articulated for nearly 20 years. While ostensibly his new definition was in recognition of changes surrounding

globalisation, it was perhaps as much in recognition that many contemporary gangs, like the global village, had changed too.

By way of comparison, I will return now to briefly discuss and review the Eurogang definition, which is:

A street gang is any durable, street-orientated youth group whose own identity includes involvement in illegal activity (cited in Klein, 2005: p.136)

Few could argue with Klein's description of the definition as 'minimalist', indeed he uses five points to better illuminate its meaning (Klein, 2005: p.136). He explains:

Point 1. "Durable" is a bit ambiguous, but at least several months can be used as a guideline. Many gang groups come together and dissipate in a few months. The durability refers to the group, which continues despite turnover of members.

Point 2. "Street-orientated" implies spending a lot of group time outside, work, home, and school – often on streets, in malls, parks, in cars and so on.

Point 3. “Youth” can be a bit ambiguous. Most street gangs are more adolescent than adult, but some include members in their 20s and even 30s. Most have average ages in adolescence or early 20s.

Point 4. “Illegal” generally means delinquent or criminal, not just bothersome.

Point 5. “Identity” refers to the group, to the collective situation, not the individual self-image (Klein, 2005: p.36).

The fact that Klein uses the term ‘ambiguous’ twice in explaining the definition, suggests that it could be loosely interpreted. Also, within the definition a variety of different categories of gangs can exist (Klein, 2002: p.241). Despite this, the definition’s focus is nevertheless narrow, purposely excluding groups such as prison gangs, motorcycle gangs and adult criminal organisations (Klein, 2005: p.136). Moreover, despite the definition being widely agreed to, many European researchers rejected the term ‘gang’ and thus an allowance was made to substitute the term with ‘problematic youth group’ – it was one way of appeasing those researchers who did not wish to create moral panic by unnecessarily labelling troublesome groups (Klein, 2002: p.241). In light of such concerns, one wonders how tight the agreement around the definition will prove to be. The Eurogang definition, however, is one element of a holistic research endeavour and that project, as will be shown in the following section, does have exciting potential for comparative research.

Although the Hagedorn and Eurogang definition were inspired by transnational or global research, and both have a criminal component, it is clear they share few similarities. In fact, any comparisons are superficial at best given the encompassing nature of one and the narrowness of the other. They may, however, serve to highlight the idea that there is room for different definitions. Indeed, the drive for a single universal gang definition may prove to be a casualty of the increasing complexity of gangs that may necessitate and make desirable a number of definitional approaches. Such a situation revives the ideas of Ruth Horowitz from the early 1990s.

Horowitz (1990) has proven to be a rather lone but interesting voice. Where others sought uniformity of definition, she – rather persuasively – argued that such an endeavour was futile as social scientists were unlikely to ever universally agree and, if they did, they would fail to sell the idea to the public and policy makers (Horowitz, 1990: p.47). Moreover, she felt such an effort was quite probably overrated anyway; fearing focused definitional parameters may narrow topics studied and questions asked (Horowitz, 1990: p.43). This is not to say that Horowitz sought to ignore definition, as some in recent times have appeared inclined to do (Short, 2007: p.322), she just expressed comfort with definitional plurality and change, arguing that new definitions “are useful because they uncover phenomena and connections previously unseen and thus unexplored” (Horowitz, 1990: p.47). Such ideas still hold certain relevance, despite a consensus that a standardised definition holds significant

importance (Klein, 2005; Lafontaine et al., 2005; Maxson & Klein, 1996; Spergel, 1995).

Clearly the debate around definition remains alive and, in the face of a growing investigation into global gangs as well as changes in American gangs, it appears the issues faced by those seeking to define gangs are more difficult than ever before. In this environment, Horowitz's ideas resonate with renewed volume and while definitional conformity will undoubtedly aid comparative analysis, definitions that seek this may have to be narrow and specific and exist within a number of definitional categories. In this way, the Eurogang definition may be just one of many that can define the plethora of gang types. Such an idea does not exclude efforts such as Hagedorn's. It seems to me that large and encompassing definitions are also useful in categorising different types of gangs within one country and indeed around the world. Importantly, such a definition also keeps alive the idea that gangs should be defined as more than just criminal entities.

Globalisation, Gangs, and Comparative Research

Perhaps the most recent development in contemporary gangs research has been a focus on gangs outside of America and incorporating the impact that globalisation has had on gangs and gang research. As noted in the previous chapter, and as has become clear, the history of gang research is largely an American history. In recent times this has begun to change; slightly perhaps, but in significant ways. A numbers of books, often with multiple contributors, have been published around the turn of the new millennium and beyond that

investigate gangs in different countries and the global processes that influence them, for example, *Gangs and Youth Subcultures: International Explorations* edited by Hazlehurst and Hazlehurst (1998b), *Street Gangs Throughout the World* by Covey (2003), and *Gangs in the Global City* edited by Hagedorn (2007d). One further example, *The Eurogang Paradox: Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the U.S. and Europe* edited by Klein, Kerner, Maxson and Weitkamp (2001) is based on the work of numerous American and European researchers who sought to undertake – and continue to encourage – comparative research between the U.S. and numerous countries on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

As stated above, the participants in the Eurogang project agreed upon a simple definition for gangs, but they also outlined a comprehensive set of rules in an attempt to standardise data collection via ethnographic research and surveys (Klein 2005 p147-148). Again, the focus is on comparative research and so methods are standardised in order to gain comparable results. Although the thrust has come from a multi-country consortium of researchers from different countries, the need for uniformity is as much about research in the U.S. as it is about Europe. This is because most U.S. studies have been done in isolation and have looked at specific samples, making comparisons between them difficult (Covey, 2003: p.14; Klein, 2005).

Early results of the Eurogang project have highlighted many interesting findings, but most significantly, they have brought into stark relief the lack of research done on gangs in Europe, and the fact that many European

countries either do not have, or do not recognise, a gang problem. Either way, it is safe to say that for the most part, gangs in Europe are not as significant or entrenched as gangs in America (Covey, 2003: p.100; Weitekamp, 2001). Whether or not this perception changes as more research is undertaken remains to be seen. The thrust of uniform, comparable research, however, is one that has the potential to yield fascinating and important results.

One point of interest that has emerged from initial findings of the Eurogang project is the influence of American gangs on youths from other countries. In places such as Britain, Netherlands, and Norway some youths have adopted the style of American street gangs, largely the Bloods and Crips. In the Netherlands one group had even taken a specific name of a large Los Angeles Crip gang the 'Eight Trays' they had found in a book by 'Monster' Cody, an American gang member who has penned an autobiography (Germet, 2001: p.150). The Dutch group had adopted the clothing, hand signals and language directly from their American counterparts (Gruter & Versteegh, 2001: p.137). Although common in style, this group – and others like them – were reported to be less intent on armed violence and did not fight over territory and seemed to be “more connected with their wish to look like the boys in daily MTV-clips” (Gruter & Versteegh, 2001: p.141). These groups are clearly not directly linked to their namesakes in the U.S., but as Maxson (1998: p.5) has highlighted, many such groups who share the name Bloods or Crips in the U.S. are not connected in any real way either, despite certain claims by law enforcement agencies. Indeed, Monster Cody's autobiography is replete with stories of Crip inter 'set' violence and hatred (Kody Scott,

1993). In fact, it was the mistaken belief held by many European researchers that American gangs were more connected and organised than they commonly are, that led to a belief that their local 'problematic youth groups' were not gangs at all – this paradox was the inspiration for the book title '*The Eurogang Paradox*'.

The advent of LA-style street gangs is also evident in New Zealand. Referring to today's youth gangs, Eggleston believes that the Americanisation of New Zealand has been increasingly influential on the country's youth. He sees the new 'gangsta' style being mimicked by the new groups as a feature that demarcates them from existing "well established" New Zealand gangs (Eggleston, 2000). As will become clear in the body of this research, however, New Zealand's traditional gangs also had their genesis in American culture via the understudied outlaw motorcycle clubs.

While the Eurogang project seeks similarities and comparisons, many new studies on gangs around the world show seemingly fundamental differences between gangs of different countries and may require a rethink of the traditional American approach to gang research. As Covey says, "The study of street gangs in different countries poses a complex set of methodological considerations for the scholar. Problems exist in the equivalence of data, as well as problems in the conceptualization and operationalization of gangs and the measurement of gang prevalence and activity" (Covey, 2003: p.7). For example, does the term *dacoit* in India or the term *Bande* in Germany mean the same thing as *gang* in the U.S? (Covey, 2003: p.7; Huizinga & Schumann,

2001: p231). Moreover, research has begun to highlight the tremendous diversity of gangs around the world in countries that do not resemble the U.S. (Short, 2007: p.320). Such diversity can be seen in heavily armed drug gangs in Rio de Janeiro's favelas; politicised and armed youths in Haiti; or vigilante security groups, like the Bakassi Boys, in Nigeria; and Hagedorn (2005b: p.158) therefore concludes that, in a worldwide setting, "social disorganization and juvenile delinquency are too narrow for the study of gangs".

A further focus for researchers of gangs around the world is the impact of globalisation. Clearly the impact of American culture via popular media is having – or rather continues to have – an impact in certain countries, but perhaps more significant are global economic shifts, rapid urbanisation, and migrations of people. But these global happenings and their impact on the gangs around the world is little understood, and it is for this reason that calls for more research around the world are being made (Covey, 2003: P31; Hagedorn, 2005b; Klein, 2005; Short, 2007: p.330). It is my intention that this research will contribute to this body of knowledge.

New Zealand Research Contributions

Like non-American gang studies generally, New Zealand has not built a strong body of gang research. Notwithstanding this, since the arrival of patched gangs in the 1960s, there is some work from which I have been able to draw.

In 1971, two criminology students, J. D. Howman (1971) and C. Anastasiou (1971) from Victoria University, undertook research on 'Polynesian' (incorporating Maori and Pacific Peoples) gangs in Auckland and Wellington. Drawing on the works of both Levett (1959) and Green (1959), noted in the previous chapter, the study – although somewhat superficial – found that, like those earlier studies, gang membership was a largely youthful dalliance, however, they also made the important observation that certain gangs, namely the Hell's Angels, the Highway 61, the Stormtroopers and the Mongrel Mob, were maintaining their membership into adulthood (Howman, 1971: p.38). It was a finding that supported a government study (Investigating Committee, 1970) undertaken one year earlier. Also, like the studies of Levett and Green before them, Howman and Anastasiou located gang membership largely in certain lower class suburbs, typified by state housing.

In 1982, a University of Waikato Master of Arts student, Edward Marsh (1982), undertook a systematic study of the Mongrel Mob and Black Power by surveying 30 incarcerated members of those gangs. Although the research primarily sought to ascertain the participants' feelings in relation to "gangs, formal institutions, and the community" (Marsh, 1982: p.93), it also provided valuable insight into the hierarchical structures, internal dynamics, and ethos of the two largest patched street gangs in New Zealand.

In the same year that Marsh submitted his thesis, Jane Kelsey and Warren Young (1982) published a challenging review of attitudes toward gangs stemming from Cohen's notion of 'Moral Panic'. Examining the Moerewa riot

of 1978 – a critical event in New Zealand gang history – Kelsey and Young highlight the role that sensational media coverage can play in creating a distorted view of gang realities and stoking suppressive legislative measures as a means of social control. It is without doubt one of the most noteworthy pieces of work undertaken in the field of gang research in New Zealand, but one with which I take some issue in Chapter Six.

In 1987, in what appears to be New Zealand's first investigation of non-patched gangs (since the emergence of patched gangs in this country, at least), Spoonley (1987) identified the rise of racist skinhead gangs, linking them to social developments – particularly musical influences – stemming from Britain. Although few in number, these gangs had been involved in some racially motivated violent activity. Despite little public concern about skinhead groups at that time, Spoonley warned of the potential dangers of such gangs. Indeed, his concern proved prescient, and in a period during the 1990s, skinheads burst dramatically into national consciousness, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

In 1992, John Meek (1992) examined the prominence and impact of gangs in prison. Although narrow in focus, Meek's work is one of the few thorough and detailed gang studies undertaken in this country. It was not, however, the first study that examined gangs in prison, having followed a minor work published by Currie in 1989. In a significant finding, Currie (1989) found the gangs had strong bonds of solidarity within prison. Similarly, and drawing on the work of Newbold (1989b), Meek outlined how gangs had transformed inmate culture

by shifting allegiances that largely encompassed the whole prison population to allegiances formed around the gangs. Despite these developments, Meek, with the aid of an 'unpublished departmental paper', outlined just 16 major disturbances in New Zealand prisons involving gangs between 1980 and 1990. The relatively small number of major disturbances, however, belies the tremendous underlying tension that existed within many of the country's penal institutions; and Meek's examination of the problems at Paremoremo during the latter half of the 1980s offers testimony to this. Further significant contributions were made by Meek through his findings that, in comparison to the inmate population, gang members tended to be younger, were more likely to be serving time for crimes of violence, incarcerated for longer periods, have more convictions, and be convicted of their first offence at a younger age (Meek, 1992: pp.270-271).

In a broad overview of crime and deviance in New Zealand, Greg Newbold (1992) engaged with the issues of gangs, outlining the limited historic knowledge of them and their involvement in criminal activities, and made the important connection between the incarceration of a number of Hell's Angels members and the group's moves into profit driven crime.

In contrast to the academic work of Newbold, and undoubtedly reflecting the growing public fascination with gangs, Bill Payne's (1997) journalistic book *Staunch* is almost certainly the most widely read work on gangs in New Zealand. Despite the book's lack of academic rigour, it does offer important first hand testimonies from many gang members, who outline several

important historic events in New Zealand gang history. Moreover, the fact that Payne was able to gain a high degree of access to many of New Zealand's most prominent gangs highlighted the fact that the dearth of New Zealand research was not due to a lack of opportunity. Despite this, few researchers have followed Payne's example and entered the field to systematically study gangs.

One relatively minor example of such work came in response to a growing skinhead presence in the South Island city of Christchurch. During the mid-1990s, Rasjad Addison (1996), for his Masters of Arts degree at the University of Canterbury, explored the culture and activities of skinhead gangs. Like Spoonley before him, Addison linked the rise of skinheads in New Zealand to British influences and examined a form of detached youth work being employed in Christchurch: a scheme run by the controversial Kyle Chapman, who went on to become the leader of a white supremacist faction and the face of racial politics in New Zealand.

In the late 1990s, Pahmi Winter (1998) contributed a chapter to an international book on gangs and youth subcultures, and it appears to be the first time a New Zealand study exclusively looking at gangs attempted to reach a world audience and thus, actively contribute or engage with the international canon of gang research. Winter's focus was ostensibly on contemporary developments within and around the Mongrel Mob, and specifically the rise of MAP, the Mob Advisory Panel. Winter used these topics as a springboard to investigate attitudes toward addressing the issue of gangs

in New Zealand, suggesting that the focus had swung away from social/community approaches and toward a 'political' approach based on suppression. Indeed, Winter's chapter came at a time of a sea change in New Zealand's approach to gangs, something that is explored in detail in Chapters Seven and Nine.

Despite the increasing legislative measures being targeted at gangs toward the end of the 1990s, there was not a corresponding increase in research during this period. There were, however, some interesting additions.

Although, Spoonley, Addison and Payne extended a research focus beyond patched gangs by profiling skinhead gangs, it was Eggleston (2000) who broke new ground with his Ph.D research during the 1990s. Eggleston studied the emergence of a new form of youth gang proliferating in many urban centres, stylised on the 'Bloods' and 'Crips', which, as outlined earlier in this chapter, formed in America and were then emulated in many parts of the world. Indeed, the study attributed the rise of such gangs in this country to the "surging" effects of 'McDonaldisation' (Eggleston, 2000: p.149). Eggleston used ethnographic research and formal interviews to understand and interpret the language of gang members. The study found that the gang members closely mimicked American popular cultural influences, such as those stemming from movies and music, and that these developments separated the new gangs from the well established patched gangs. Eggleston did, however, question whether these gang youths – his subjects ranged in age from eleven to 24 years old – who were so adept at "talking the talk", were in

actual fact “walk[ing] the walk?” (Eggleston, 2000: p.160). His question, as will be shown in the penultimate chapter of this thesis, was to be answered in the affirmative, as a spate of LA-style street gang murders occurred on the mid-2000s.

Further advancing knowledge of patched gangs, and continuing the tradition of student produced work, University of Auckland Master of Arts candidate Dominic Andrae (2004) examined such gangs through the familiar themes of media sensationalism and moral panic. He also explored the attractions of gang membership including such factors as acceptance, status, power, economic support and respect (Andrae, 2004: p.32). Andrae’s most important contribution, however, was his examination of symbolism and how this affected and affirmed gang member behaviour and activity. This symbolism was primarily represented by gang attire and particularly the back patch, which aided in the formation of a distinct anti-social identity. Andrae also explored rituals – such as initiation ceremonies – and the distinct stages that a prospective member must move through in order to gain full gang membership; a process that ensures commitment to a gang’s ethos and commits him to the social status of an outsider.

Similar themes were engaged with in 2007 by Dave Haslett (2007) in his Masters research at the University of Canterbury on early outlaw motorcycle clubs in the South Island. To date, Haslett’s work is the only significant study to focus on outlaw clubs in this country. Haslett explored the idea of ‘myth making’ around such groups and was another to draw on Cohen’s Moral

Panic, suggesting the outlaw clubs were 'folk devils', so shaped through sensational media and the unfettered framing done by the police.

That same year, New Zealand gained its first true insider's view of a gang when former Mongrel Mob president Tuhoe 'Bruno' Isaac (2007) published his memoirs. Invaluable for its detail of the Mongrel Mob's attitudes and activities, it also tells his version of events at nationally uniting the gang's many chapters at Ambury Park in 1987, an event that I discuss in Chapter Seven, and one that marks the third pivot point in New Zealand gang history.

As this thesis was drawing to its conclusion, another book that sheds some light on women in or around the gang scene was published. Pip Desmond's (2009) history of the Aroha Trust, an all female work cooperative that was closely aligned with the Wellington chapter of the Black Power. As well as giving further insight into women associated with gangs, their motivations and experiences, and supporting the prior work done by Dennehy and Newbold (2001) outlined earlier in this chapter, it also offers a unique perspective on the activities of certain key people who influenced the development of Black Power, something outlined in Chapter Five of this thesis.

Notwithstanding some important contributions, it is clear that gangs in New Zealand have failed to gain significant academic attention. This relative paucity of research means that a sound base of knowledge is lacking, and this thesis is an effort at working toward building such a foundation.

Conclusion

Since the 1980s, gang research has advanced significantly, yet in many ways the issue has become less clear. The complexity of the gang situation, observed by Thrasher in Chicago in the 1920s, has become even more evident as gangs, and subsequently gang studies, have spread to a greater number of American cities. Rich and detailed research from throughout that country in recent years has proven, perhaps beyond anything else, that gangs in different places evolve for different reasons depending on numerous variables including ethnicity, economy, migration, levels of poverty, and group organisational structure.

Nevertheless, even within these differences, many similarities are evident and, as has been shown, broad generalisations in relation to the social, psychological and economic influences surrounding gangs and their members are both many and valid. Moreover, during this era, the breadth of research has expanded to include previously ignored areas such as females in gangs and, particularly important for this study, outlaw motorcycle gangs.

The changes within the gang scene have potentially made the already demanding task of defining exactly what a gang is more difficult. It appears increasingly clear that the pithy definitions of the past are inadequate and that a more sophisticated and nuanced approach is required. Although this study predominately focuses on patched gangs, which provide the benefit of self identification, as outlined in the introduction to this thesis I have set about creating a number of definitions to incorporate all such groups in New Zealand, but which also allow for the necessity of differentiation.

Internationally, the range of gang research now appears set to expand significantly given the fact that gang studies in recent times have begun to globalise and focus on gangs around the world. These studies seem set to both bolster and test American literature that has for so long provided the authoritative paradigms. Until now, New Zealand contributions to global gang research have been limited. Although a greater input to the international cannon is desirable, the fact that gangs are increasingly becoming imbedded within New Zealand society and, as such, are the target of ever increasing legal measures, it is increasingly obvious that more knowledge in the area is not only desirable but, in my view, necessary.

It is with a view to contributing to that global body of knowledge, as well as to better informing gang policy locally, that I now turn to look at the rise and development of gangs in New Zealand.

Chapter Three.

The Foundations for the Modern Gang: The 1950s.

Introduction

A primary objective of this thesis is to identify the evolutionary history of contemporary New Zealand gangs. But before these groups could evolve they required a base from which to develop; and in the 1950s this base was established within the unique social, economic and political environments of the time.

Gangs of the 1950s emerged from a youthful, largely working-class, sub-cultural movement, within which there were two distinctive styles: 'bodgies' and 'milkbar cowboys'. Indeed it was largely this youth movement, and not 'gangs' specifically, that became the focus for significant community concern surrounding the problem of juvenile delinquency and its links to international popular culture. Nevertheless, the information that exists on New Zealand gangs, sparse as it may be, gives an insight into their nature and activities as well as allowing for the construction of hypotheses as to how and why they came about.

This chapter, therefore, seeks to extract the New Zealand gangs of the 1950s out of the wider youth groups that were common at the time, and explain their nature and activities, as well as offer explanations as to how and why they emerged. Furthermore, it explores the gangs of the 1950s in their historical context and highlights the political responses to their emergence.

New Zealand Gangs in the 1950s

Although they gained a significant presence in the 1950s, groups of troublesome youths or 'gangs' were not a new phenomenon in New Zealand and have existed since at least colonial times. In 1842 and 1843, having been transported from Parkhurst Prison in England, 128 male juveniles (Stone, 2007: p.21) began roaming Auckland streets and were blamed for "a rapid spread of moral pestilence" (Cherrett, 1989: p.12). Twenty years later, *The New Zealand Herald* reported that a "number of boys and young men congregate together and commit outrages of a nature altogether unfit for publication". These "outrages" included breaking windows, breaking and entering, assault, and stripping females naked and dragging them about, and these "lawless practices" occurred "at least four nights in the week on average" (Howman, 1971: p.21). In a similar vein, during 1888, the *Weekly News* railed against a "garden robbing, window breaking, insolent, defiant and ferocious generation of young cubs" (*NZ Herald* 5.1.1971). There were "well organised" gangs of about ten to 20 youths reported in the 1890s, with leaders and a code of signals, who deliberately jostled pedestrians and squirted tobacco juice at passers-by while making "obscene and insulting remarks" (*NZ Herald* 5.1.1971). Similar gangs were evident in the early the

1900s and these groups were believed to have developed secret languages and engaged in initiation ceremonies involving urine – human or equine – being placed in new members’ hats (Belich, 2001: p.362). In 1927, it was said that youth gangs in Auckland were engaged in fights (with knives and coshes), vandalism, stealing, and the claiming of territory that they would defend “with great viciousness” (Levett, 1959: pp.7-8).

Little, however, is known of these groups and it was not until the late 1950s that youth gangs were subjected to any degree of systematic study, via the works of A. E. Levett, a Child Welfare Officer, and J. G. Green, the head of a government research unit. Levett (1959: p.1) identified 41 gangs in New Zealand’s largest city of Auckland, incorporating between 486 and 730 members aged between 12 and 24. Green (1959: p.27), in a more detailed study, found 17 gangs in the country’s capital city of Wellington that maintained a total membership of between 251 and 278 with ages ranging from 14 to 21. Both researchers, however, acknowledged that their gang numbers were conservative due to methodological issues surrounding the collection of data (Green, 1959: pp.27-28; Levett, 1959: p.1). Levett’s study, for instance, excluded large tracts of the city.

These gangs emerged from a larger, primarily Anglo American working class youth movement based on consumption, independence and rebellion. At the same time, crime and delinquency had become a major concern in many countries (Fyvel, 1963: pp.18-20). In New Zealand, charges brought before the Children’s Court leapt from 3,662 to 10,365 between 1950 and 1960

(Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997: p.132). These increases in crime became linked here, as in other parts of the world, to this boisterous youth subculture. In England, such youths were termed 'teddy boys' (Fyvel, 1963), and in Australia they were known as 'bodgies' (Bessant & Watts, 1998; Stratton, 1984). As in New Zealand, both groups were influenced by American popular culture, particularly teenage movies and rock 'n' roll music. In New Zealand, youth of this type were also called bodgies, after their Australian counterparts and, in a manner similar to the groups elsewhere, they were distinguished by their own unique sense of style.

Bodgie attire often included long coats, brightly coloured shirts with slim ties, tapered pants, garish socks, and thick-soled black shoes (Crowther, 1956: p.4; Green, 1959: p.8; Levett, 1959: p.2; M. Ritchie, 1997: p.1; Yska, 1993: p.173 & 176). Their female counterparts were 'widgies' who typically had short hair, and wore tight slacks or a skirt with a split at the back, men's shirts or coloured blouses – often accompanied by a patterned scarf – colourful sweaters, and slip-on pumps or flat black shoes (Crowther, 1956: p.2; M. Ritchie, 1997: pp.1-2; Yska, 1993: p.176).

In New Zealand the term 'bodgie' was often used as a generic term meaning 'juvenile delinquent' and frequently encompassed another youth identity that shared similar international links and influences – the milk bar cowboys. This group's style was somewhat more uniform and usually included leather jackets and trousers or jeans rolled slightly up the leg or tucked into flying

boots, and typically they rode motorcycles (Crowther, 1956: p.2; Levett, 1959: p.2; M. Ritchie, 1997: p.2; Yska, 1993: p.176).

It is important to note that only a minority of the bodgies and milk bar cowboys formed or joined gangs. Green (1959: p.60) suggested at the time that the public “lumps together” the gangs with “the larger group of non-conformists (particularly in dress)” and “worries about the whole assortment indiscriminately”. That such confusion occurred is unsurprising given that, in the vast majority of cases, there was no way visually to distinguish between, for example, a gang of bodgies and the wider bodgie youth culture. Moreover, such differentiation becomes harder if one accepts that a defining feature of a bodgie gang was “anti-social characteristics” (Green, 1959: p.5) and that a defining feature of bodgies generally was the “deliberate adoption of an ‘anti social’ stance” (Shuker, 1994: p.270). The following two chapters will demonstrate how New Zealand gangs soon became clearly identifiable. Nevertheless, the problem of distinguishing gangs from a wider youth fashion would emerge once again nearly half a century later, as will be discussed in the closing chapters of this thesis.

As gangs were largely camouflaged within the wider youth trends for much of the 1950s, they only attracted significant interest late in the decade, through the research of Levett and Green. What can be revealed from both of these studies is that the gangs were, with few exceptions, immature groups, both in terms of the age of their members and in their development. Typically, these groups formed “in a similar way to many other human groups. They live in the

same locality or frequent the same area. They share similar outlooks and attitudes to life because of essentially similar experiences. The gangs have a spontaneous and unplanned origin, the natural outgrowth of a number of boys coming together” (Levett, 1959: p.4). Drawing on the ideas of Thrasher (1927), Tannenbaum (1938) and other early U.S. researchers, many of these gangs were little more than ‘playgroups’. Using Taylor’s (1989) typology, they may be seen as ‘scavenger gangs’, or alternatively, using Maxson and Klein’s (1995) terminology, they were perhaps ‘compressed’ gangs. But given the difficulty in judging exactly when a clique of youths transforms into a gang, it is difficult to accurately establish the precise nature of the groups examined by Levett and Green. Using the definitions that I have outlined in the introduction to this thesis, some of these groups may not have reached the required benchmarks to be defined as a gang, but as will be shown many were displaying the qualities consistent with what I have termed ‘incipient gangs’.

With few exceptions, the gangs identified by both Levett and Green tended to be small, had few if any rules, and lacked formal structure and clear leadership (Green, 1959: p.10; Levett, 1959: pp.5-6). Certain groups, however, were beginning to show territorial desire, which was often reflected in their name (Green, 1959: p.8), and others had created emblems to distinguish their group (Levett, 1959: p.9). There was one unsubstantiated report of a female gang in Auckland, but overall gangs were a male phenomenon (Green, 1959: p.34; Levett, 1959: p.5). There were female members of some gangs, but this was rare. Although some gang members “were serious and hardened offenders” (Green, 1959: p.55), gang crime

tended to be petty in nature and reflected boisterous adventurism. Membership in these groups appears to have been fleeting and none of the gangs achieved any real longevity. But despite individual gang disintegration, it appears a type of churning was occurring whereby, as some gangs were folding, others were emerging so that the gang scene was in a constant state of unhurried rejuvenation; changing over time, but not growing older. As will become clear, these gangs were a reflection of, and a reaction to, the era in which they existed – a finding that will be shown to be consistent over the course of this thesis.

Economic Prosperity – The Gangs of the Good Times

Nineteen-fifties New Zealand is generally viewed as a simple and rather uncomplicated decade, and for good reason. The New Zealand economy was basic but strong, and socially the country was uniform and conformist (Belich, 2001; Dunstall, 1992; King, 2003). On face value, the foundations of New Zealand's modern gang culture would seem to have formed in an unlikely period.

During the 1950s, the country's rural economy entered the final stage of a 'grasslands revolution', a process that began in the first quarter of the century whereby technological drives began to significantly increase farming outputs, the country's main source of income (Belich, 2001: p.308). Beginning in 1950, the Korean War created a tremendous demand for New Zealand's primary products, particularly wool, and this offered further impetus to an already thriving economy.

Between 1945 and 1960, output volumes of all farm produce increased over 300 percent with value climbing from £97.1m to £316.6m (Department of Statistics, 1955: pp. 436-7; 1961: pp. 396-7). This long economic boom lasted until the early 1970s (Sinclair, 1991: p.288), and the wealth being generated was experienced by all workers as unemployment was virtually nil and jobs commanded increasingly higher wages. The supercharged economy did bring about inflationary pressures, but wage increases offset price rises in consumer goods. The nominal weekly wage-rate index (using a base of 1954=1000) shows wages increased from 729 in 1950 to 1193 in 1960. This compares to just 339 in 1933, during the economic depression (Department of Statistics, 1961: p. 995). In 1951, just 14 percent of young men earned in excess of £300 per year, but within 5 years, 44 percent did so (Yska, 1993: p.47). Demand for young workers – in either full or part time employment – meant that New Zealand’s middle and working class youth were enjoying a period of unprecedented financial opportunity, and one in stark contrast to that which their parents had experienced. With some insight, National MP Peter Tait said in 1953 that the labour market was enticing young people out of school and into the labour market whereby, “they command...the same wage as older men without having their responsibilities” (*NZPD*, 1958, vol.317: p.1090).

Noting an earn-and-spend mentality, Levett (1959: p.8) found that gang members could readily command high wages even in unskilled work. Similarly, Green found the tight labour market allowed gang members to

adopt a lackadaisical attitude to work, moving in and out of employment as it suited in order to spend long periods with their gang. He found certain youths to be “virtually full-time gang members” (Green, 1959: p.19). Echoing a finding of Short and Strodbeck (1965: pp.225-230) in America, work and gang life often clashed and it was work that tended to give way. One informant told Green (1959: p.19) that the gang lifestyle was about being up all night and sleeping through the day, a situation that made it too difficult to hold down a job. He responded by working just a “few days at a time”. This allowed for what Levett (1959: p.3) described as a ‘cultivated’ spontaneity.

Although certain gang members were actively fostering free time, they were doing so during a period where young people in general were enjoying greater freedom than previous generations of youth. New Zealand’s overall prosperity meant that 1950s families were increasingly purchasing labour saving devices. The 1956 census shows that more than half of New Zealand households owned washing machines, electric ovens and refrigerators. Such technological advances freed many teenagers from traditional household tasks and allowed them greater leisure time. Further evidence of New Zealand’s wealth is evident in motor vehicle purchases. Registered ownership of private cars doubled in the 1950s and between 1945 and 1955, motorcycle ownership increased by 93 percent from 13,624 to 26,244, (Department of Statistics, 1946: p.221; 1960a: p.412). Many of these vehicles were affordable to youth, thus completing an important trinity of money, free time and mobility. These were the components with which significant numbers of New Zealand’s youth could construct the unique identities of bodgies and milk bar cowboys,

create broad insider/outsider distinctions and encourage a youthful oppositional attitude that undoubtedly helped certain cliques to solidify and transition into incipient gangs.

Gang participation in this new era of youth mobility and independence was most visible in milk bar motorcycle gangs, but was apparent within other gangs as well. Of the gangs identified in Wellington, around three quarters had cars, motorcycles or both, and certain gang “activities centre round [sic] these” (Green, 1959: p.26). In Auckland, the data on gang transportation are unclear, but both motorcycles and cars were associated with many gangs and it was reported that gang members often came “from a wide area”, including the outer suburbs, to meet and congregate on Queen Street in the city centre (Levett, 1959: p.8). Moreover, vehicles were not just transport; they also provided thrills and daring entertainment. Drag racing, either against an opponent or against the clock, was “a popular pastime for certain motor-cycle or car gangs, when they could get away with it” (Levett, 1959: p.3).

From the data available, one can conclude that those youth in or around gangs were not isolated from the rewards the labour market had to offer. In fact, it appears as though many used the opportunities provided by the economic boom to forge an alternative lifestyle that revolved not around work but around leisure; the primary vehicle for which was their gang. During this period, then, it is plausible – at face value, at least – to see financial privilege as a component supporting gang formation.

Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, gangs of the late 1950s did not last for more than modest periods, and gang membership was a fleeting dalliance. One explanation for this is that the labour market's open door to jobs allowed gang members an easy return to a conventional lifestyle after a period of fun provided by the gang, a situation not available, for example, to the Los Angeles barrio gangs under the study of Moore (1991). She found that difficulty in entering the workforce was a crucial reason for gang membership continuance. I would therefore argue that the economic privilege provided by the buoyant 1950s economy, while an important consideration, is best viewed not as a reason for gang formation, but as a critical factor in membership failing to persist; a conclusion that will be further evidenced as this thesis unfolds. This being so, more significant explanations for 1950s gang formation are better sought elsewhere.

Relative Deprivation – Socio Economics and the Housing Strain

It seems apparent that New Zealand's young gang members were not obviously excluded from the prosperity and reward that the 1950s economy presented. As will become clear, however, they were nevertheless situated within socioeconomic groups and geographic locales widely recognised by gang researchers as being conducive to gang formation.

Both Levett and Green found gangs to be composed primarily of youths from working class households. In Wellington, Green (1959: p.42) found that 60 percent of gang members' fathers were in semi or unskilled occupations, and thus of "lower socioeconomic class". Of those gang members who had left

school, the majority were working as casual labourers or in factories and only a quarter “took jobs which could be assumed to provide good prospects for advancement” such as ‘office’ jobs, sales jobs or apprenticeships (Green, 1959: p.50). In Auckland, Levett (1959: p.4) found that, of those out of school, over half were in semi-skilled or unskilled work, with trade apprenticeships generally making up the rest.

The information that is available on New Zealand gangs at this time offers certain insight to avail the status frustration theory of Cohen (1955) and the lower class thesis devised by Miller (1958/1969), and a few points are worthy of note. As stated in Chapter One, Cohen (1955: p.135) suggested that: “The hallmark of the delinquent subculture is the explicit and wholesale repudiation of middle-class standards and the adoption of their very antithesis” (A. K. Cohen, 1955: p.129). This was certainly reflected in the gangs’, as well as the wider youth movement’s, manner and style, which sought to express a defiant status that was a deliberate clash with mainstream New Zealand. Moreover, Cohen’s idea that anti-social and criminal behaviours obtain elevated status within groups, and are thus perpetuated, is evidenced in their acceptance of criminality (which some ‘boasted’ about), the ongoing nature of certain criminal activities, a craving for notoriety, and a hostile attitude toward authority and the police (Green, 1959: pp.9, 13, 22 & 57; Levett, 1959: pp.3-5).

In relation to Miller and others’ idea that gangs uphold certain working class ‘focal concerns’ or attributes, the available New Zealand gang data provide

few clues, but in Australia the bodge youth movement was strongly supported by such notions (Stratton, 1984), and therefore one may assume this was the case in New Zealand. A more definitive point to be made in relation to Miller's ideas, however, is that gang formation is aided by single (maternal) parent families in order to seek male expression (W. B. Miller, 1958/1969: p.343). It was one of Green's most noted findings that 43 percent of gang members came from 'broken' homes, and a large percentage of those youths who were still living at home, lived in "mother only" households (Green, 1959: pp.41 & 42). As Klein (1971: p.36) points out, however, family factors like broken homes "though important, probably attain that importance through combination with many other factors". These 'other factors', as numerous researchers have uncovered, invariably include influences arising from neighbourhood conditions, to which I now turn.

Both Green and Levett discovered that gangs and gang membership were most evident within certain geographic locales, primarily the newer urban areas that were being developed to house a growing population. Like many post-war nations, New Zealand experienced a 'baby boom', a dramatic increase in birth rates, which placed stresses on infrastructure. From 16 births per 1000 population in the mid-1930s, the rate increased to over 26 per 1000 by the late 1940s and this was maintained until 1961 (King, 2003: p.414). Moreover, the 1950s were part of an extended period of migrant growth. Between 1945 and 1968, net migration to New Zealand was 250,000, and 85 percent of these migrants were from the U.K. (Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997: p.45). That so much of this migration derived from New Zealand's past

colonial parent meant the country maintained something of a homogeneous ethnic population, a point to which I will return. Overall, the New Zealand population increased by a quarter during the 1950s, reaching 2.4 million by 1960 (Department of Statistics, 1955: p.27; 1961: p.44). This growth was largely concentrated in urban centres that expanded by 33 percent in the ten years to 1961, by which time around three quarters of the country were urban dwellers (Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997: p.54). These population changes created an acute housing shortage in the 1950s. Despite the government building over 32,000 state houses since 1937, in 1950 there was a waiting list of over 45,000 (Ferguson, 1994: p.177).

The state's involvement in housing began in earnest under the first Labour Government, elected in 1935. This government viewed high-quality housing as a fundamental right that was not being delivered by the market and was thus in need of state intervention (Schrader, 2005: p.35). Although a change of government in 1949 brought about policy changes, including the encouragement of state house purchase rather than rental, and a narrower focus on targeting such accommodation at the poor and needy, it was made clear that, "So long as there is a need for rental houses, the Government will continue to build State houses" (*AJHR*, J-6, 1950: p.8). In order to encourage socially diverse communities, some early state houses were built in established and affluent areas (Schrader, 2005: p.36). More often, however, they were constructed within large projects of specifically designed suburbs, and the speed of their construction was often too swift for community

development to keep pace. Initially bereft of vegetation and parks, such suburbs had a “raw and impermanent feel” (King, 2003: p.433).

At least two reports suggested links between rapid urban growth and juvenile delinquency in New Zealand in the 1950s. Undertaken in 1953, the ‘Hutt Valley Youth Survey’ reported that people moving into state housing areas were “facing rather extreme changes to their way of life” (Yska, 1993: p.46). Furthermore, the “instant suburbs” were deficient, it said, due to the “unsatisfactory provision for leisure and the inadequate provision for wholesome sport and recreational activities” and therefore youths were travelling toward urban centres, “where they are forced to find and make their own entertainment” (Yska, 1993: pp.48-49).

A further report that considered the link between delinquency and urban development suggested that ‘mushroom’ suburban growth created problems as such areas lacked community and educational facilities (Special Committee, 1954: p.33). Moreover, they tended have a high proportion of poor families with children and thus they lacked the stabilising factor of older people, or the benevolence of the wealthy, creating an “abnormal distribution of the population” (Special Committee, 1954: pp.32 & 33). Wise planning in the future, the report suggested, “could avoid some of the disadvantages which have become evident in these areas” (Special Committee, 1954: p.32). This report, undertaken by a committee with Dr. Oswald Mazengarb as its chair, was commonly referred to as the Mazengarb Report (discussed in the next section). The report covered a range of topics and is now generally seen

to be of dubious value, but in one rare – perhaps unique – contemporary offering of praise, Schrader (2005: p.214) suggested that if the report's recommendations around town planning had been acted on, it "might have moderated future social problems in state housing areas".

In Auckland, Levett (1959: p.3) found a concentration of gang membership in certain – newer – state housing areas that were yet to establish "churches, pubs, recreation, working and civic groups" and were thus characterised by a "lack of community spirit and community facilities". Within the state housing development of Mount Roskill, for example, he noted a difference between the area built "in 1939" and the "newer area settled over the past 10 years"; the latter had three gangs, the former had none. He noted the concerns of police that the newer housing areas had "few facilities for growing children and almost none for adolescents and adults" (Levett, 1959: p.4). In Wellington, Green (1959: p.52) also found that gangs were concentrated within a minority of districts, few of which were the city's established or affluent suburbs. Furthermore, and perhaps related, was the fact that both Green (1959: p.53) and Levett (1959: p.4) described the home lives of gangs members as 'unsatisfactory' due to the presence of such things as alcoholism, adult crime, 'frequent and tense family quarrels', and mental illness. The youth gangs that formed, therefore, can perhaps be seen as informal associations that attempted to fill the voids left by urban planners while at the same time fulfilling social and psychological benefits that many youths found absent within their families. Just as adults in these communities undoubtedly made

new networks in order to gain social contact and undertake leisure activities, so too did youths – and one such outcome was gangs.

The finding that gangs were situated in certain geographic locales and not in others is consistent with the assertion made by Thrasher that “better type” areas of the city are “practically gangless” (Thrasher, 1927: p.20). New Zealand’s new suburban housing districts, however, were some way from suffering the degree of social disorganisation within the ‘interstitial’ areas of Chicago’s ‘zone of transition’². Indeed, while it is easy to identify the problems arising from the rapid development of state housing, it is perhaps prudent to consider what the alternative to these large-scale building projects might have been. At a time of such urban growth, without a fundamental commitment to new housing, conditions may have been much worse. It was a point made by Labour leader Walter Nash in 1954, who stated that, “If the people living in those [state rental] houses had been in the conditions they were living in before those houses were built, those people would have been worse and not better [off]” (NZPD, 1954, vol.304: p.2032). In my view it is arguable, indeed probable, that without state housing the relatively minor gang situation New Zealand faced in the 1950s would have been exasperated.

Undertaking research in this country in the 1950s, a visiting American scholar, David Ausubel of the University of Illinois, pointed out that the ‘slum conditions’ in New Zealand are “not nearly as severe or as extensive as in the United States” and hence in relation to juvenile delinquency “are a much less

² An explanation of these terms is outlined in the first theory chapter of this thesis.

important causal factor” (Ausubel, 1960/1977: p.141). He also opined that New Zealand gangs had little in common with their American counterparts, suggesting the latter were more organised and functioned under ‘despotic’ leadership (Ausubel, 1960/1977: pp.134 & 136). Although Ausubel offers an interesting critique and an invaluable cross-national perspective, his assertion of despotic leadership is, Yablonsky (1967) aside, not supported by American gang literature³. In addition, his readiness to suggest that American gangs had a high degree of organisation is equally contentious and often disputed (Klein et al., 2001: p.4). Although these points by themselves do not negate his contention, I would argue that local conditions were not a ‘less important’ cause of juvenile delinquency – and gang formation and activity – but were instead of *relative* importance. As will become clear in the following chapters, as social ills increased so did the nature and severity of the gang problem. Hence there is a strong case to make that U.S. and New Zealand gangs were indeed comparable, in so much as their respective social conditions reflected their relative nature and activities. Where conditions were worse, so were the gangs.

At least in part, this argument gains further support from U.K. literature. The research of Fyfe (1963), for example, suggested that the delinquent problem of the 1950s within the British working classes was not a gang problem *per se*. This is similar to New Zealand where the gangs remained a relatively minor issue disguised within the wider bodgie and milk bar cowboy youth movements. Downes (1966) argued that because the degree of deprivation in

³ Indeed, Yablonski has received some criticism for this assertion, see for example Klein (1971)

the U.K. was less than that encountered in the U.S., working class youth rebelled but did not readily form gangs. Downes, however, went so far as to conclude that the gang situation was a 'myth', and I depart from him here – in relation to this country, at least – in that the gang situation in New Zealand at that time is better characterised as 'minor'.

One contributing factor to the New Zealand gang situation remaining comparatively minor was, as previously noted, the highly homogeneous ethnic make-up of New Zealand society, particularly in its urban communities. As noted by Bursik and Grasmick (1993) and others, no single ethnic group is inherently more or less inclined toward gang formation. But as Bogardus (1943) found in early American gang research, ethnic minorities often face greater social disadvantages that influences gang membership, a situation that Vigil (1988) later described as 'multiple marginality'. This theory explains gang formation and I will explore its utility in detail in Chapter Five when looking at the rise of gangs formed by Maori and Pacific youths.

Both Green and Levett found gang membership to be overwhelmingly dominated by Pakeha youth, and as will become clear, there was good reason for this. In Wellington, no Maori gangs were identified and just ten gang members were reported to be Maori (Green, 1959: p.35). In Auckland, Maori were somewhat more prominent, and were evident in a small number of Pakeha dominated gangs, but just one group, the Red Ram Rockers, was predominantly Maori (Levett, 1959: p.7). One youth in fact suggested, "Being in a gang depends on what sort of joker you are, not whether you're Maori or

Pakeha” (Levett, 1959: p.7). Unlike Australia (Bessant & Watts, 1998: p.197; Stratton, 1984: p.21) and the U.K. (Fyvel, 1963: p.61), there are no reports of racial aggression undertaken by groups of youths, although this does not mean it did not exist. Levett (1959: p.7) points out that his study of Maori gangs was made difficult as Maori Welfare Officers were reluctant to aid an inquiry that was not undertaken by “a member of their own race”, and thus Maori gangs were almost certainly understated in Auckland. Notwithstanding the fact that, in that city at least, Maori may have been under reported, Maori made up just 6.06 percent (116,034 people) of the national population in 1950, increasing slightly to 6.61 percent (154,119 people) by 1960 (Department of Statistics, 1950: p.18; 1960a: p.38). Moreover, in the 1950s most Maori were still living in rural areas and the movement to cities in search of better employment opportunities did become highly significant until the 1960s. Similarly, Pacific Island migrants were beginning to gain a small presence in Auckland as the government looked toward the island nations to its north to help fill the demands of the labour market. But again, significant numbers did not arrive until later. In the 1950s, migrants from the Pacific were merely a trickle – numbering just a few hundred every year (Department of Statistics, 1955: p.36; 1961: p.64). Both these internal and external migrations were to become major factors in the New Zealand gang scene’s future, but in the 1950s their effect remained largely latent.

The Political and Social Response

Given that the gang scene in 1950s New Zealand was not substantial, and hidden within wider youth movements, the country did not respond to a ‘gang

problem' but to the general problem of juvenile delinquency. As will become evident, this response was steeped in the conservatism of the time, and focused significantly on censorship of American popular culture.

While teen expression and delinquency was an issue common among Anglo American youth around the world, older generations were affected by another global phenomenon: the Cold War, which emerged in the aftermath of World War II. Eastern Europe's Iron Curtain and the seemingly omnipresent Soviet threat and nuclear capabilities, the success of the Chinese communist revolution in 1949, and the Korean War beginning in 1950 were among issues creating unease throughout the West, and New Zealand was no different.

One sign of this country's conservative social shift was the National Party's 12-seat defeat of a rather tired 14-year Labour government in 1949. National's first Prime Minister, Sidney Holland, said, "if you want to condense our policy it is the private ownership of production, distribution and exchange" (cited in King, 2003: p.422). Holland had decided the way to beat communism was to create a nation of 'little capitalists' (Yska, 1993: p.25). The electoral victory over a party that had publicly maintained a drive toward gradual but real socialism (Belich, 2001: p.304), marked the beginning of a long reign by the National Party that would hold power for 19 of the next 22 years. Labour's only return to government in those years came in 1957 by way of a slim two-seat majority. As will be outlined in the next chapter, however, Labour's tenure was dogged by controversy and it was soundly defeated at the polls after just one term. Indeed, such was National's grip on power that many of the party

faithful believed it was the natural party of government (King, 2003: p.423). Reflecting the mood of conservatism and the fear of international conflict, Compulsory Military Training was reinstated in 1949. A further conservative policy change, which was influenced by a spike in murders in the late 1940s, was the reinstatement of the death penalty in 1950 (Newbold, 1989b: pp.21-22). Although it was a significant issue in the 1950s, delinquency was just part of a growing law and order issue. Between 1950 and 1960, reported crime almost doubled. Serious violence grew 800 percent while social disorder and sex crimes both increased by 250 percent (Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997: p.131).

Unsurprisingly, New Zealand's political conservatism was reflected in its social conservatism. There was a certain uniformity to life and this was reflected in both fashion and leisure activities: "Clothes of the day tended to be drab by previous and latter standards, and short-back-and-sides haircuts were part of the national male uniform, while rugby, racing and beer did represent for most men the extent of recreational options" (King, 2003: p.431). Conservatism was akin to a national identity (Dunstall, 1992) and David Ausubel, the visiting American scholar mentioned previously, believed "that the sanctions for non-conformity *are* relatively severe" (Ausubel, 1960/1977: p.128). Within this environment, bodgie youths contrasted most vividly, partly because of their unique clothing, but also because they adopted a deliberate anti-social attitude (Shuker, 1994: p.270).

In July 1954, concerns regarding youth and delinquency reached fever pitch, stemming from the activities of a group known as 'Elbe's Milk Bar Gang'. On 6

July of that year, readers of Wellington's *The Dominion* newspaper awoke to the headline, 'Large-Scale Police Inquiry Among Hutt Valley Children' (*Dominion* 6.7.1954). The story was elaborated on by *The Evening Post* that night. It reported that, "Police investigations revealed a shocking degree of immoral conduct among adolescents in the Hutt Valley and altogether 60 youths and girls were involved in a total of 80 offences...The conduct spread into sexual orgies perpetrated in private homes during the absence of parents and into several second-rate Hutt Valley theatres" (*Evening Post* 6.7.1954).

With an election looming in just four months, the National government moved quickly. Holland said that his government would undertake an "exhaustive investigation" of "this grave social problem" and that "there is, I regret to say, ground for believing that it is not confined to the Hutt Valley" (*NZ Herald* 13.7.1954). The Minister of Education Ronald Algie clearly believed in the seriousness of the matter, proclaiming that "there is in our midst a serious evil" (*Evening Post* 17.7.1954). The government swiftly assembled a Committee of Inquiry with the brief to "inquire into and report upon conditions and influences that tend to undermine standards of sexual morality of children and adolescents in New Zealand" and to make recommendations to the government (Special Committee, 1954: p.10). Appointed as the committee's chair was Dr Oswald Mazengarb Q.C., a conservative man with strong links to the government having been a twice-unsuccessful National Party candidate for parliament (Stace, 1980: p.34). Aware of the political expediency required, Mazengarb wanted the committee to report back before the impending general election, and his demanding two-month timeframe meant several

older members became ill and exhausted during the committee's investigation (Yska, 1993: p.70). In what will become a familiar refrain throughout this thesis, it would seem that political expediency was more important than taking time to look carefully at the issue.

It was almost certainly with an eye on re-election that the Prime Minister, in an unprecedented and never repeated move, had the Mazengarb Report sent to every New Zealand household, a decision derided by the Opposition as it had yet to be placed before parliament (*NZPD*, 1954, vol.304: p.2008). Some 300,000 copies were printed, at that time New Zealand's largest ever printing job (*NZ Herald* 25-9-54). Among a raft of findings, the report suggested the problems of errant youth stemmed from a lack of Christian guidance, a decline in family life through working mothers, media influences, "unsettlement" following two world wars, new housing development, increased use of contraceptives, the broadening of divorce laws, an increase in pre-marital sexual relations, and even the spread of new psychological ideas undermining traditional morality (Special Committee, 1954). Of all the ideas spelt out in the report, it was a comment made about 'media influences' that was to provide a major thrust of the government's response to the delinquency problem. In light of what was to come, many wondered why "a target drawn so small by the Morals [Mazengarb] Committee should have attracted so heavy a barrage" (Perry, 1965: p.49).

Interestingly, given that the initial complaint centred on a 'gang' of milk bar cowboys, gangs were not identified as a problem in the report, reflecting the

fact that they had yet to form in significant numbers or were yet to be seen as a major concern. In fact, the report reflects what appears to have been a widely held belief that the problem of delinquency was a somewhat wide and general threat. This belief was almost certainly given further currency by the Parker-Hulme murder case that was being tried just as the Hutt Valley issue was being unearthed. In June 1954, armed with a brick in a stocking, 16-year old Pauline Parker and 15-year old Juliet Hulme took turns at caving in the head of Pauline's mother in a quiet Christchurch park (Newbold, 2000: p.49).

Although Pauline lived with a step-father, both girls were from respectable families, confirming in the minds of many that New Zealand's youth were running amok and that the problem had the potential to affect even 'good' families. As if written in a script, the Parker-Hulme murder trial also bolstered two other widely held notions that were becoming linked to the problems of youth – sex and American popular culture. Witness statements hinted at the fact that Pauline was sexually active with a young male boarder, and an expert witness brought by the prosecution testified that Pauline and Juliet were in a relationship that was "homosexual in nature" (*NZ Herald* 17.7.1954). Also, Pauline's diaries contained her thoughts leading up to the murder, which she spelt 'moider', mimicking, as the Crown Prosecutor made clear, Hollywood gangster slang and "thereby suggesting a connection to the corrupting influence on adolescents of American mass culture, which was about to explode as major debate of the fifties" (Yska, 1993: p.61). In fact, it had already begun. On 13 July, in the wake of media reports of the Hutt Valley saga, the Minister for Women and Children, Hilda Ross, spoke at

length in parliament about the American “literature which is flooding the country and debasing the minds of our young people” (*NZPD*, 1954, vol.303: p.377). Two days later, another National MP, James Roy, said, “what the eye sees is what impresses the mind. I am afraid the class of picture [movie] our young people go to see has not been the best” and he went on to say that the government was taking moves toward “stricter censorship” (*NZPD*, 1954, vol.303: p.446).

In the wake of the Mazengarb Report, three bills were hastily drafted and passed into law before parliament went into recess for the November election of 1954. The Police Offences Act was amended to make contraception unavailable to people under 18 years of age. Changes to the Child Welfare Act meant girls under 16 could be deemed delinquent if they engaged in sex (the law already existed for boys). And the Indecent Publications Act thereafter ensured sales restrictions were placed on books and other reading material that tended to “deprave persons of any class or any group, or unduly emphasises matters of sex, horror, crime, cruelty, or violence” (*NZPD*, 1954, vol.304: p.1,944).

Despite dedicating huge swathes of copy to the problem of delinquency in the light of the Hutt Valley issue and welcoming the Mazengarb inquiry, many newspapers were beginning to turn against the measures before they were passed into law (Shuker, Openshaw, & Soler, 1990). In an editorial, *The Press* expressed significant concern regarding the legislation, particularly in relation to the censorship measures, suggesting the haste with which they

were being pushed through was 'regrettable'. "It is probably," the paper said, "that the Government feels hesitant about ending the present session without having done something to give effect to the committee's recommendations. But the effect of what no one doubts are good intentions will be bills virtually written overnight... [and] ...hastened through without all the consideration that is their due" (*The Press* 28.9.1954). After the laws were passed, similar concerns were expressed by Victoria University College law lecturer, I. D. Campbell (1954), who said that the government had "marred its record" in the hasty drafting and passing of the Indecent Publications Amendment Act. He said that outside input was given "scant opportunity" and that the "Act bristles with ambiguities, and that its enactment was an ill-considered move" (I. D. Campbell, 1954: p.293). Book sellers had asked to be involved in the process of drafting the legislation (*NZ Herald* 22.9.1954), but such calls were given little regard and the government minister who introduced the bill to parliament, Charles Bowden, was critical of their "captious criticism" (*NZPD*, 1954, vol.304: p.2006).

Following their re-election in 1954, the National government enthusiastically enforced the new provisions of the Indecent Publications Act and many books and comics were banned. Indeed, censorship quickly became an important tool by which the government sought to control the influence of American popular culture, and music and film were not immune.

Certainly, New Zealand youth were enthusiastically embracing rock 'n' roll music. In 1955, sales of 45 rpm singles in New Zealand numbered just 200. In

1956, 20,000 were sold and just one year later that number soared to 576,000 (Yska, 1993: p.142). As was the case in Britain (Fyvel, 1963) and Australia (Stratton, 1984), young New Zealanders were abuzz with the new genre of American music that “provided a fresh perspective, celebrating leisure, romance, and sex, deriding deferred gratification and men in grey flannel suits stationed at their office desks, and delighting in the separate world of the teenager” (Altschuler, 2003: p.8). Performers like Bill Haley, Buddy Holly, Gene Vincent, and Eddie Cochran are said to have been bodgie favourites (Shuker, 1994: p.259). Willis (1978: p.35) compiled a remarkably similar list (he included Elvis Presley) as favourites of those within the British youth biker scene. In a statement as relevant to New Zealand as it was the U.K., he said, “It is difficult to evidence, but the motor-bike boys’ fundamental ontological security, style, gesture, speech, rough horseplay – their whole social ambience – seemed to owe something to the confidence and muscular style of early rock ‘n’ roll.” (Willis, 1978: p.35).

In New Zealand, rock ‘n’ roll was decried for the social immorality that many saw inherent in it. Thus, in the interests of social sanitation, the state-controlled New Zealand Broadcasting Service (NZBS) banned a number of songs from airing on public radio, and those deemed acceptable were given just half an hour every Thursday evening. What was prohibited from the airwaves, however, was permitted in milk bar jukeboxes and in halls where local musicians played covers of popular American songs. For example, music that the NZBS banned, like the Cheers’ song *Black Denim Trousers*

and Motorcycle Boots in 1955, were not heard on public radio but they were still publicly available.

Like comics and music, many American movies were seen as a corrupting and unwelcome influence. *The Wild One* (1954), a movie inspired by the events of Hollister⁴ and motorcycle gangs in the U.S., was banned by Chief Censor, Gordon Mirams, in an action that met with significant public approval. In response, the Auto Cycle Union, the governing body of motorcycle sport in New Zealand, said, “this film can do damage to the motorcycling movement and boost the egos of our comparatively tame cowboys” (Yska, 1993: p111).

Other films, too, were controversial, and partially censored. Two such films were *Blackboard Jungle* and *Rebel Without a Cause*, both of which were released in New Zealand in 1956 (Watson & Shuker, 1998: pp.43-44). Mirams objected strongly to these films, fearing that the behaviours they portrayed could adversely affect the country’s youth. As part of the growing youth-orientated genre out of America, the films were focused on teen angst and defiance and included rebellion at school, violence toward teachers, knife fights and games of ‘chicken’ (where two cars drive at speed toward one another until one driver serves away).

Mirams’ concerns, it would seem, were not without foundation. In 1957, *The New Zealand Herald* reported several examples of ‘chicken’ being played around the country by New Zealand youth (*NZ Herald* 27.8.1957). The

⁴ It was at Hollister in 1947 where it is widely accepted that outlaw biker culture was forged (Reynolds, 2000: p.57), following reports of the town being taken over by rebel bikers. This infamous event is well documented (for example, M. Harris, 1985; Hayes, 2005; H. S. Thompson, 1967; Wolf, 1991).

following month Labour MP Robert Macfarlane raised the issue in parliament, making direct links to the influence of American films (*NZPD*, 1957, vol.313: p.2217). Other examples of a growing American influence were less sensational, such as youths speaking with American accents mimicking the gangsters they read about in books (Yska, 1993: p.184).

Although the increasing influence of American culture on New Zealand youth may have been undeniable and evident in examples of delinquency, it was mistaken as causal. In the U.K. and Australia, the youth movements were in existence before the significant onset of rock 'n' roll and the influx of American teen movies (Fyvel, 1963; Stratton, 1984). In 1955, one Wellington barber told the *The Evening Post* that the 'bodgie' hairstyle arrived with U.S. marines in the mid-1940s (Yska, 1993: p.57). Moreover, Belich (2001: pp.506-507) points out that the 'teenager', and certain concerns surrounding them, predate bodgies and rock 'n' roll. The basis for the youth movement, he argues, was based not in a cultural 'site', but with the emergence of widespread secondary schooling that had its beginnings in the 1930s. Without international influences, this country – to a greater or lesser extent – would still have had delinquent youth. New Zealand did not import delinquency from overseas; rather rebellious youth, and from them gangs, simply adopted a common Anglo-American style and similar, delinquent and non-delinquent, activities. The issue undoubtedly became a 'moral panic', as several scholars have observed (Shuker et al., 1990).

At least two prominent early gang researchers had investigated the links between pop culture and delinquency in America. Cressey (1938: p.517) acknowledged that youth, when suitably predisposed, would copy techniques seen in films. Yet he found that the movies themselves did not *cause* juvenile delinquency. Similarly, Thrasher found that the links being made between comics and delinquency were not based on any credible research: “The current alarm over the evil effects of comic books rest upon nothing more substantial than the opinion and conjecture of a number of psychiatrists, lawyers and judges” (Thrasher, 1949: p.200).

The drive for censorship then, had little worth other than perhaps allowing a vent for community concern. However, in restricting or prohibiting certain movies, books and music, the authorities may have widened the generation gap and arguably stoked a mood of rebellion among New Zealand’s youthful population by depriving it of highly valued things that they almost certainly saw as harmless. Moreover, certain attempts at censorship appear demonstrably pointless, and similarly may have contributed to the mood of youthful defiance. For example, having restricted or censored rock ‘n’ roll on the radio, but allowing it to be played in jukeboxes and in dance halls (live music would have been near impossible to censor), the government was in fact encouraging young people to come together; not just in physical locality but also in attitude. In their peer groups and away from a ‘square’ society that tried to restrict their choice of music, any sense of rebellion associated with rock ‘n’ roll, far from being suppressed, was perhaps only being fuelled.

The problem of delinquency was an important, but overblown issue of the 1950s. As King (2003: p.434) has suggested, "When American rock and roll reached New Zealand...it represented a minor revolt of youth against the comfortable and secure world of their parents. As a rebellion, it did not persist: *real* rebellion awaited the 1960s and 1970s". And drawing a parallel argument, so did what became widely considered *real* gangs.

Conclusion

The gangs of the 1950s can be clearly seen as developmentally immature groups that did not yet present a significant issue or problem. Simply put, these gangs were an inevitable outcome of informal youthful associations brought about by urbanisation, although accentuated, perhaps, by the speed with which that urban development took place. These groups did, however, represent an important foundation for what was to come in the following decade.

Growing out of a broad youth subculture, which was enabled by a strong economy and the ability to establish a visible and social identity, by the end of the 1950s certain cliques of youths were beginning to transform and adopt important gang components such as name and claiming a specific geographic territory; developments that are consistent with my definition of a 'incipient gang'.

Also consistent with that definition, most groups that were developing in this way formed within the lower social strata, suggesting that despite the strength

of the economy, the relative deprivation facing those of lower socioeconomic status was a significant factor in the moderate gang formation that took place during the era. Although sufficient for gangs to transpire in moderate numbers, the deprivation was not so severe as to allow a substantial gang problem to emerge.

The fact that the labour market was buoyant meant that gang membership was a passing phase in the lives of many of the young people who joined or formed them. Such gangs, therefore, had a fleeting existence and generally did not survive membership turnover. In this way, gangs emerged, most often in areas with few recreational options, to provide a social function for youths before members transitioned into adulthood.

Because of the gangs' immature development they failed to attract specific political or community concern. Such concern was reserved for delinquency as a general issue and a significant response, reflective of a deep conservative streak in New Zealand society, was based around censorship of American popular culture. This response, although not directly targeting gangs, highlighted certain facets that would become synonymous with government and community action targeting gangs in the future: hasty, reactive and ultimately futile.

Indeed, public and political concern surrounding gangs did not escalate greatly for the better part of a decade, by which time the gang scene had transformed. The telltale signs of moderate evolution evident in the late 1950s

were to be greatly accelerated by an event in the early 1960s, something that can be identified as the first pivot point in New Zealand gang history.

Chapter Four.

The Rise of the Outlaw Clubs: 1960-1970.

Introduction

During the 1960s, the gang scene in New Zealand dramatically and fundamentally changed. During that decade, the milk bar cowboy gangs transformed from loose cliques into organised outlaw motorcycle clubs, and in doing so they gained longevity, or the ability to survive over time. This change occurred after a Hell's Angel chapter was established in Auckland in 1960⁵, something that proved to be a pivot upon which the entire gang scene turned.

Despite this development occurring early in the decade, it was not until late in the 1960s that a significant number of outlaw clubs emerged. Consequently, as was the case in the 1950s, gangs were yet to be isolated as a significant political concern, and national attention remained focused on the wider – and growing – problem of youth delinquency and crime.

This chapter will describe the advent and activities of outlaw motorcycle clubs and examines the context within which these events occurred, including the

⁵ Although the date of the official charter is 1961, it will be shown that it is likely the club started in Auckland in 1960.

suppressive actions of police as well as the sub-cultural support provided by the unique social environment of the liberal and tumultuous 1960s.

The Pivot Point

To help uncover a moment that transformed the New Zealand gang scene, I tracked down one member of a small group of milk bar cowboys who began to hang around outside the Majestic Theatre on Auckland's Queen Street in the late 1950s. This man – 'B.B.' – is now a successful businessperson who wants to remain anonymous, but when he was around 16 years of age he was part of a gang defining event. He recalls that his motorcycling friends had originally met outside various dances around Auckland's inner city, at milk bars or often on the side of the road during a motorcycle breakdown – something that created an informal support network among bikers whose machines were often unreliable.

One of the young bikers, a builder who had artistic abilities, had his secondary talents employed painting an eagle on the backs of his friends' leather jackets. The inspiration came directly from the lyrics of the 1955 hit by Cheers, *Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots* – a song, as noted in the last chapter, that the New Zealand Broadcasting Service had banned. The chorus went, "He wore black denim trousers and motorcycle boots/ And a leather jacket with an eagle on the back/ He had a hopped-up 'cicle that took off like a gun/ That fool was the terror of highway 101" (www.lyricsdepot.com). Far from being a symbol of exclusive membership, the eagle was largely a fashion

accessory and if someone wanted one they could have one. About ten bikers took up the offer.

Sometime later, it was mooted that the group of youths should differentiate themselves under the moniker the 'Auckland Outcasts', but the name – full of youthful rebellion – was used infrequently:

The guy that painted the eagle came up with the name the 'Auckland Outcasts', but it wasn't really an adopted name. You didn't go around saying, 'I'm an Auckland Outcast'. It was just – we must have thought it was cool or something (B.B. 2003 pers. comm.).

Like similar groups of the time, the Auckland Outcasts took great pride in their bikes. Although they provided affordable transportation, motorcycles were also a means to forge an identity within an image conscious milk bar cowboy youth movement. Members tended to ride high-powered Triumphs, BSAs, Ariels, Nortons, and Matchlesses; and a small number chose Vincents. These motorcycles tended to be standard, but the more stylish had crash bars, twin mirrors, extra chrome and large mud flaps that would cover the muffler to increase engine noise. Typical of the milk bar cowboy style, the bikers wore leather jackets with lambs' wool lining, old flying boots and American jeans purchased from seamen docking at Auckland's port. A white scarf was a popular accessory. Surplus from the armed forces offered up New Zealand Air Force and Army great coats. These were often not worn but rather draped over the legs while riding, providing the dual purposes of the 'in' look as well

as all-important warmth. As was typical at that time, none of the group wore helmets, which were not legally required for travelling under 30 miles per hour until a law change in 1974 made them mandatory at any speed.

The steep decline of Upper Queen Street and an absence traffic lights made for a long, unimpeded road ideal for reaching high speeds, and a favourite pursuit of the group was allowing one's feet to drag on the street while riding so that steel capped 'hobnail' boots created an impressive display of sparks. The motorway leading from Queen Street to Ellerslie was a popular strip of road on which to test the effectiveness of a motorcycle repair, the speed of one machine against another, or to impress a girl who accepted the offer of a pillion ride.

All-in-all, there was little to differentiate the group from any number of similar clusters of bikers groups peppered around various youth-hangouts throughout New Zealand: but this soon changed. On one Queen Street night, while mingling around outside the Majestic Theatre in mid-1960, the Outcasts met a young American named Jim Carrico who spoke of a Californian group called the Hell's Angels. That chance meeting was the basis for the first pivot point in New Zealand gang history.

Youth Crime and the Response of the Second National Government

Despite significant developments within the gang scene, it was not until the end of the 1960s that gangs gained significant attention as a distinct issue. Therefore, as was the case in the 1950s, it was juvenile delinquency and

youth crime generally that were the focus of community and political concern. And this concern was brought into sharp relief early in the new decade when the Hastings Blossom Festival descended into fights and violence, an incident described as New Zealand's equivalent of America's Hollister (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.164), an event noted in the previous chapter. Held in September as an annual celebration of spring, the festival of 1960 had been beset by bad weather. The modest population of Hastings swelled by many thousands, including 4,000 who travelled to the town on specially designated trains (Kirkby, 1986: p.210). Many revellers were ill prepared for the inclement weather, and lacking coats or umbrellas, they swarmed into the town's cafes and bars, filling them beyond capacity. The Albert Hotel, a large, traditional looking pub on the corner of Heretaunga Street and Karamu Road, was packed wall to wall, with patrons crowding out of its entrance and onto the street, and busy barmen "filled and refilled glasses by the hundreds" (Kirkby, 1986: p.211).

In the mid-afternoon, two police officers entered the Albert Hotel. Media reports are unclear as to why trouble started, but one author suggests that a "belligerent element", seeing the "men in blue", indiscriminately threw glasses and jugs (Kirkby, 1986: p.210). In a conversation with a policeman who was working in Hastings that day, I was told that the trouble started after a young man, either unable or unwilling to push through the packed bar to get to the toilet, relieved himself where he stood. A police officer, seeing this, tried to arrest him.

It was the beginning of trouble. The unrest and ill temper quickly spread, and fights broke out in the street outside the Albert. Groups of youths – reportedly from the Wellington region – revelled in the mayhem and upped the ante by throwing stones and bottles at police and damaging a police car that they threatened to set alight (Kirkby, 1986: p.213). Ending the ruckus, the fire brigade hosed down the unruly elements of the crowd. Hastings Mayor, Ron Giorgi, lauded police and fire service efforts: “They acted with tact and restraint in an extremely difficult situation... They restored law and order in the face of an ugly mob scene” (Kirkby, 1986: p.213).

Media coverage on the Monday after the weekend incident was reignited two days later when an open letter written by several Hastings citizens was published in a number of leading newspapers. In it, they said that youths had openly urinated in shop doorways and foul-mouthed girls competed with the boys in the “depravity” of their language. Rocks were thrown at a railway car and a sheep was stolen, slaughtered, and roasted on a fire in the flickering light of which were public displays of sexual intercourse (*NZ Herald* 14.9.1960). Having replaced Sid Holland as National Party leader after National’s defeat in the 1957 election, Keith Holyoake seized the political opportunity to put pressure on the Labour government, telling parliament that “the alarming and disgraceful incident witnessed in Hastings during the Blossom Festival had aroused concern from the North Cape to Bluff” and that, “[T]he incident had all the appearance of organised rowdyism” (*NZPD*, vol.324, 1960: p.2244).

The Prime Minister, Walter Nash, attempted to calm the matter while appearing attentive to community concern, stating that both the Minister of Police and the Minister of Justice were “already inquiring into the circumstances surrounding the occurrences in Hastings last Saturday” (*NZPD*, vol.324, 1960: p.2244). Trying to counter Holyoake’s attack, government MP Michael Moohan said: “The Leader of the Opposition and others should be warned about exaggerating the incident”, and drew parallels to the 1954 Hutt Valley incident, discussed in Chapter Three, that he said was “magnified out of all perspective” (*NZPD*, vol.324, 1960: p.2245). The Minister of Internal Affairs, Bill Anderton, was the most dismissive, suggesting, rather hopefully perhaps, that delinquency was a “passing phase” (*NZ Herald* 5.10.1960).

The government had good reason to want the Hastings unrest played down. With a working majority of just one seat in parliament, Labour was going into the November 1960 election as an unpopular government. In response to a surprise balance of payments deficit in their first year of office, Finance Minister Arnold Nordmeyer, who like Nash did not drink, smoke or drive a car, unveiled the 1958 budget in which taxes were hiked, and duties on beer, spirits, tobacco and cars were doubled (Sinclair, 1991: p.293). More than anything else, it was this ‘black budget’ that led to Labour’s drubbing at the polls, and National returned to power commanding a 12-seat majority. With that, National’s post-war electoral dominance marched on, and it was 14 years before Labour was given another chance at the country’s helm.

Although law and order did not become a significant issue during the 1960 election campaign (Chapman, Jackson, & Mitchell, 1962; Prichard & Tabb, 1961), a number of rhetorical flourishes regarding juvenile delinquency and crime made on the hustings, and particularly in the aftermath of the 1960 Hastings Blossom Festival, were to haunt the new government.

Maintaining the trends of the 1950s, crime in New Zealand continued to escalate during the 1960s. Reported crime rose by nearly 60 percent with the main contributors being serious violence and violent disorder, which increased by 86 and 85 percent respectively (Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997: p.131). Convictions in the Children's Court increased from 10,365 in 1960 to 21,502 in 1970, with the largest increases occurring in the latter half of the decade (Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997: p.132).

Given these data, the Labour Opposition had many opportunities to point out to Prime Minister Holyoake and his MPs that the youth crime problem was getting worse. Despite only moderate promises regarding youth crime in National's 1960 election manifesto (New Zealand National Party, 1960: 12A), comments made in relation to the Hastings incident and during the election campaign were continually used against the government throughout the decade, and parliamentary records testify to the frequency of these attacks (for example, *NZPD*, vol.331, 1962: p.1370; vol.336, 1963: p.1771; vol.344, 1965: p.2682; vol.348, 1966: p.2673; vol.352, 1967: p.2313; vol.360, 1969: p.891).

These political assaults frustrated the government, which was anything but idle. Described as “an example of the perfect relationship which can exist between a permanent head and a politician” (Newbold, 1989b: p.120), the partnership of Ralph Hanan as the Minister of Justice, and John Robson as the Secretary for Justice, was responsible for a number of bold initiatives targeting the problem of youth crime.

Following the 1960 election, Robson attended the second United Nations Congress on Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, where it became clear there was widespread concern about increasing levels of delinquency in well-developed countries (Robson, 1973: p.12). Robson did not share the desire of the congress to undertake a large research programme embracing many countries, fearing it would be years before “anything productive could be obtained” (Robson, 1973: p.12). Consequently, he and Hanan forged ahead in an experimental manner with a number of custodial rehabilitation measures, often borrowing from overseas initiatives. Accordingly, in 1961 the first detention centre opened at Waikeria, where offenders aged between 16 and 21 were sent for a maximum of three months of strict discipline and hard work. In an attempt to reduce the amount of time that youths spent incarcerated, the maximum sentence for a spell in borstal was reduced from three years to two. And in keeping with this philosophy, changes to the Criminal Justice Act in 1962 created a part-time custodial regime called periodic detention, whereby offenders aged 15 to 21 were detained only during weekends. The first periodic detention centre was built in Auckland in

1963, and in 1966 the scheme was expanded to include adult offenders (Newbold, 1989b: p.124).

Relating to these developments, Hanan wrote in the Department of Justice annual report for the year ending 31 March 1963, that, "The young offender continues to be our main concern. The task of getting on top of the problem of youthful crime is likely to be neither simple or speedily accomplished. All I can say is that the offensive has begun in earnest" (*AJHR*, H-20, 1963: p.5). The 'offensive' may have started, but the problem did not abate. In 1967, under questioning from the Opposition about increasing juvenile crime rates, Hanan said that "New Zealand had done more in the way of experimentation and toward seeking a solution to the problem than had any other country in the world" and that he "only wished more could be done" (*NZPD*, 1967, vol.352: p.2324). The efforts of the government were surprisingly liberal and certainly ambitious. They were well considered and intellectually rigorous. But ultimately the reformative programme was unsuccessful in aborting the advance of juvenile crime.

In an unfortunate symmetry for the government, the decade ended as it had begun when in 1969 the Hastings Blossom Festival was again disrupted by violence. Unlike the incident in 1960, this time the culprits of the mischief could be specifically identified. The cause of the 1969 unrest was a number of outlaw motorcycle clubs that are the focus of this chapter, as well as a new street gang called "The Mongrels"⁶ with whom we will later investigate

⁶ As will become clear, the group were soon to become widely known as the Mongrel Mob.

(*Sunday News* 5.10.1969). By this time the media could individually name such groups, testimony to the fact they were becoming, in ways I will outline below, distinctly recognisable. Indeed, the general problem of youthful delinquency was beginning a process of being reframed as a problem of gangs. Reminded of his campaign rhetoric from 1960, an exasperated Prime Minister Holyoake appeared at a loss: "I am asked to give reasons for this. I am sorry I cannot. There seems to be a kind of mental bug affecting the minds of men around the world" (*NZPD*, vol. 360, 1969: p.823).

The Hell's Angels Form in Auckland

As outlined, the Hastings Blossom Festival of September 1960 generated a great deal of media coverage. It was, however, a very small article in an Auckland newspaper three months later, which, in hindsight, recorded more significant happenings.

On 9 December 1960, *The New Zealand Herald* reported that the secretary of the Auckland Commercial Travellers and Warehousemen's Association, Mr J. H. White, and his wife were driving home along Jervois Road in Auckland when they suffered a puncture. As Mr White prepared to change the wheel he said that he was approached by three young men wearing "standard motorcycle gang garb: Leather Jackets, riding boots and peaked caps" with an offer of help. Mr White was 'dubious' – presumably due to the reputation of milk bar cowboys – but accepted their assistance. With the wheel changed, the 'leader' of the group gave Mr White a small card that read, "You have just been assisted by a member of the Hell's Angels Motor Cycle Club road patrol.

It is our pleasure". The youth, speaking with an American accent, said he had been a member of a similar club in America and intended to start something along the same lines in Auckland. Jim Carrico was changing more than a wheel; it is no understatement to say that he was beginning to transform the entire gang scene in New Zealand.

With little fanfare or alarm, Carrico was turning the small group of milk bar cowboys, known to few apart from themselves as the Auckland Outcasts, into the Hell's Angels. Back patches were embroidered at Milne and Choyce, a department store on Queen Street, and sewn onto the members' old short-sleeved school pullovers (B.B. 2003 pers. comm.). The eagle remained painted on their jackets but it was now covered with the 'deathhead' insignia⁷; above which were the words 'Hell's Angels', and below it, 'Auckland'.

Although the patches were a single piece of cloth (unlike the three-piece patches worn in the U.S.), the embroidery was detailed, and a significant step-up from painted jackets. The group was distinctive immediately. They were so distinctive, in fact, that a reporter from the *Auckland Star* went to find out about the group. On New Year's Eve 1960, the newspaper published his article under the headline, "Auckland 'weird mob' has a proud tradition". The reporter found Jim Carrico who told him, "I'm a member of the Hell's Angels of San Francisco...They're a big club, you know, and they go back to a fighter squadron of World War I." He went on to say there was a Hell's Angels group

⁷ The official 'deathhead' insignia was designed by an early HAMC president from San Francisco, and was derived from images used by two World War II aircraft squadrons – see the Hell's Angels official website www.hells-angels.com.

“in every major city in the South Western United States. Regional headquarters were established in San Francisco and Los Angeles and today there are thousands of members from Canada to Mexico and now New Zealand”. As will become clear, Carrico’s claims were significantly exaggerated.

Carrico said that, along with the club in Auckland, he had established groups in Hamilton and Christchurch. Carrico specifically used the term ‘club’ and insisted the group was not a gang. When the young biker invited the journalist to a Herne Bay house – outside of which was a row of “sleek, polished motorbikes” – he found inside,

“a room of teen-age boys and girls. Leather Jackets and boots predominated and the girls had too much eye shadow. Collectively, they didn’t look at all friendly, and when the boys were introduced with a curt handshake and by names such as “Animal,” “Crazy” and “Pinky,” I wondered what I had struck”.

After spending some time with the youths the reporter found:

I was among a likeable bunch of kids. What seemed outlandish and arrogant to me was something of traditional significance to them. What some would think surliness was resentment against those intolerant of any non-conformity. I came away with the idea that though only a special type of youth would want to be in something like “Hell’s

Angels,” the club was a force for good among lads who might otherwise drift into hooliganism and delinquency (*Auckland Star* 31.12.1960).

The journalist concluded by saying, “I left the club thinking the youngsters strange, but sincere. Motorcycling is their passion. But then with other people it’s racing and Rugby” (*Auckland Star* 31.12.1960). The reporter’s largely favourable opinion of the group was shared by a local policeman who was cited in the article as saying that he no longer considered them “another troublesome bunch”. He noted that over Christmas the group had taken several crates of soft drink to orphanages on the North Shore and in South Auckland (and, as B.B., told me, “to chat up the nurses”). As will become clear, favourable views held by police would not last.

The newspaper article appears to have pleased the group as they sent a copy of it to the Hell’s Angels in San Francisco. In a letter dated 28 April 1961⁸, and addressed to “Father Frank and the Frisco Angels”, Carrico – who signed off with his club name of ‘Thumper’ – was quick to explain some falsehoods and exaggerations he had conveyed to the reporter:

I don’t know what truth there is in the storys [sic] I used to hear about the origin of the Angels at home, but I took the story about the flight squadron during the first world war and did it up good, I mean like how is this reporter supposed to know. As far as me telling him that I was a

⁸ There are at least two surviving letters written by Jim Carrico that are held by HAMC (Auckland). The one I have referenced here is referred to throughout this section as ‘Carrico’s letter’.

member of your club, I extend my humblest of appologys [sic] to you and your club, but like I had to give him some sort of direct connection. And as far as there being thousands of members from Canada to Mexico, well you know how it is. I mean like I get kind of carried away some times.

Clearly, then, Carrico had not been a member of the Angels in the U.S., and the exact nature of his relationship to them remains unclear. It is safe to conclude, however, that whatever association he had, it was a close one. As will become obvious, there is much evidence to show that Carrico had a clear understanding of how the club operated, as well as its rules and its structure – more or less all of which he established in New Zealand.

The date that the Hell's Angels give to Auckland's official charter is 1 July 1961 – at that time, unlike Carrico's audacious claims, just the fourth chapter anywhere behind San Bernardino, San Francisco and Oakland (Lavigne, 1993). It appears, however, that the Auckland club was actually recognised before that. The letters Carrico wrote to the U.S. that I have seen were on official club letterhead and it is difficult to imagine the U.S. Angels would have allowed this if the chapter had not been officially identified. Moreover, in 2007, Phil Schubert, a prominent and long-time Hell's Angel member, went to San Francisco and acquired copies of minutes of meetings that appear to show that the New Zealand chapter was indeed acknowledged before 1 July 1961 (Phil Schubert 2008 pers. comm.).

Carrico's letter to the San Francisco chapter offers a great deal of insight into the club in the early 1960s. It shows that he brought with him the principles that were being forged by Sonny Barger, the influential president of the Oakland Hell's Angels⁹. The same rules, structure, and discipline that were to make the Hell's Angels the largest motorcycle club in the world had found root in New Zealand, and, as will be shown in the following chapter, by the early 1970s they would spread beyond the motorcycle scene and become the basis for street gangs too.

Carrico wrote that the Auckland chapter had the "usual officers", and a document held by the Auckland Hell's Angels shows this included a president, a vice president, a treasury/secretary and a road captain. Despite the *Auckland Star* identifying Carrico as the leader, Hell's Angels documentation that I have viewed from that time shows that the club's first president is recorded as Pete Skinner. As was the case in the U.S. (Barger et al., 2000) – the president had special rights and in certain decisions his vote held greater power, and outside of meeting times his authority was near absolute (B.B. 2003 pers. comm.).

Carrico's letter outlines that to gain membership of the club, a person had to pay the club's weekly fee for three weeks, ride with the group for a month and be unanimously voted in by existing members – a rule the same as that being used in the U.S (Barger et al., 2000: pp.43-44). Although there is a plethora of anecdotal and empirical evidence that highlights the importance of the

⁹ For more on Sonny Barger see his book *Hell's Angel: The Life and Times of Sonny Barger* (2000)

overseas connection in shaping the gang scene in New Zealand, this is perhaps the most tangible piece of comparable evidence that exists. This rule, however, took time to become consistently applied and firmly embedded. One Hell's Angel who joined in 1964 told me that he was given a patch more-or-less straight away (Phil Schubert 2006 pers. comm.).

Just like the U.S. chapters, as evinced by meeting minutes I have seen from San Francisco (dated 13 December 1961), fines were the primary sanction for breaking club rules, and were levied for infringements such as turning up late to weekly meetings or not attending compulsory club motorcycle rides, known as 'runs'. Continual breaches of rules – or unpaid fines – resulted in members losing their patches temporarily or permanently.

As will become clear as this thesis proceeds, the numerous effects that Carrico had on the New Zealand gang scene were enduring and wide ranging, but for now, two are particularly worthy of note. First, the adoption of patches as an exclusive identifier gave members a distinctive sense of group identity. A patch wearer was no longer just an individual; he/she was part of an exclusive collective. The patch became a source of prestige, and helped create strong intra-group bonds. The insider/outsider distinction between milk bar cowboys and mainstream society, outlined in the previous chapter, was further delineated as patches created visibly separate groups within the previously homogenous subculture. Furthermore, the patch, to use marketing jargon, became a recognisable 'logo'. Whatever perception built up around the group and its associated patch was therefore carried with its members

over time and place. As will become clear, one effect of this was acute police attention. Maintaining the marketing jargon, the patch also became a type of advertisement. One Hell's Angel, Steve Tidswell, told me of seeing the group in the 1960s:

When I was a young fella I was coming back from the movies with the ol' man and we got over taken by a bike going like fuck. The ol' man said, "that's the Hell's Angels". I've never been too sure about many things in life but from that time on I was sure [I wanted to be in the Hell's Angels].

The second and perhaps most important development to consider, was the creation of a formal organisational structure, and rules that maintained it. Although universal to outlaw motorcycle clubs around the world (Veno, 2003; Wolf, 1991), many international researchers report that most street gangs lack formal organisation and leadership, something noted by early researchers, and many since (Horowitz, 1983; Klein, 1995; Klein et al., 2001; Thrasher, 1927; Yablonsky, 1967). As will become clear, nearly all gangs in New Zealand, with varying degrees of precision, adopted the organisational template provided by the Hell's Angels and this is important as it meant the gang scene obtained a high degree of structural form and thus arguably became unique. As noted in the literature review, U.S. studies that have identified highly structured and well-organised gangs, such as those by Jankowski (1991) and Taylor (1989), tend to show they are involved in, or more successful at, organised criminal activities. Therefore, the structure

adopted by New Zealand gangs allowed many an easy transition into such endeavours; but in the 1960s, any gang participation in profit driven crime was many years away. Nevertheless, I suggest that these features proved pertinent to the ongoing viability of the young groups.

The organisational structure adopted by the Auckland Hell's Angels and others subsequently, meant such groups were less inclined to disintegrate when key members departed the scene. Democratic processes instilled a greater degree of legitimate authority, and leadership became a position and not a person. Using Weberian terms, it was a shift from 'charismatic' to 'task' leadership (Glassman, 1984: p.217). In this way, when they became vacant, executive positions were filled by elections, and the authority vested in those roles was transferred. As was the case in the previous decade, gang participation in the 1960s was largely a fleeting phase in the life of most members, but these organisational developments enabled the gangs themselves to endure over time. Further support for this longevity came from the adoption of such things as club rules, fees, and fines. Along with a formal leadership structure, these elements had the effect of creating the gang as an abstract, independent entity. Unlike in the past, the group became something more than just the sum of its members and therefore was more likely to continue in the face of membership turnover, although this was by no means assured.

In 1961, Carrico's letter says that the Auckland Hell's Angels had 40 members – including one girl – and was "growing fast all the time". It is unknown

whether or not a club existed in Christchurch, as asserted by Carrico in the media. Certainly there is no surviving evidence of one. There was, however, a chapter established in Hamilton in the early 1960s and another started in Whangarei around 1965¹⁰. As well as portraying a different area name, the patches were also embroidered in different colours, some of which are displayed at the Hell's Angels' Auckland clubhouse. I have been told that these chapters came and went rather quickly and some members from each moved to join the Auckland chapter (Phil Schubert 2006 pers. comm.).

In April 1961, Carrico left the club. In his letter he said he had resigned from active membership "three weeks ago" and was planning to go home in two months. Exactly when he left and what happened to him is unknown, but in his short stay he had forged the Hell's Angels' first international link and initiated a process that fundamentally reshaped the New Zealand gang scene.

The Police Reaction – a Source of Cohesion

When Carrico said the Hell's Angels were a club and not a gang, he had a legitimate claim, and one maintained by many groups to this day. Even those unfamiliar with such groups would note the structural elements he brought to New Zealand are not unique to gangs. Formal rules, informally prescribed behaviours, membership fees, and uniforms or badges are elements common to any number of clubs or organisations. One must also remember that they formed primarily around a common interest in motorcycling. It was not,

¹⁰ These chapters were associated to the Auckland chapter, although neither was sanctioned or recognised by the American Hell's Angels. A further chapter existed on Auckland's North Shore between 1972 and 1978, but this too was closed down (as a result of not being officially sanctioned by the international Angels) and certain members entered the Auckland chapter.

therefore, what they were, as much as how they were perceived that made them 'gangs'. Miller (1975: p.263) was perhaps the first to outline that perception is critical to group definition: "Put in general terms, if youth groups in a particular community appear to present a problem, they are perceived as gangs; if they do not, that community has 'groups' but no 'gangs'." This issue will be expanded further in later chapters, but for now, it is enough to say that the positive publicity that the young group received in the *Auckland Star* was seldom if ever repeated. In fact, the Hell's Angels – and other motorcycle groups that would mimic them late in the decade – were soon creating many negative headlines. A selection from *The New Zealand Herald* is typical: "Concern About Conduct Of Motorcycle Club" (17.1.1965); "Clubhouse Is 'Headache' To Police" (1.7.1965); "Arrest By Citizens Planned; Action Against 'Hells Angels'" (15.11.1965); "Motorcyclists' Outing Finishes in Court" (7.6.1966); "9 Motorcyclists From Shore Group Arrested" (29.10.1968); "Motorcycle Louts At Beach" (25.11.1968); "Gangs Not Welcome At Taupo" (8.4.1969) "Motorcycle Mob On Rampage In Country Hotel" (9.4.1969); "More Motorcycle Gang Members Appear in Court" (12.6.1969); "Gang Member Convicted on 3 Charges" (24.9.1969).

As noted in one of the above articles, gang clubhouses were becoming a problem for the police. In the early 1960s, the Hell's Angels established a clubhouse in Khyber Pass, but they moved regularly. One clubhouse at 64 Upper Queen Street burned down in 1964, and so the group rented a new place at Anglesea Street in Ponsonby (Phil Schubert, 2006 pers. comm.). Within the clubhouse walls the gang not only found a haven to party, but also

a place to work on their motorcycles and meet regularly. But more than this it was physical manifestation of the group and therefore a representation of the entity existing as something more than the sum of its members and consequently a further important component in the achievement of gang longevity. Indeed, the clubhouse would become a standard for all outlaw clubs – and, in turn, all gangs – and pose “headaches” for police (*NZ Herald*, 1.7.1965) and be recognised as centres for “drinking parties and sex” (*Truth*, 18.8.1968).

According to one media source, by the mid-1960s, the notoriety of the Hell’s Angels had gained significant public prominence, and not just in Auckland (*Sunday News* 19.9.1968). After the publicity surrounding the problems at Hastings in 1960, as described earlier, the Angels were drawn to the city’s festivals later in the decade looking for adventure. Indeed long runs throughout many parts of the North Island were becoming common.

On one trip to New Plymouth in mid-1966, the *Sunday Times* reported that, “Hundreds of local people were crowding the pavement” to see the “club members and their girlfriends... [who] ...were mainly dressed in black leather jackets and tight black trousers” (*Sunday Times*, 5.6.1966). The Hell’s Angels were a novelty for many people, but local police were clearly aware of their growing reputation. A New Plymouth police spokesperson said that the group had received “a thorough talking to. We heard they had arrived from Auckland and we thought we had better see them” (*Sunday Times*, 5.6.1966).

That 'talking to', or a subsequent one, led to at least one arrest. Sourced from a club member's scrapbook, a newspaper clipping (which lacks reference detail) says that when a member of the New Plymouth police asked why he had a stock whip draped around his neck, 20-year-old Hell's Angel Geoffrey Strickland, replied, "For hitting nosy cops with". This led to his arrest and subsequently to his companions travelling to the local police station where they raised a Nazi flag up the station's flagpole in protest (Phil Schubert pers. comm.). It was a typical act of bravado and defiance. In fact, in the mid-1960s, "cop baiting" was not, perhaps, unusual, and in one example, a group of Hell's Angels came across a lone country traffic officer who promptly locked himself in his vehicle while the group "downtrowed and pissed all over his car before dragging on" (Shadbolt, 1971: p.36). In fining Strickland £20 for carrying an offensive weapon, the presiding Magistrate said,

"The Police evidently persuaded you and your friends to leave New Plymouth to avoid any possible disturbances and I think they should be commended for their action. I notice by the newspapers that your friends got into trouble in another town. It is youths like you who adopt an arrogant attitude towards the police that give teenagers a bad name".

The trouble in 'another town' occurred the night the bikers left New Plymouth, and in light of more recent information, there is more to the story than what the Magistrate could get from the newspapers. As will become clear shortly,

the increasing conflict between the Hell's Angels and the police was not just a matter of gang members having an 'arrogant attitude'.

In the late 1950s, Green (1959: p.25) reported that one method employed to deal with the problem of gangs was for police to prevent "the groups from meeting in public places and by 'keeping on their tails' and laying as many charges as possible against gang members". As will become clear, this method appears to have been maintained in the 1960s. Green also recommended, without elaborating in any way, that police "require instruction in the handling of groups of young adolescents" (Green, 1959: p.59). Whether or not this was a veiled criticism is unclear, but there is evidence of police heavy handedness in the 1960s. Early in the decade, *The New Zealand Herald* reported that many young motorcyclists were complaining of police harassment. One said, "I have been spoken to like a dog, my only crime being that I ride a motorcycle and wear a leather jacket which is regular motorcycle rig" (*NZ Herald* 24.10.61). What weight one can give to such complaints is difficult to judge, but they are supported by certain police activities.

In 1997, retired police inspector Murray Forbes (1997) published a brief account of the incident that the New Plymouth Magistrate referred to when sentencing Geoffrey Strickland. In *Confessions from the Front Line*, Forbes writes with great candour of the night when he and his colleagues confronted the Hell's Angels. Travelling home in the rain after their trip to New Plymouth in 1966, the bikers had stopped for shelter at a derelict house at a railway

settlement of Kiokio – incorrectly recorded by Forbes (1997: p.34) as Kihikihi¹¹ – south west of Te Awamutu. Rightly judging the house as abandoned, the group decided to stay a night (*NZ Herald* 7.6.1966). Alerted to their presence by a farmer, the local weekend police muster in Hamilton – including a young Forbes – was bolstered by off duty staff, mostly football players who “were always keen for a fight in those days” (Forbes, 1997: p.34).

Facetiously describing the operation as a “discreet visit”, Forbes says the police deliberately damaged motorcycles and tore patches from the backs of members. Including friends and girlfriends of club members, the police arrested 21 people for being unlawfully on premises. The following day a number of Angels went to lay complaints about the damage done to motorcycles and clothing, as well as assaults and the theft of patches. However, they were soon “sent on their way” as “complaints were not taken from riff-raff” (Forbes, 1997: p.35). Not mentioned in his book, Forbes told me in March 2008 that he was one who took a patch as souvenir but no longer had it as his wife threw it away “because it stunk”.

The rationale given for the police action was that a show of force would prevent future problems (Forbes, 1997: p.34). There is a strong argument, however, that such actions have a contrary effect. Conflict between the rebellious groups and the police is almost certainly inevitable, but the cavalier and illegal aspects of police activity, as outlined by Forbes, undoubtedly fed

¹¹ Complicating matters, one media report says it was at Pioipio, slightly further south, but a Hell’s Angel member who was there told me it was Kiokio (Phil Schubert 2008 pers. comm.). In talking with Forbes, he agreed his report may be a mistake, and I believe KioKio is most likely to be correct.

resentment and led to greater group cohesion. As will become clear, the example of overzealous policing is not isolated, but it does offer a perhaps unique insight into how cohesion and consequently gang evolution can occur through conflict.

The idea that conflict inspired cohesion is a requirement for gang evolution was first proposed by Thrasher (1927). Most often sourced from inter-group clashes, Thrasher believed that when a group faces hostility it derives a sense of 'we' that binds the membership more tightly together (Thrasher, 1964: p.24). Although gang interaction with broad social forces was integrated within Thrasher's 'situation complex' – whereby gangs are seen as part of a complicated web of social interactions – it was Tannenbaum (1938: pp.19-22) who explicitly developed the idea that a cohesive effect is created by excessive societal reactions. This occurred, he believed, through the 'dramatization of evil', whereby significant negative attention is brought to bear on gangs, and their youthful activities are seen in forcefully negative ways and repressed. Regardless of how good the intentions of these actions, repression results in gangs becoming more cohesive, and thus causing them to generate their own value system that insulates the membership from the values of the community. More recently, Klein (1996) is among those who have reached similar conclusions. He argues that, "The gang dynamic manipulates messages of attack by the law and justice system to feed the special gang culture and reinforce gang cohesiveness" (Klein, 1996: p.208).

Whether initiated through 'cop baiting' or 'discreet visits', the interaction between police and the gangs was creating an escalating cycle of action/reaction. Although this is likely to have aided group cohesion, it also introduced the rebellious youth to the criminal justice system and, as will become clear in later chapters, this was to have a definitive effect on the culture and dynamics of such groups.

Certainly, the abuse of power by police at Kiokio aggrieved the club members. Regarding the police action, one of the Angels told me, "Of course it was over the top. What did they achieve? We were sheltering from the rain. [Then] when everyone was locked up and gone, to cut your brake cables and throttle cables - a chicken shit thing, a cowardly act" (Phil Schubert 2008 pers. comm.). It appears they let their frustrations be known at the time. Travelling in three police vans from the police station to the Hamilton Magistrates Court after being arrested at KioKio, the youths were defiant and were repeatedly ordered to, "Cut out that filthy language" (*Waikato Times* 6.6.1966).

Using Becker's idea as a guide, that being to "look at all the people involved in any episode of alleged deviance...all the parties to a situation, and their relationships" (Becker, 1963: pp.183 & 199), one can gain considerable insight into the issues and outcomes of the incident at KioKio. The aggressive behaviour by police riled the youths, but given complaints were not accepted from 'riff raff', one might appreciate the youths' subsequent feelings of powerlessness and contempt for authority. Those reading in the media about the incident would have undoubtedly perceived the 'filthy language' of the

youths as reflecting their uncouth and undesirable nature – unaware that this anti-social behaviour was born of, and a reaction to, the heavy handed and illegal tactics of police. As previously discussed, the content of these media reports were noted with apparent distain by the New Plymouth Judge when convicting Geoffrey Strickland for carrying a stock whip. Given this, one can assume they also influenced other authority figures and members of the public about what type of group the Hell's Angels were, and therefore they were viewed and treated accordingly. And yet, the incident described by the media bore little resemblance to what actually occurred.

While the majority of those arrested were either fined £10 plus £1 costs or remanded, three were sentenced to jail for one month with either one or two years probation – the group's then leader, David Roach, was given the harsher sentence of two years probation (*Waikato Times* 6.6.1966). One of those sentenced to prison was Phil Schubert, who said he was shocked by the ruling and the attitude of police:

“It was a ridiculous sentence. It's a minor trespass, isn't it? [The police action] was over the top, and the [court] sentences – It would get your back up, wouldn't it? It was totally unfair, particularly when you're young and you know you're not getting treated fairly. It doesn't make you conform it makes you go the other way” (Phil Schubert 2008 pers. comm.).

Schubert lodged a successful appeal to his sentence and in the end he was given two years probation. Apart from the mandatory conditions restricting his movement and employment, the probation order also specified that, “you do not associate with any person not approved by the Probation Officer and in particular any member of the ‘Hell’s Angels’ Group”.

The order was given on 1 July 1966. Within a week Schubert, and two other Hell’s Angel members, flew to Australia. There he changed his patch to read ‘Nomad’ instead of ‘Auckland’. It was almost certainly the first Hell’s Angels patch to be worn on Australian soil. Schubert told me that his two companions went on to establish a Hell’s Angels chapter in Sydney sometime around 1968, although it was not formally recognised and inaugurated until 1973 (Veno, 2003: p.31) or 1975 (Lavigne, 1993: p.62)¹². After a spell of prison in Australia, it was nearly ten years before Schubert would return to New Zealand and shortly thereafter rejoined his old club in 1978 at a time when many of its members were incarcerated following an incident I will detail in Chapter Six. At that time, he was surprised to find how much the club had transformed. Although by the latter half the 1960s the group had undergone dramatic changes since being formed from a loose clique of milk bar cowboys, these changes were to be matched by significant advancements in the 1970s. In spite of – perhaps aided by – the tensions stemming from police suppression efforts, the group became better organised and its members significantly more committed (Phil Schubert pers. comm.). Moreover, as will become clear, the Hell’s Angels were by that time just one of numerous

¹² In correspondence with me in September 2009, Veno said that an official charter was obtained by the Sydney chapter in 1968, but it was withdrawn in 1969 after its president was killed by four members of the Finks.

outlaw motorcycle clubs that were nevertheless dwarfed in membership numbers by large – and patched – street gangs.

Rebellion and the 1960s Social Environment

While the Hell's Angels were gaining increasing public prominence as the 1960s unfolded, they were not alone in their rebellious and non-conformist outlook. The deep and widespread conservatism that had defined New Zealand in the 1950s began to dissipate dramatically as the 1960s progressed. And within this broad social shift there were more radical elements that set about challenging the country's laws, political decisions, and social folkways and mores. Crossover between these more radical elements and the rise of groups like the Hell's Angels should not be overstated, but certain links are important to construct. As will become clear, outlaw motorcycle clubs and dissident sub-cultural groups shared certain similarities that I will argue aided the development of outlaw motorcycle clubs, while increasingly liberal attitudes were important in shaping how New Zealand gangs were viewed in the future.

The social and cultural changes occurring in New Zealand during the 1960s were inspired by and in turn a part of a Western World phenomenon, and often germinated in the U.S. Indeed the 1960s are remembered prominently for countercultural revolutions and experimentation, the effects of which often struck deep into mainstream society but were most obvious within the youth and those on the fringes of society. Marginalised groups began to seek a voice through protest and challenged governments and mainstream thinking.

These protests reached a crescendo in numerous, varied, and often violent demonstrations and uprisings in 1968: a turbulent year for much of the world and one that acutely defined the turmoil of the period (Kurlansky, 2004).

For many people, the questioning of traditional authority also meant the use of recreational drugs, most notably LSD, the hallucinogenic properties of which helped inspire psychedelic clothing and art – and helped establish a ‘hippie’ subculture. The advent of the mini skirt and the bikini, trends unthinkable a decade previous, were representative of a widespread movement of sexual liberation that found more acute representation in ‘love-ins’, events in which sex became a form of expression and social activism. Unsurprisingly, much popular music of the time reflected these events: often drug inspired and overtly political.

Indeed the social changes between the 1950s and 1960s were arguably unique in their drama and rapidity. The dissent that pervaded much of western society in the 1960s made the threat posed by the rebellious teenager, of such concern in the 1950s, become a rather nostalgic memory of a seemingly much simpler time.

The remarkable societal changes of the 1960s were unfolding as technological innovations began to mitigate New Zealand’s geographic isolation and broaden social perspectives. Before exploring two important technological advances and their impact, it is important to note that the take-

up of technologies, and indeed other consumer goods of the 1960s, was enabled by the country's continuing prosperity.

Despite a collapse in wool prices in the latter half of the decade, the New Zealand economy remained very strong. As was the case in the 1950s, jobs were plentiful and unemployment was virtually non-existent and consequently wages continued to rise. The Wage Rate Index (using a base of 1000 in 1965) was near 1,200 by the end of the decade. This compares to 734 in 1955 and just 249 in 1932 (Department of Statistics, 1970a: p.941). This wealth enabled the country to embrace new technologies and allowed many people to free themselves from pragmatic economic considerations and focus on wider social issues.

Television broadcasting began in 1960, and by 1971, more than four in five households had a television set (Department of Statistics, 1971: p.341). Among other things, the new medium contributed to New Zealand becoming better connected to international issues. Images of America's involvement in the Vietnam War, which was steadily escalating throughout the 1960s, were beamed into New Zealand households and helped inspire a peace movement here. Similarly, the American civil rights movement, which sought an end to discrimination against African Americans, gave rise to increased awareness of racial politics in New Zealand. Similarly, many people took of the feminist fight for women's liberation. In the U.S., television coverage of the demonstrations that accompanied issues such as these sparked what conservative commentator William Buckley called a "contagion of protest" (King, 2003:

p.454), and New Zealand it seems was not immune. Moreover, developments within television broadcasting in New Zealand made this country's political leaders appear more accessible and accountable. First broadcast in 1968, the *Gallery* current affairs programme, hosted by former academic Brian Edwards, directly challenged politicians and allowed New Zealanders to be more acutely in-touch with political decisions.

Increased air travel also shaped New Zealand's social outlook. Between 1960 and 1970 international passenger flights in and out of New Zealand rose from 92,000 to 554,000, an increase of some 600 percent (Belich, 2001: p.427). People returning from travels overseas, or indeed immigrating or visiting here (as was the case with Jim Carrico), could translate to New Zealanders how the 'swinging 60s' were playing out around the world (King, 2003: p.457). Consequently, New Zealand fashion mimicked overseas trends, clothes became brighter and more extravagant, and men began to grow their hair, and thereby breaking free from the short-back-and-sides cut that was akin to male uniform in the 1950s.

In 1964, British pop group the Beatles toured New Zealand drawing enormous crowds wherever they went, and in doing so highlighted the continuing popularity and influence of music on young people. As was the case in the 1950s, these new music appetites were not being satisfied by state radio broadcasts, which, with usually just one station in each main centre, could not possibly be all things to all people. In 1967, self proclaimed 'pirate' radio station, Radio Hauraki, started broadcasting the latest hits - many of them

protest songs by the likes of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez - from a ship anchored just outside New Zealand's territorial waters, and thus out of reach of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service restrictions. In 1970, the state monopoly on radio was officially broken when broadcasting was deregulated and licences began to be issued to private stations (The Radio Network, 2008). For a country so keen to control popular music in the 1950s via censorship, the change was significant.

The more radical moves away from conservatism and conformity were most evident at university campuses. University attendance grew by 150 percent between 1960 and 1969, by which time there were 31,494 students enrolled in New Zealand's seven universities (Department of Statistics, 1961: p.218; 1971: p.237). These youthful elites were well represented among those who began to defy and challenge the state, infected, perhaps, by the 'contagion of protest'.

In 1960, modest demonstrations accompanied the selection of an incongruously named All Black team that toured apartheid South Africa with only white players, but it was an anti-war rally in 1967, following the government's decision to send troops to Vietnam, that New Zealand first witnessed mass protest. Indeed, it was the first time a significant segment of the country openly opposed government policy (Sinclair, 1991: p.307). It was to signal the beginning of a growing protest culture, and from the late 1960s and into the 1970s there "seemed to be a superabundance of causes that would bring people out into the streets" (King, 2003: p.454). In what became

increasingly common, significant clashes between police and more radical protestors were being reported in the media as early as 1967 (Brown, 1971: pp.7-14). Although difficult to evince, it is plausible that such clashes, and indeed protest and dissent generally, confirmed in the minds of outlaw club members the repressive nature of the state and validated their rebellious underpinnings. More demonstrably, the wider protest movement was evidence of, and in turn contributing to, more liberal and independent thought among significant portions of the population. Many people were starting to challenge conventional notions and, as will be outlined in coming chapters, this led to a period from the 1970s and into the 1980s in which gangs were seen by many as troublesome but legitimate communities, and the best way to mend or mitigate their anti-social and criminal tendencies was to work with rather than against them.

Many of these attitudes were inspired by a further development, most obvious in and around the country's universities in the late 1960s: the arrival of the hippie subculture. And between this movement and outlaw bikers certain parallels are evident. As was the case around the world, from within the local hippie movement charismatic leaders emerged who encouraged people to resist convention and create alternative ways of thinking and lifestyles. Tim Shadbolt surfaced as one such leader who, among other things, rallied against the state on numerous issues, clashed with police, was jailed, and adopted and encouraged communal living. James K. Baxter, at the time one of New Zealand's most celebrated poets, was another who became a symbol of the emerging counter culture. Baxter was "long-haired, barefooted, bearded

and raggedly dressed”, an appearance that would have been unthinkable just ten years previous, but in the late 1960s “would not have looked unusual” (Belich, 2001: p.511).

Baxter, too, preached a radical departure from social norms and established communes in Auckland, Wellington, and in Jerusalem, a small settlement up the Wanganui River (Belich, 2001: p.460). These leaders encouraged many young people to ‘drop out’ of society and rally against the government and other state and business institutions that they perceived to be repressive. The use of illicit drugs such as marijuana and LSD was also beginning to become apparent (Newbold, 2004: p.56). By the late 1960s, then, cynicism, defiance and rebellion were established within mainstream youth culture as qualities to advertise and admire, and contempt for “the law and its representatives became the ‘in’ thing” (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.163).

Within the developing social context of the late 1960s, then, the rebellious and non-conformist nature of the Hell’s Angels was in many ways not unique. Although the outlaw clubs were centred in the working classes and bereft of the lofty political ideologies common to other, middle class, dissident groups, they shared with hippies a sense of building their own value system and to a certain degree the notion of ‘dropping out’ of society. In addition, the formation of communes and the development of gang clubhouses, were based on similar concepts of sharing and community; a sense of common good rather than individual attainment, traits not as evident in the formation of new gangs in the 1990s and beyond.

Moreover, the fact that all of these values were being publicly articulated in the latter half of the 1960s by leading countercultural figures almost certainly gave the young outlaw bikers a degree of impetus and a sense of legitimacy to their lifestyle. The changing social environment, then, was important in both bolstering the outlaw lifestyle as well as how that lifestyle came to be viewed.

An Inside View of the Hell's Angels' Activities

In an interesting crossover between the predominantly working-class bikers and the typically middle class protest and hippie movements, Tim Shadbolt, in his late teens and just before becoming a the activist leader noted above, spent more than a year hanging out with the Hell's Angels in the mid-1960s¹³. His book *Bullshit & Jellybeans*, published in 1971, gives a brief but vivid insight into the group.

For Shadbolt, the rebellious lure of the club was appealing: "I used to love sitting in the gutter with barefeet, a chrome-studded chain-covered leather jacket and filthy jeans. Eatin' chips. People look at you with such disgust and hate. It was terrific" (Shadbolt, 1971: p.34). B.B. told me that club members in the early 1960s were clean-cut and meticulous in their dress, going so far as washing the lambs' wool that lined their boots with household chemicals to keep them white. This change in dress and attitude is therefore rather dramatic, and in adopting a worn-out and unkempt appearance, these youths,

¹³ The fact that Shadbolt found the Hell's Angels appealing and that they maintained an element of 'cool' was not unique to New Zealand. In the U.S. the Hell's Angels began to attract a number of well known artists and personalities and the hippie/liberal set attached themselves to the rebellious group. Author Ken Kesey and his 'merry pranksters', and 'gonzo' journalists and writer Hunter S. Thompson were among those who associated with the outlaw club in the U.S.

and others like James K. Baxter who I mentioned earlier, were creating – the latter perhaps more consciously – a contrast with an increasingly consumerist society. Going one-step further in advertising their oppositional nature, the Angels began to don Nazi regalia, because “it really seemed to bug people. The swastikas meant as much to us as Napoleon’s tricolour meant to our parents” (Shadbolt, 1971: p.36). Although Nazi symbols may have had some white power connotations in the U.S. (Chase, Gast, Keating, & Kelly, 1983), for the New Zealand Hell’s Angels – and other groups that would mimic them – it was little more than a symbol advertising their rejection of social norms.

Shadbolt recorded a number of the group’s activities like beer-drinking races and “longest prick” contests, which occasionally involved other groups such as the Road Runners and the 25 Club – both of whom are discussed in the following section of this chapter. Shadbolt also documented other activities of the Hell’s Angels:

The gang often went on runs to Whangarei and Dargaville. After we’d stirred up Dargaville a bit with a few drags along the main straight we had this shit hot party out in an old haybarn. Booze was stacked up to the roof and it lasted 3 days. By the third day there were some pretty rude scenes. This guy called Atlas got hold of a lamb and tried to screw it. A girl called ‘Powderpuff’ did a strip-show for the boys. For her star performance while someone was screwin’ her she sucked off another guy pulled another two off while another two fellows masturbated into her ears (Shadbolt, 1971: p.34).

When published, this account of sexual adventurism created little if any widespread public stir, a sign that 15 years after the Mazengarb report, attitudes to sex were less tightly strung. Indeed, attitudes toward sex in New Zealand were changing considerably with the advent and uptake of the birth control pill and a breaking down of mores concerning sex before marriage.

Notwithstanding that, few within the mainstream would have approved of the sexual behaviours described above, but within the Hell's Angels it was accepted and encouraged; and therefore group sex – most often many men on a single woman – thrived and became a defining activity of New Zealand gangs, something I will discuss in Chapter Eight. For now, it is enough to say that the group was creating its own codes of behaviour, and increasingly they transcended those set down by society. Widely recognised as a feature of collective behaviour (Locher, 2002), the following account suggests the group was acting in ways that individual members may not have; but such behaviours became normalised and, therefore, as will become clear as this thesis proceeds, within many such groups, increasingly frequent.

All these teeny bopper girls used to hang around trying to look tough, but none of the guys would touch them because they were all carnies [underage]. A couple of girls who looked 'old enough' were hangin' around buggin' everyone 'cause they wanted to go for a ride. Well, the boys decided to take them for a ride up Mount Eden. The first one went down OK and a few of the guys got stuck in; then someone tried to lay the other girl. Well her mate had lapped it up but this girl got

scared and started screamin'. Some of the lover boys parked up in daddies' cars came rushing across to rescue this damsel in distress, but when they saw her surrounded by 20 bikies they decided she could get stuffed and retreated hastily. By then someone had called the cops and everyone split in all directions. No one was caught. The sentence for gang rape is 14 years. Those girls wanted the ride (Shadbolt, 1971: p.34).

Gate crashing parties also become common, and the strength of their numbers meant a party host could do little to get rid of the group: "A few windows might have been smashed and the papers would yell and scream about Hells [sic] Angels gate-crashers" (Shadbolt, 1971: p.34).

Although such activities were largely unthinking and outcomes of group bravado, within the context of the wider protest/hippie movements, these actions were – by some at least – justified as reactions to the perceived unjust state of the world: "I often wondered what was considered the most violent act by society – a baby dying of starvation while wheat surpluses were burnt in America, or a motorbike boy breaking a window. What's the most vicious brutal crime?" (Shadbolt, 1971: p.34-5). The logic may be questionable, but the explanation gives insight into how the wider cultural environment may have spurred the anti-social activities of rebellious groups: "It was a wild insane destructive negative revolt. But it was better than death – society's coffin of respectability, graveyard of progress and cross of the bourgeoisie. We were proud to be rejected because we didn't want to be like those who

rejected us” (Shadbolt, 1971: p.36). On the whole, however, it appears that the young bikers had little higher purpose or thought in their rebellious activities, a position summed up by one of the defining scenes in the classic 1959 biker film, *The Wild One*. In it, Marlon Brando’s character ‘Johnny’ is asked what he is rebelling against, to which he replies, “Whadda ya got?”

In August 2004, I had a conversation with Tim Shadbolt, who had become a long-term and popular Mayor of the Southland city of Invercargill, and he told me that the groups were rebellious but not criminal:

The gangs in those days – they weren’t like gangsters really, they were like rebel youths. So we all had jobs, most of the gang guys were in apprenticeships, motor mechanic apprentices or things like that so it wasn’t - there wasn’t a gangster element it was just motorbike cowboys - that was the irony, they weren’t really criminals and would be shocked to be called that. The criminals were a different culture altogether, they were the guys like [machine gun murderer] Ron Jorgensen and [career criminal and repeat prison escaper] Trevor Nash, they ran beer houses and had their own pecking order and prison culture and all that. They were the gangsters. The bikies were just rebels.

Indeed, the activities of the Hell’s Angels in the 1960s were, overall, in the realm of youthful rebellious fun, but within a mercurial group environment they could quickly, but rarely, turn more serious and certainly there is no drive toward profit driven criminal endeavours. While the latter would not seriously

change until the 1980s, by the 1970s the group gained a reputation that would overtake the likes of notorious lawbreakers such as Nash and Jorgensen and they soon became some of New Zealand's most obvious villains, not so much as individuals but as part of a collective: as Hell's Angels.

Follow the Leader -The Growth of Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs

By the end of the 1960s, the Hell's Angels were no longer the only patched group in the country as several outlaw motorcycle clubs had formed. These groups were inspired by the Auckland Angels' media presence and their long runs out of the city, but the influence of the Hell's Angels in New Zealand, however, was by this time not just confined to the Auckland chapter.

During the 1960s, the club in America was creating something of an industry. By the middle of the decade, the group was demanding, and receiving, \$1,000 from reporters in order to gain access to them (H. S. Thompson, 1967: pp.48-49). Aware of growing public interest in the Hell's Angels, film production companies began to make movies that were based (sometimes rather loosely) on the gang, as well as motorcycling generally. *The Wild Angels* (1966), *Hells Angels on Wheels* (1967), and *Hell's Angels 69* (1969) were all inspired by the club; the latter two films included members of the gang in the cast. These films were part of a wider genre of films capturing the free spirit of bikers, including the 1969 cult classic *Easy Rider* (Yates, 1999: p.53). These movies were enormously influential in creating worldwide interest around motorcycling, but in New Zealand, the greatest impact during the 1960s appears to have come from two non-fiction books, both of which were published in 1966.

Hunter S. Thompson's *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga* is both an inspired piece of writing and the result of an equally inspired ethnographic undertaking. Thompson ingratiated himself with Sonny Barger's Oakland chapter of the Angels and rode on-and-off with the club for two years. His work captured the spirit of the club and many of its rules and codes of behaviour. The book became a classic and numerous club members have told me of its tremendous influence on their forming or joining outlaw clubs in New Zealand.

Also published in 1966, George Henry Smith's *The Sex and Savagery of Hell's Angels: The Full Story of America's Wild Ones* was another influential publication, which luridly outlined the activities of the group. Claiming to be written by a gang insider and published under the pseudonym of Jan Hudson, the book has since been discredited. Osgerby (2005: p.74), for example, claims that Smith/Hudson "probably culled most of his information from press clippings". Despite its dubious claims of firsthand accounts, many older bikers have told me of its influence in the late 1960s and 70s, examples of which will be noted later in this thesis. These influences in New Zealand have been confirmed by Haslett (2007: p.44). Also, an American outlaw club mentioned in the book, the Devil's Henchmen, may have been the inspiration for the name of a club that formed in Christchurch in 1973 and discussed in Chapter Six. Incidentally, the book also mentions the possibility of a New Zealand chapter of the Hell's Angels (Hudson, 1966: p.20), the uncertainty signalling

the fact that by this time the Auckland chapter had lost contact with its American counterparts.

These numerous media influences were to bolster groups like the Hell's Angels in New Zealand during the latter part of the decade. One element that was adopted in New Zealand outlaw motorcycle clubs, the wearing of 1% badges, a symbol that the wearer is an 'outlaw' (for fuller explanation see Wethern & Colnett, 1978: pp.53-54), was almost certainly taken from the literature. Carrico would not have known of these emblems when he came to New Zealand (as they came about while he was in New Zealand, or perhaps even after he had left), but by the late 1960s, such badges were common, and with them came the 'outlaw' attitude detailed in the various films and books.

The following example offers insight into this evolutionary shift from milk bar cowboy to outlaw club. In the early 1960s, a milk bar cowboy 'gang' calling themselves the Road Runners appeared on the North Island's East Coast. 'Tex', a member of the group, who later went on to become a member of the prominent outlaw club the Magogs of New Plymouth, told me in December 2003 that they were a group of farmers' sons who would ride around Hawkes Bay on Friday nights and party up, 'crash out' and then be up and home by 5am to milk the cows. Like many such groups that disintegrated when a dominant member left the scene, the Road Runners dissolved when their leader, 'Tony', moved to Palmerston North. In a short time, however, Tony re-established the club there. By 1966 the new Road Runners were typical of

groups at that time and their transformation into a full outlaw club, which took a less than a year, is worthy of note.

One member of the Road Runners during this period was Cos Jeffery, who in 1985 detailed their transformation in an unpublished paper, which I have obtained from him. The Road Runners enjoyed riding British motorcycles and the friendship and camaraderie that came from a group of like-minded people. Female members were welcome, although they were a minority of the 18-odd all-Pakeha membership. While ostensibly holding equal status, perhaps unsurprisingly, the women fulfilled the jobs of taking minutes, writing letters to members advising them of up-coming runs, and cooking, if required. All members worked in paid employment – although it was regarded as “a necessary evil” (Jeffery, 1985: p.142). The club was a hobby for its members, a sideline activity that organised road trials, riding competitions and touring around the open roads surrounding Palmerston North. When they were not riding, the hangouts of choice were the city’s main square or the Rose Milkbar. Their presence, however, began to receive significant police attention. Upholding a theme addressed earlier, “The police had taken to interfering and persistently harassing members” and the club believed this was “completely unwarranted” (Jeffery, 1985: p.142). Given what is known about the relationship between conflict and cohesion, as discussed above, the outcome evinces a certain sense of predictability.

The perception of undue police attention, Jeffery told me in 2008, created “a them and us attitude”. The moderate members wanted to distance themselves

from trouble, concentrate on the more social aspects of the club, work on a better public image, and avoid the police by spending more time at a clubhouse they had rented slightly out of town (Jeffery, 1985: p.142). The rebels within the club wished to become more like the Hell's Angels and make the club more central to the lives of its members (Cos Jeffery, pers. comm.). Lending support to the idea that police suppression contributed to greater group cohesion, as outlined earlier, the rebel faction saw the police interference as a challenge to be confronted (Jeffery, 1985: p.143). The rift within the club soon came to a head. The matter went to a vote and the moderates lost by one: nine votes to eight. Trials and competitions quickly lost vogue and long runs that often went through the weekend and into the week became common. If that meant missing work, work was missed – something an economy with ample jobs allowed for. Club activities were now mandatory for all members, and commitment to the club became a significant – perhaps primary - focus of members' lives.

The club had shifted from a part time hobby toward a more committed lifestyle, and, reflecting both the Hell's Angels and wider cultural trends, the group adopted an unkempt appearance. The female club members resigned, as did any moderates who failed to adjust to the transition (Jeffery, 1985). They were replaced by the likeminded, a crucial process that inevitably meant the group rebelliousness became entrenched – and an important and general process that will be explored in later chapters. By the end of 1966, the Road Runners sought to advertise their oppositional nature by donning a back patch. The transformation to an outlaw club was thereby formalised.

Other milk bar cowboy-type groups were also making this transition, including the 25 Motorcycle Club in Wellington and the Coffin Cheaters in Dunedin, and by the late 1960s the vast majority of rebellious biker groups were adopting, or being formed on, the outlaw model inspired by the Hell's Angels. While there were still a number of young groups springing up and then fading away, by the end of the decade – as the liberalism and rebellion of the 1960s was at its most prominent – a number of outlaw clubs that would prove to be permanent and important fixtures within the New Zealand gang scene were in existence. With rebelliousness often reflected in their names, the Highway 61 of Auckland was established in 1967; the Outlaws of Napier in 1968; the Outcasts of Hamilton, the Sinn Fein of Upper Hutt, the Satan's Slaves of Wellington and the Epitaph Riders of Christchurch were all established in 1969. With the possible exception of the Sinn Fein, whose presence is not recorded, all of these groups were at the Hastings Blossom Festival disturbances of 1969 (*Sunday News* 5-10-1969).

The back patch was the key identifier of the clubs. Initially, patches were a way for likeminded groups to recognise one another and many of these clubs remained on good terms, but as the outlaw motorcycle scene grew, conflict between groups became increasingly apparent.

Like any group, whether it is rugby players or anyone else, there are just some - it's their recreation. They want to prove their manhood or whatever, or they just liked the adrenalin rush you get from fighting.

There are always some people who just like fighting (Tim Shadbolt 2005 pers. comm.)

At first, these conflicts tended to be spontaneous, in the same way as individual fans of competing sporting teams may come into conflict. Such hostilities, however, tended to snowball. If a member of one club lost a fight, not just the individual felt the defeat, it was a loss of mana for the whole club. Based on the all-for-one-and-one-for-all refrain, individual fights therefore had the tendency to escalate into club disputes.

Reflecting the important status they had achieved, the taking of opposition back patches during conflict became the standard way of imposing the ultimate humiliation over an enemy. It appears that one consequence of this was the cessation of female membership. Around the turn of the decade, women were universally banned from joining outlaw clubs as they were deemed to be less able to defend a patch. For the same reason, Barger had successfully had a motion passed banning women from the Hell's Angels in America in the mid-1960s (Veno, 2003: p. 152). In an era of growing feminist consciousness, Bellich (2001: p.508) has suggested that the gangs were collectives designed to shore up a threatened sense of masculinity. The treatment of women will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

The realities of outlaw club conflict were soon faced by the Road Runners around the end of 1969 when they became at odds with the Sinn Fein, a group based about 100 kilometres to their south at Upper Hutt. The Sinn Fein

executed a raid on the Road Runners and stripped the patches from their backs. It is said that the colours were turned inside out used to print Sinn Fein patches in an effort to add extra insult (Cos Jeffery 2006 pers. comm.). With the club scene in New Zealand being so small, word of the defeat travelled quickly. The Road Runners had lost their patches and with them their status as a functioning outlaw club. Although any groups of bikers could don back patches, it was becoming clear that such groups had to be able to defend them; the scene was creating an informal governing process akin to natural selection whereby only the strong were able to survive and the weak vanish. As became standard within the scene, the Road Runners did not remake their patches. The club had been defeated and defrocked and had little choice but to close down. Certain members of the group were among those who did, however, establish another club in Palmerston North in 1971 named the 'Mother Fuckers' (later abbreviated to 'Mothers') that would prove to be, and remains, a powerful force in the city.

The defeat of the Road Runners by the Sinn Fein was an early conflict between clubs of the 1960s. It was, however, to pale in comparison to the wars that took place in the 1970s and beyond.

Conclusion

As was the case in the 1950s, for the greater part of the 1960s gangs were not identified as a significant social issue. These groups were seen as a part of the growing delinquency and crime problem; a problem that the government was proactive, but ultimately unsuccessful in tackling. The growth

of outlaw motorcycle clubs toward the end of the decade, however, meant they were beginning to attract some attention. In 1960, unrest at the Hastings Blossom Festival was seen as an acute example of the fear that many of the country's youth were running amok, but by 1969, at the same event, the visibility of these new outlaw clubs ensured they were identifiable as being involved in the trouble. Looking at this one event, then, we can begin to see a shift that was to define the 1970s and beyond as gangs became a specific target of social concern. In many ways, this shift can be linked to the differences between the milk bar cowboys of the 1950s and the outlaw motorcycle clubs of the 1960s, which were fundamental and dramatic.

Many of these important changes can be linked directly to the formation of the Hell's Angels in Auckland – an event so crucial to the gang scene that I have defined it as the first pivot point in New Zealand gang history. Factors such as the adoption of back patches and a democratic hierarchical structure, supported by formally proscribed rules, aided the ongoing viability of these new groups. Although membership remained fleeting and the domain of youth, the outlaw clubs as discrete entities were better equipped to survive membership turnover and thus attain longevity. Unlike those seen in the 1950s, many of the groups that formed in the 1960s remain in existence today.

In many ways the outlaw clubs were a small part of the changing social landscape of New Zealand, which saw a dramatic shift away from the social conservatism and conformity that had defined the 1950s. Members of outlaw

clubs shared with hippies, for example, an unkempt appearance and an ethos of dropping out of society by creating distinct communities and folkways. Much of the enduring ethos of these groups is firmly rooted in the ideals of the 1960s. Many of these shared folkways were not only instrumental in creating strong group bonds but also in how these groups were perceived – issues that will become apparent as this thesis proceeds.

Using the definitions outlined in the introduction to this thesis, many of the changes can be seen to move these groups from ‘incipient gang’ to ‘gang’. However, it can be deemed that they were still only transitioning between stages, as during this period they were yet to produce a strict rule base that superseded the rules of the state, or an exclusive membership via ‘prospecting’, two things that I contend are necessary to define a gang. As will be shown in following chapters, these important evolutionary and definitional components did not fully develop until the 1970s, but the geneses for these changes were evident during the 1960s.

Instrumental in creating developmental shift, was the advent of the back patch that helped create a clear ‘insider and ‘outsider’ distinction while also ensuring the groups were readily identifiable to other groups, the public and the police.

The outlaw clubs’ use of Nazi images and acts of ‘cop baiting’ suggest a nascent rebellious intent, so to imply that police suppression alone was the causal factor that created an oppositional attitude is patently false. Nevertheless, the attitude of the police appears certain to have had

considerable impact in feeding the growing internal dynamics of these groups. At Kiokio, for example, police engaged civilians keen to fight the young bikers, deliberately damaged motorcycles, and stole highly prized back patches, which acted as a lightning rod for existing discontent. Actions such as these undoubtedly solidified the growing 'them and us' attitude, and amplified and gave focus to a hitherto fledgling and largely directionless adolescent revolt.

Indeed, the conflict between the outlaw clubs and the police can be seen as one important factor that led to or accelerated the creation of a more hardened and antisocial value system, things that would soon become synonymous with such groups, and thereby completing their transition from 'incipient gangs' to 'gangs' in the decade that followed.

Chapter Five.

The Rise of Polynesian Street Gangs: 1960-1970s

Introduction

Around the same time as the Hell's Angels were emerging from the milk bar cowboy youth movement and transforming into an outlaw motorcycle club a group of Pakeha 'bodgies' were on their way to creating what became arguably New Zealand's most notorious street gang, the Mongrel Mob.

The rise of the Mongrel Mob is best viewed in two distinct stages. Stage one begins with a small group of predominantly Pakeha youths in the early 1960s who, in both Wellington and the Hawkes Bay, established the gang's name and went on to create some of its defining behaviours and symbols. The process whereby the gang's membership became less Pakeha and more Maori accelerated when the second, and perhaps most important, stage commenced at the beginning of the 1970s. By this time, street gangs in Auckland had adopted the outlaw motorcycle club-like patches and formal organisational structure. Further evincing the importance of the first 'pivot point' outlined in the previous chapter, this lead was subsequently followed by all street gangs, including the Mongrel Mob and their primary rival, Black

Power, and with a unique rapidity, not seen before or since, these gangs then migrated or emerged throughout much of the country. Like the outlaw motorcycle clubs, the membership of street gangs was bolstered by the wider social environment of the late 1960s that saw the popularisation of dissent and non conformity, but specific social issues facing New Zealand's ethnic minorities were to provide the ingredients for mass gang formation, the likes of which were previously unknown.

This chapter will examine the first stage of the Mongrel Mob's development and investigate the importance of Pacific immigration and Maori internal migration during the 1960s and the advent of a social environment conducive to the formation of Polynesian¹⁴ gangs. It will then explore the rise of 'patched' and organised street gangs, including the Mongrel Mob (in stage two of their development) and Black Power, and outline the differences between these two groups that shaped their futures within the New Zealand gang scene, and what these differences can tell us about gang maturation.

The Mongrel Mob (Part I)

Given the dearth of literature on New Zealand gangs, the legend of the Mongrel Mob's inception is surprisingly prolific – albeit somewhat varied. The Mongrel Mob – or 'Mongrels' as they were known until around 1970 – is widely reported to have formed in 1956 (Andrae, 2004: pp.25-26; Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.161; Kelsey & Young, 1982: p.2; Newbold, 2000: p.204) when a group of youths are said to have appeared before the Hastings

¹⁴ I use the term 'Polynesian' to describe both Maori and Pacific Peoples.

Magistrates Court and been denounced as 'mongrels' (Andrae, 2004: pp.25-26; Isaac, 2007: pp.2&35; Kelsey & Young, 1982: p.2; Payne & Quinn, 1997; Yelash, 2001: p.13). It is the belief of many authors, and indeed Mongrel Mob members themselves, that the pejorative label appealed to the youths who adopted it as their gang name.

None of the literature cites a reference for the year 1956, but its source may have been an article in *The Truth* newspaper published in 1971 in which a Mongrel Mob member claimed that the gang was in existence at that time (*Truth* 20.4.1971). The age of the original members of the Mongrels, however, debunks this; in 1956, the founding members of the Mongrels were only around 10 years old, and had not yet met. Therefore, we can say for certain that this date is incorrect, but, as will become clear, just exactly when the gang started remains uncertain.

Moreover, while all of the original members believe the above story to be true, none I have spoken to – when pressed for details – can specifically remember the court incident in Hastings from which the gang's name is said to have derived, except one who says it happened in 1962 and occurred in either the Hutt Valley or Wellington (Seagull 2004 pers. comm.). Another founding member, while not dismissing the story, believes the name was first adopted after local police in Wellington habitually called the youths 'mongrels':

It [the court case incident in Hastings] probably did [happen], but it happened in Wellington first and it was from the CIB it used to be in

them days. You know as far as I can remember back, they [the police] just used to think we were a pack of mongrels [and would call us that] (Chappy Steffert 2007 pers. comm.)¹⁵

After speaking with many of the original and early members of the Mongrels, I am unconvinced the court incident occurred at all, and certainly I have been unable to find any evidence of it. It seems apparent, however, that one way or another the name was adopted by the gang as they saw it as an apt description of how they saw themselves.

One long-time (but not original) Mongrel Mob member, Dennis Makalio, has become something akin to the gang's unofficial historian, but his efforts at detailing the gang's early history have proven as equally troubled as mine. Despite being unable to gather exact data, Makalio has concluded, contrary to popular belief, that the gang's name first emerged in the Wellington region – not the Hawkes Bay – in 1962. As such, he believes Wellington and not Hastings is the gang's 'Fatherland', the term used by Mongrel Mob members to recognise Hastings as the gang's birthplace.

One reason for the lack of clarity regarding the exact origin of the gang was the transient nature of many of its founding members. Prominent original Mongrels like Peter ('PD') Steffert, his brother Chappy, and Gary Gerbes met in the early 1960s after being sent to welfare establishments in the Wellington region as adolescents. Following stints in state care, the youths remained in

¹⁵ The interview with Chappy Steffert was undertaken on my behalf by Mongrel Mob member Dennis Makalio and videoed.

Wellington for a short time, where some members were part of a group called the Petone Rebels, before following Gerbes back to Hawkes Bay, where he had grown up. The youths' style at this point was a hang-over from the fading bodgie movement: "We had long hair...earrings, gloves – no leathers – P jackets, purple socks – that's what we were, man" (Gary Gerbes 2004 pers. comm.).

For several years the young men, singly or collectively, split their time between Hawkes Bay and Wellington, making friends in each region. Apart from lags in borstal, moving around was most often motivated by a desire to seek adventure and the abundant employment market of the 1960s continued to allow the freedom to easily pick up jobs when required. And in this they were not alone. During the 1960s there were only two years when labour turnover of the total male workforce fell below 20 percent (Dunstall, 1992: p.463), meaning significant amounts of people were moving freely from job to job.

We never stayed anywhere too long. Buying cars and leering it up here and there. [We would g]et out of Borstal and many of these guys would have nowhere to go so they'd go to Wellington because there was that much work...We were always coming backwards and forwards...we always used to come back to the Bay. There was shearing at all that" (Chappy Steffert 2007 pers. comm.).

If, as Makalio believes, the Mongrels' name was first adopted in 1962, I have been unable to find references to it in the media until very late in the decade and these are from the Hawkes Bay and not Wellington. In 1967, four original members of the gang were arrested in Hastings for wilful damage, obscene language, assault, and resisting arrest, but there is no mention of them being 'Mongrels', or members of a gang at all (*Herald Tribune* 18-9-1967).

The first specific mention of the gang that I have found is in reports of the disturbances at the 1969 Hastings Blossom Festival (*Sunday News* 5-10-1969). After this time, the name becomes prominent in both Hawkes Bay and Wellington newspapers (e.g. *Herald Tribune* 7-12-1970; *Herald Tribune* 25-3-1971; *Evening Post* 21-4-1971; *Evening Post* 28-6-1971).

The paucity of media accounts of the gang in the 1960s is noteworthy and suggests the gang came about later in the 1960s, perhaps as late as 1968¹⁶, or that without a common identifier, like a patch, was not easily recognised by the police or media. As will become clear toward the end of this thesis, this situation exists with many contemporary youth street gangs. In addition, they were possibly too small and transient to become a particular focus. By the late 1960s, however, there were loose groups calling themselves Mongrels in the Hawkes Bay and in the Wellington region: "[There were] different pockets – there was nothing united. There were different Mobs" (Chappy Steffert 2007 pers. comm.).

¹⁶ Without firm evidence to the contrary, I suggest this date is as likely as any for the genuine inception of the gang. I base this on numerous conversations with those within and surrounding the group in the 1960s. Nevertheless, it remains a distinct possibility that the name was used in a loose way before that time.

In contrast to the growing number of outlaw motorcycle clubs with formal leadership and organisational structure, by the end of the 1960s the Mongrels were simply a loose-knit collection of rebellious youths and young men: “When you look back on it nothing was planned, it just sort of happened . . . People drifted in and drifted out. It was like an unorganised family” (Chappy Steffert 2007 pers. comm.). In fact, it appears likely that different groups came and went in different places, but the name was kept alive by core members. One member of the gang in the late 1960s, was a member of a group called the Hastings Night Hawks in the middle of the decade, suggesting the name was not being used then or there was a lull in the area for a short time (V.J. 2004 pers. comm.).

Despite their disorganised nature in the late 1960s, the Mongrels were nevertheless establishing many of the behaviours and rituals that became synonymous with the gang. Although Makalio makes a claim for the Mongrel Mob’s ‘Fatherland’ label to be shifted to the Wellington region, it was in the Hawkes Bay that the gang was forging its most significant reputation for violence, and it was to their standard that other groups of Mongrels would aspire.

As Gerbes explained to me:

We would fight them [people wanting to join the gang] ourselves and see what they could do, or else we would send them in against terrible

odds, wait a while, and then go in and smash them [the opposition]. It was all about muscle. We hated bikers and the only other gangs were the Hell's Angels, no Niggers [Black Power], no nothing. We just developed utter strength. We built strength. Our other hate was boat people [seamen], overseas ships. And we specialised in going out and wiping pubs out. About eight of us. Tough cunts. And we established such a strong name. If anyone said anything wrong about the Mongrels I would just smash them (Gary Gerbes 2004 pers. comm.).

But the word 'mongrel' did not just offer the group of youths a name; it began to be used to actively define them. In what can be seen as classic case of 'labelling' (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1951), the gang began a process of secondary deviation by embarking on 'mongrel' behaviour. The label that had been given and subsequently adopted due to petty acts of misbehaviour began to define the self-image and actions of its members. One story Gerbes related to me, which has subsequently appeared in an episode of *Ross Kemp on Gangs*¹⁷, was of him and another member of the gang drinking at the Provincial Hotel in Napier, when a female associate made a snide insult about the group. In retaliation, Gerbes grabbed her by the legs and held her up by her ankles, ripping her underwear off with his teeth. After discovering she was menstruating, he pulled the tampon out with his mouth and shook his head smearing blood over his face. The other Mongrel then licked the blood off his face and they both tore at the tampon and ate it (Gary Gerbes 2004 pers. comm.).

¹⁷ The episode was part of the first series, produced by IWC media and aired originally on SKY 1 in the UK.

With a certain degree of self-consciousness from a man who at the time of my interview was approaching 60 years of age, Gerbes says such acts were a way to,

Justify our standing. Class acts. Most people would go...like it was yuck... But those are the sort of stunts we used to pull. The sort of things we used to do because we were Mongrels. It was just a thing of class. Our law was our law. It was bad law, it was dumb law - ah - not bad law; it wasn't bad then. But it was just a law all of its own (Gary Gerbes 2004 pers. comm.)

Without the impediment of adult supervision, the young men were unknowingly forging enduring subcultural elements that became embedded within the gang. The 'law' Gerbies described would eventually be termed 'mongrelism' by the gang. Mongrelism is somewhat difficult to define, but is basically any outrageous behaviour that distinguishes a Mongrel Mob member's actions from those that are socially acceptable. This creed became embedded in the gang's collective conscience. As noted in the previous chapter, outlaw motorcycle clubs were also engaging in defiant and anti-social activities, but the Mongrel Mob's undertakings appear more extreme. Indeed, the gang would later commit some of the most notorious crimes of physical and sexual violence in modern New Zealand history, and much of this behaviour, I would argue, is linked to the ideals fostered within the gang during this time.

In recent times, one former Mongrel Mob member described the gang's attitude in the 1980s:

If it was considered evil, bad and lawless we embraced it as good; everything was backward or ironic. The 'mystery' of the gang was that we were right even if we were wrong; we were good even if we were bad. We embraced a living contradiction. The Mob psyche may have made no sense to outsiders but everything made perfect sense to us. Being a Mongrel meant being able to do anything your mind could conceive; any form of fantasy or debauchery you were able to dream up was acceptable (Isaac, 2007: p.2).

For Gerbes, the gang's anti-social outlook was an outcome of the treatment that many of the youths had received while in state care:

A lot of those guys [early Mongrels] went through the same place – Levin Training Centre and Epuni Boys' Home... It was pretty sad and pretty demoralising – there was sexual abuse by the people that ran the place [and] absolutely shocking violence. I was just a kid and I ran away once. I was made to stand on a square at strict attention and talk to myself. If I stopped saying 'legs, legs why did you run away' I would be beaten and thrown in a shed – locked in a shed... Those places destroyed our fuckin' heads, man. [So we said] fuck the system. If that was the way they were going to treat us, then we will

treat them the same way. We were going to give them what they gave us – and [via the Mongrel Mob] they got it all right (Gary Gerbes 2004 pers. comm.)

While violent and anti-social acts became core elements within the Mongrels, other symbolic elements that would come to define the gang were also being established in the late 1960s. One media account from Hastings in 1966 reported that painted swastikas appeared around the town during the Blossom Festival of that year (*Herald Tribune* 3-9-1966). Although it was not known who was responsible for the graffiti, the Mongrels, like the early Hell's Angels at that time, claimed the swastika for their gang, not to demonstrate any racist attitudes, but in symbolic defiance of social norms. To mainstream New Zealand, the swastika represented something terrible and despicable; thus, the Mongrels saw it as perfect example of mongrelism. Furthermore, the gang took up the Nazi cry of 'seig heil' and this became an enduring and important part of the gang's lexicon.

A further, and unique, symbol taken up by the Mongrels during this period was the gang's salute, whereby members extend the thumb and little finger of one hand while clenching the remaining three digits. In more recent times, the salute is given with the back of the hand pointing away from the body and looks like the 'shaka' sign commonly used within surfer culture (and indeed by many people as a friendly acknowledgement or greeting). Old photos show that the original signal, however, was given with the palm of the hand facing outward. The exact origin of the Mongrel Mob salute are unclear, but many

within the gang suggest that the extended thumb and finger look like the ears of a dog, and thus the salute was derived to mimic the bulldog that the gang adopted as a symbol in the late 1960s or early 1970s; at which point (or potentially before) the gang adopted a guttural bark used variously in greeting, celebration, or anger.

Another account surrounding the salute says that PD Steffert, in a display of loyalty to the gang, cut off the three middle digits of one hand so that he would always give the Mongrel's salute. In fact, Gerbes told me that Steffert lost his fingers in an industrial accident while working in a factory in Petone in the early 1960s. So, whenever Steffert waved or gave a Nazi salute, only his little finger and thumb were visible on his misshapen hand, and it is possible that the salute derived from that.

In numerous ways, then, by means of visual representation, attitudes, symbolic representations, and language, the group was creating more than just a gang but a subculture or a collective way of defining their existence.

Old photos of the gang have also captured a significant change occurring within the group's make up. As further evidence of the importance of the gang's name, the Mongrel label was embraced by members in a somewhat literal sense – mongrel dogs being dogs of mixed breed – and the gang members began to pride themselves on accepting anybody who could show true mongrelism, regardless of their ethnicity. While Pakeha youths had

originally formed the group's core, by the end of the 1960s the gang had transformed to include a significant number of Maori members:

To me that [ethnic background] doesn't mean jackshit. A Mongrel is just a Mongrel whether he's Maori, Chinese, Russian or Bob Turk down the fuckin' road. He's a mongrel" (Gary Gerbes 2004 pers. comm.).

There was all sorts, mate, Maoris, Coconuts [Polynesians] – anyone that was sort of that way, off the beaten track – they were always with us. We had all fuckin sorts with us (Chappy Steffert 2007 pers. comm.)

The gang's willingness to accept members from a range of ethnicities was to prove even more significant as immigration and an internal migration grew rapidly in the 1960s. These processes transformed not just the Mongrels, but also the entire New Zealand gang scene.

Ethnic Migrations and Multiple Marginality

The Mongrel Mob's shift from a Pakeha to a Maori dominated gang can be seen as a reflection of something occurring in the gang scene generally. I will examine this transformation shortly, but before doing so it is important to note that this change occurred during the turbulent and unique social period – defined by protest, alternative lifestyles, and a greater liberalism – of the 1960s and outlined in the previous chapter. The influences impacting on outlaw motorcycle clubs stemming from this period are equally important to street gangs, but as they have been discussed in the previous chapter I will

not repeat them here. What follows, then, explores the unique social elements directly affecting Polynesian – largely Maori – communities and the fundamental impact these had on the gang scene.

As will be recalled from chapter three, Auckland gangs in the late 1950s were overwhelmingly Pakeha (Levett, 1959). In contrast, by the early 1970s the city's gangs were dominated by Maori and to a lesser degree youths from Pacific Islands (Investigating Committee, 1970: p.12). In a little more than ten years, then, the ethnic make-up of gangs underwent a striking and rapid transformation. This change reflected ethnic demographic changes brought about by immigration and internal migration and the social problems that ensued. An appreciation of the factors that created these problems in the 1960s is crucial to understanding the widespread formation of Polynesian gangs in the following decade.

As previously discussed, the New Zealand economy during the 1950s and 1960s was booming. Not only did this allow young workers ample freedom to move between jobs, it also created a significant demand for workers. The island nations to New Zealand's north, with largely subsistence economies, were seen as a labour pool to supply this need, and migration from these nations was encouraged by both the government and businesses alike (Belich, 2001: p.534). As a result, whereas in 1945 fewer than 2,000 Pacific Peoples lived in New Zealand, by 1956 the number had grown to over 8,000 and by 1966 it was over 26,000 (Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997: p.56). Despite these rapid increases, the percentage of Pacific Peoples living in New

Zealand by the end of the 1960s remained relatively small, at a little over one percent of the total population. Many of these migrants, however, settled in just a few Auckland suburbs – like Grey Lynn and Ponsonby – giving them a significant presence in those areas. By the late 1950s, a number of predominantly Samoan youths formed a street gang called the King Cobras in Ponsonby (Payne & Quinn, 1997)¹⁸. It proved to be an early indication of what was to come when Pacific Peoples grew in number so that by the beginning of the new millennium they were the dominant ethnic group within certain South Auckland suburbs (Statistics New Zealand, 2001).

As will become clear, the growth of Pacific migrants proved important to the development and growth of gangs, but in the 1960s and early 1970s it was the movement of New Zealand's indigenous population that proved more significant and immediate.

Maori were thought to be a dying race in the late 19th century as their numbers dropped to under 46,000 due to introduced diseases and war (Walker, 1992: p.498). But as a result of improved immunity to disease, better housing conditions and advances in healthcare, Maori were living longer (Belich, 2001: p.467), and with a birth rate that outpaced even that of the 'baby boom' in the post war period, the Maori population grew from 99,000 in 1945 to over 200,000 in 1966 (Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997: p.55). The increase in raw numbers, however, was not as significant as the dramatic shift in Maori

¹⁸ The King Cobras were also mentioned in the 'Carrico letter' cited in the previous chapter as having been in conflict with the Hell's Angels.

lifestyle that created a number of social problems and subsequently impacted on the gang scene.

Beginning during World War II, Maori moved in increasing numbers from the country into main centres in search of work, money and pleasure (Metge, 1964: p.128). The proportion of Maori living in cities and boroughs grew from 17 percent in 1945 to 44 percent in 1966 (Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997: p.54). In short measure, then, a great wave of Maori were leaving their traditional lifestyles and entering the cities. This pattern was most obvious in Auckland where, by 1968, Maori numbered more than 30,000 (Kawharu, 1968: p.175). This process became known as 'urban drift', and it continued so that by the mid-1980s, 80 percent of Maori lived in urban environs (Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997: p.54). The term 'drift', however, tends to understate the rapidity and impact of the move from rural to urban living, particularly in the 1960s.

The problems associated with rapid urban change have been linked to gang formation in numerous U.S. studies (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; A. K. Cohen, 1955; W. B. Miller, 1958/1969; J. W. Moore, 1978, 1991; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965; Thrasher, 1927; Yablonsky, 1967). It was Bolitho (1930) and Bogardus (1943), however, who were two of the first researchers to specifically link cultural adjustment factors and gang membership within growing urban spaces. Bolitho believed the cultural clash between immigrant parents and American culture led to a defection from cultural norms and consequently a repudiation of legal norms. Bogardus identified social pressures such as problems with language and school, conflicting methods of parental control,

racial discrimination and low socioeconomic status as factors pushing Mexican boys toward gang activity in California.

It is Vigil (1988, 2002), however, who has most thoroughly examined ethnic specificities and gang membership, and his concept of 'multiple marginality' first devised in a study of Hispanic gangs (1988), has since been further shored up by investigations of African American, Vietnamese, and Salvadorian gangs and communities in the U.S. (2002). Vigil's framework explains that gang formation is not an inherent element of any given ethnicity, but that ethnic minorities are more likely to form gangs because of the specific social issues such groups face.

The process of multiple marginality begins with 'macrohistorical' elements, such as racism and social and cultural repression, and 'macrostructural' elements, like immigration/migration, that produce enclave settlements within which low socioeconomic status relegates "persons or groups to the fringes of society" (Vigil, 2002: p.7). The marginalisation process then continues with the breakdown of both formal and informal social controls leading to 'street socialisation' whereby youths are moulded "to conform to the way of the street" (Vigil, 2002: p.10). This occurs when families, under stress in poor jobs and in deficient housing, fail to provide adequate supervision. This is then reinforced by failure at school due to language difficulties and "culturally insensitive and ethnocentric curriculum" (Vigil, 2002: p.9). Youths facing similar circumstances cling together and often find themselves having negative interactions with law enforcement creating hostile attitudes and a

rejection of mainstream social norms, at which point they commit to alternative street rules and identity, often via gang membership. It is with these ideas in mind that I outline and examine the situation of Maori within the urban drift in the 1960s.

Although an important component of multiple marginality is the creation of an underclass, in the New Zealand context it is important to note that, up until the mid-1970s, the urban economies easily absorbed the new workers and unemployment rates remained negligible. Reflecting their grouping in semi- and unskilled jobs, however, Maori males were on average earning 90 percent of non-Maori males (Sorrenson, 1990: p.345) creating what King (1983: p.250) describes as a “brown proletariat”. But as Belich (2001: p.474) points out, Maori were not “low-paid” and their situation represented “a massive improvement” on what they had experienced 30 years before, and, was relatively better than what it proved to be in the future (Sorrenson, 1990: p.345).

Nevertheless, Maori experienced significant difficulty with the transition from traditional tribal folkways and *mores* to those expected in urban Pakeha society. “There were difficulties with managing salaried incomes for the first time, with budgeting, savings and investments, and with accommodation, hire purchase and door-to-door salesmen” (King, 2003: p.475). Moreover, although it was “rarely explicitly exposed in public” (A. Harris, 2004: p.19), Maori often faced overt discrimination in employment, accommodation and social activities. And some young Maori made claims of police heavy-

handedness, described by one media witness as acting in a “surly and intimidating fashion” (Edwards, 1971: p.180). Therefore, it was not just Maori adjusting to urban life, many Pakeha were also uneasy – or even hostile – in their first substantial dealings with Maori people. Although New Zealand, with some justification, trumpeted excellent Maori/Pakeha relations, U.S. Academic, David Ausubel, found that race relations “are generally much better than in the United States, [but] they are not nearly as good as people think or claim they are” (Ausubel, 1960/1977: pp.149-150).

Therefore, despite an overriding belief at the time that New Zealand race relations were excellent, by the late 1950s many of the issues fostering the processes of multiple marginality were clearly evident. Indeed, they were even acknowledged at the time as reflected in a 1960 report commissioned by Labour Prime Minister and Minister of Maori Affairs, Walter Nash, who it will be remembered led a single-term government from 1957 to 1960. Nash, however, shelved the report, and it was the newly elected National government’s Minister of Maori Affairs, Ralph Hanan, who made it publicly available in 1961. Hanan acknowledged in the report’s foreword that some of its content was “controversial” – perhaps the reason Nash was seemingly reticent to release it – but he nevertheless believed “that an informed public opinion is necessary to ensure that the reasons behind any subsequent policy measures are understood” (Hanan, 1961: p.3).

The *Report on Department of Maori Affairs* (commonly known as the ‘Hunn Report’ after its author, the acting Secretary of Maori Affairs, Jack Hunn),

outlined and attempted to address the problems being created, or made more obvious, by the advent and speed of Maori urbanisation. For the purpose of looking at salient issues that can result in gang formation, a number of issues raised in the report are particularly pertinent. Hunn found that Maori faced an acute housing shortage and that they were over-represented in crime statistics. He also pointed to the “statistical blackout” of Maori within post-primary and university education as well as concern that an “employment problem, barely incipient at present, could easily become the major challenge the future” and suggested, therefore, that Maori must be given the opportunity to become equipped to “compete on equal terms for a much wider range of jobs” (Hunn, 1961: pp.25 & 14). It seems Hunn was acutely aware that the problems faced by Maori, concentrated in semi- and unskilled occupations, would be faced in the event of an economic downturn. It was a prescient concern given what lay ahead in coming decades.

To counter the problems of urbanisation, the Hunn Report advocated a policy of ‘integration’ to “combine (not fuse) the Maori and pakeha elements to form one nation wherein Maori culture remains distinct” (Hunn, 1961: p.15). However, little provision was made in the report or by the government subsequently, to protect Maori identity and culture. Indeed, in the 1960s, Ralph Piddington (1968: p.260), Professor of Anthropology at Auckland University, supposed that for most Pakeha, “Maori are envisaged as dark-skinned Pakeha, having no distinctive cultural characteristics of their own”. It was a view increasingly resisted by urban Maori, many of whom had “powerful objections” to policies of assimilation but who were yet to find an equally

powerful voice of protest (Sharp, 1991: p.6). Indeed, the advent of a powerful Maori protest movement in the 1970s was to have a significant impact on the gangs. And, in turn, these gangs proved a difficult issue for Maori radicals to reconcile. Both of these issues will be explored in following chapters, but for now it is important to recognise the tentative but important roots of a Maori cultural resurgence.

In the early 1960s, some urban Maori were forming singing and arts and crafts groups and in 1965, the first urban marae was constructed in South Auckland (Walker, 1990: p.200). In contrast, the government's efforts were focused on what appeared more pressing issues like housing, employment, education, and trade training. As Hanan noted in 1962, "I have always advocated that emphasis should be placed on these measures as they are the ones best calculated to facilitate the integration of Maori and pakeha [sic]" (*AJHR*, G-9, 1962: p.3). Furthermore, Hanan felt such measures would slow the Maori crime rate, and given that he held not only the Maori Affair portfolio but that of Justice as well, this was also his concern. Toward these ends, the government undertook a number of initiatives.

In 1961, following recommendations from the Hunn Report, parliament created the Maori Education Foundation, an independent trust established to "foster post-primary, technical, and university education and trade and vocational training among Maori people" (*AJHR*, G.9, 1962: p.4). Further policy changes extended Maori trade training schemes, which were seen as a way of "converting a sizable segment of Maori school leavers each year from

potential unskilled workers to skilled and qualified tradesmen” (*AJHR*, G.9, 1966: p.4). In addition, pre-employment courses were initiated to instruct young Maori migrants in the ways of urban life in Wellington in 1966, Auckland in 1967 and by 1972, they were offered in Hamilton and Christchurch as well (*AJHR*, G.9, 1972: p.10).

Undoubtedly well intentioned, these measures nevertheless proved insufficient within the rapid social change that was unfolding, and within which so many young Maori were struggling. In 1965, some 85 percent of Maori children were leaving school without achieving any qualifications (Walker, 1990: p.208). In 1970, the Department of Education reported that “many young Maori pupils [are] leaving school inadequately equipped academically, vocationally, and socially to take effective part in the wider community” (*AJHR*, E.1, 1970: p.28). The following year, the National Advisory Committee on Maori Education (1971: p.6) said that English language difficulties and a curriculum unfamiliar to Maori meant, “Too many Maori children find themselves in a failure situation”. In what is often a harsh peer environment, for many young Maori city schooling was a difficult and frustrating time. Vigil (1988: pp.60-63) has made the compelling argument that problems of acculturation leads many children down a path of school failure, something that not only limits life chances but also to a diminished commitment to society norms. Given this, the fact that many young Maori were not coping with or succeeding within the education system, meant that schools were not only failing to instil knowledge and skills, but that they were also unsuccessful in their role as an important agent of social control.

Also in response to the Hunn Report, the government intensified its Maori housing campaign. In 1968, Hanan told parliament that over 10,500 houses had been built for Maori families and 25,000 young Maori had been accommodated in hostels since the government was elected in 1960 (*NZPD*, 1968, vol.356: p.1752). The Census data of 1971 suggest these actions achieved notable success in narrowing the gap between Maori and non-Maori housing standards, though the number of Maori per dwelling was 6.8 compared to non-Maori at 5.5 so the former may have experienced certain problems of crowding (Metge, 1976: p.88). Less successful, were efforts to 'pepper pot' Maori houses among those of Pakeha. Seen as desirable to "promote closer integration" (Hunn, 1961: p.41), the policy had to be scrapped when it became clear that Maori and Pakeha alike were opposed to it (King, 2003: p.252). The abandonment of the policy proved significant.

By housing Maori together, a critical density prevailed in what were often new housing estates, particularly in Wellington and Auckland (Walker, 1992: pp.501-2) where, in an effort to curb costs, multi-unit high density housing was now favoured (Ferguson, 1994: p.195). Notwithstanding the problems, including delinquency as discussed in chapter three, which had already been identified as stemming from state housing areas, places like Otara in South Auckland and Porirua in Wellington became minority 'enclaves' similar – though not as physically decayed – to those identified as problematic by Vigil (1988: p.17).

Further problems stemmed from Maori themselves as they failed to adapt to their new urban locales. Perhaps as they had done in their rural environs, Maori children were allowed a considerable degree of time unsupervised by parents “busy with other things”, and as soon as they were passed “toddler stage” they were often on the street playing well into dusk (Metge, 1964: p.200). Moreover, an issue affecting Maori that has been little discussed by historians, was the effects of alcohol. Before a law change in 1967, all bars in New Zealand had to close before 6pm, with the rationale being that with such a short time to drink after work, men would not become intoxicated and distracted from their familial duties. In practice, however, men rushed to the pubs after work and consumed as much as they could before closing, in what was known as the ‘6 o’clock swill’. Historian Keith Sinclair declared it “the most barbarous drinking custom in the world” (Sinclair, 1991: p.300). For many Maori, it was their introduction to drinking in the cities.

Many Maori gang members who were children in the in the 1960s told me of growing up in households of heavy drinking and weekend-long parties often leading to child neglect and abuse. These issues are significant, as ambivalent or negative family supervision leads youths to seek places where they are not marginalised and where they can find protection and identity – often on the street with youths whose situation are similar.

Such problems were a result of, or at the least compounded by, the loss of Maori cultural identity within urban environs. The primary objective of ‘integration’ was to merge the cultures into one, and while this policy allowed

for Maori to keep a distinct identity, little effort was made to ensure this occurred; perhaps in the mistaken belief that young Maori growing up in the cities would simply become Pakeha (King, 2003: p.483). The effect was a generation of young urban Maori unconstrained by traditional Maori authority and poorly socialised in Pakeha ways. These Maori youth “grew up in a cultural vacuum and felt directionless and detached from the society into which they emerged as adults; and these formed a large proportion of those subsequently represented in crime statistics” (King, 2003: p.483).

As touched on above, youths weakly tethered to home and school have weakened ties to social norms and consequently have not internalised the values of mainstream society (Vigil, 2002: p.10). This inevitably leads to non-conformist behaviour and interaction with the police and the criminal justice system. Indeed, the “alarming increase in [Maori] criminality”, most noticeable in youth offending, as outlined in the Hunn Report (1961: p.32) continued unabated. In 1960, Maori youth represented 1,269 or 23 percent of the ‘distinct cases’ dealt with by the Children’s Court (Department of Statistics, 1960b: p.56). By 1970, these data had increased to 4,866 and 42 percent respectively (Department of Statistics, 1970b: p.66). In the crashing wave of the urban migration, many young Maori were adrift, and with that there was one utterly inevitable response: gang formation.

Given this, it is therefore important to understand how gang membership acts as – or, is seen as – a solution to the problems marginalised youths face. It is quite clear from international research that there are numerous issues

influencing gang membership (Carlie, 2002; Klein, 1995; Lafontaine et al., 2005) and these can be usefully grouped as 'push' and 'pull' factors (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Outlined above are external forces within the wider community that acted to push youths toward forming or joining gangs. Those youths that seek gang membership, however, do so because of what they believe the gang can offer them – the pull of gang membership. Unsurprisingly, these benefits, perceived or real, are such things as prestige, power, and belonging. In these ways, the gang can act as a substitute for important human social psychological factors of wellbeing that are otherwise scarce, absent, or seemingly out of reach. Therefore, the gang is not an anomalous manifestation of an otherwise healthy society, but a symptom of certain social malaises, which provides an important function, or a number of important functions, for its membership. Given the clearly demonstrable problems facing many, particularly indigenous, youths during the 1960s, the climate was set for an explosion of predominantly Maori gang membership.

Polynesian Street Gangs and the Influence of the First Pivot Point

As noted in the previous chapter, gangs were not widely seen as a serious problem in the 1960s, when delinquency generally, and, increasingly, Maori youth crime, were the focus of public and governmental concern. By the late 1960s, however, this was beginning to change. By this time distinct and recognisable street gangs joined the outlaw clubs in achieving longevity while overwhelming them in membership numbers. The drivers for this turnaround can be found in the specific social conditions of the 1960s that led to the advent of numerous high profile Polynesian gangs. Equally critical was that by

the late 60s these gangs were beginning to demonstrate the influence of the first pivot point provided by the Hell's Angels by donning back patches and implementing a hierarchal organisational structure.

In 1968, the Department of Justice published a detailed report titled *Crime in New Zealand*. Despite the report's considerable size (it was some 417 pages in length), gangs rate merely a passing mention. The report stated that, "New Zealand up to the present has been free...of serious gang violence, although groups of young people have occasionally shown aggressive tendencies" (Department of Justice, 1968: p.203). This situation, the report concluded, had encouraged two schools of thought: "One takes the view that group violence exists and that it is serious and disturbing...The other view is that there is no evidence of group activity, in the sense of gangs, operating in New Zealand cities" (Department of Justice, 1968: p.203). By 1970, however, it appears the former view was gaining ascendancy, and at the forefront of concerns were the growing number of Maori and Pacific dominated gangs.

In April 1970, following a number of media reports surrounding gang activity, the Mayor of Auckland, Sir Dove-Meyer Robinson, said he was no longer prepared to walk alone in the city at night and vowed to stamp out gang violence (Edwards, 1971: p.175). But it was in May of that year that the issue gained significant national attention when as many as 250 members of the 'Stormtroopers' went "rampaging" through the South Auckland suburb of Papatoetoe (*NZ Herald* 20.5.1970). Police Inspector P. J. Gaines said the gangs consisted of Maori and Pacific Islanders with a minority – "about 10

percent” – of Pakeha youths. He said the gangs had dangerous potential that should be made known to the public: “They have no respect for property or people. It is much worse than the Teddy Boys (of a decade ago)” (*NZ Herald* 20.5.1970). Gaines also reported that the Stormtroopers had caused damage to property and on orders from their “command”, had burgled a house. Moreover, “With a bit of incitement they can turn a crowd into a rabble. We are concerned at the danger to people and property before we can get there. We are taking firm measures to stop them getting out of hand” (*NZ Herald* 20.5.1970).

Prominent social and political activist, Tim Shadbolt, described the incident in Papatoetoe as New Zealand’s first “race riot” adding, “there’s going to be a lot more of it. People don’t know how bad the situation is” (Edwards, 1971: p.175). In July, prominent Maori leader, Sir Tui Carroll, said gangs were becoming a prominent problem in many places and claimed that “race relations are being endangered by the actions of young Maoris who leave school too early and face limited and frustrated lives” (Edwards, 1971: p.175). Further credence was given to these concerns when the chair of the Auckland District Maori Council, Dr. Pat Hohepa, estimated the total number of gang members in Auckland at 2000 (Edwards, 1971: p.176). The incident in Papatoetoe was not a race riot (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.169), and the total number of gang members was almost certainly inflated, but such statements heightened public concern.

In reaction to these comments, in mid-1970 Brian Edwards' *Gallery* current affairs programme interviewed a number of young Polynesian gang members in Auckland. As discussed in chapter four, *Gallery* was an example of some elements of the media that were reflecting the emergence of a more questioning and liberal society. The intention for the programme initially was to highlight the racial unrest that Polynesian street gangs were believed to be fostering in certain parts of Auckland, but Edwards and his team soon found that the youth gangs did not display "any anti-Pakeha feeling or indeed any awareness of or interest in racial problems" (Edwards, 1971: p.180).

What Edwards found was that the gang members "had only one topic of conversation, only one barrow to push, only one grudge – the police" (Edwards, 1971: p.180). Many gang members complained of harassment and physical violence from the police – similar issues highlighted by the outlaw motorcycle club members in the previous chapter. Edwards saw the allegations as serious and credible enough to make them the focus of the programme: "the end result [of the programme] was undeniably a serious indictment of the New Zealand police force. It was not what we had gone to get, but it was what we found" (Edwards, 1971: p.182).

On Tuesday 14 July 1970, the *Gallery* episode went to air. Although it gave a glimpse into the world of the embryonic Polynesian street gangs and the changing nature of the gang scene, it was its focus on the role of the police that had the most immediate impact.

The Police Commissioner, Angus Sharp, made a statement that was published in the *Auckland Star* the day after the *Gallery* programme was broadcast in which he defended the police against the allegations and insinuated that the ideas expressed by the gang members had been prompted by the *Gallery* team.

There is obviously a problem in Auckland, but...It is obvious that the police are the only people trying to do anything at all with these young people who never know any discipline in their lives until they come up against the police and the courts. Obviously they would be hostile to the police and receptive to ideas put into their minds. The police, who are the only ones trying to do anything at all, are being bitterly criticised by people who are perhaps out of sympathy with us anyway, or have a completely erroneous idea of the role of the police (*Auckland Star* 15.7.1970).

As a direct result of the public interest stirred up by the *Gallery* programme, the Minister of Police, David Thomson, requested a report on the problems of gangs in Auckland. Perhaps reflecting a desire to broaden the issue rather than focus solely on law and order, the Minister turned toward an encompassing body. The Joint Committee on Young Offenders, was comprised of senior representatives of various government departments that had an interest – direct or peripheral – in juvenile offending, namely: Justice, Police, Maori and Island Affairs, Internal Affairs, Social Security and Education (Joint Committee on Young Offenders, 1970: p.1). It was to this

committee – via the establishment of a sub-committee, the ‘Investigating Committee’ – that the investigation of the youth gang problem in Auckland fell.

As was the case with the Mazengarb Committee of 1954, and, as will be shown, numerous subsequent investigations into gangs, the Investigating Committee was given a tight timeframe, in this instance just six weeks (Joint Committee on Young Offenders, 1970: p.5). It appears that, once again, political considerations – namely, being seen to act – seemed more important than gaining a thorough understanding of the issue.

Due to the limited time given to research, the Investigating Committee (1970: p.12) was reliant on data from child welfare officers, which meant the demographic information “may not be typical of gang members generally”. Notwithstanding this, the report does offer some insight into the changing gang scene, observing that 75 percent of gang members were Polynesian (60 percent of whom were Maori) and 25 percent Pakeha (Investigating Committee, 1970: p.12). As previously noted, this was a significant change from the Levett (1959) and Green (1959) studies of just over a decade previous when gangs were almost exclusively Pakeha.

Despite the imprecise nature of the data, the sea change of the gangs’ ethnic composition was obvious and a reflection of the shifting social make-up of Auckland and the associated problems stemming from this. Moreover, these new Polynesian street gangs were large, and of the 30 gangs identified by the Investigating Committee, many were thought to have a membership of 30 or

more. The largest gang, made up of Maori and Pacific youths, was the Stormtroopers with 66 members, a number that increased to 200 when including 'fringe' members¹⁹. At least two of the gangs, the Stormtroopers and the Nigs, had 'junior' gangs made up of adolescent youths who "tend to step into older gangs once they are considered old enough" (Investigating Committee, 1970: p.6). The advent of 'feeder gangs' is consistent with the findings of a number of overseas studies, for example Thrasher (1927), Yablonsky (1967) and Moore (1991).

The Investigating Committee (1970: p.1) believed that because most gangs were made up of Maori and Pacific Island youths, despite little evidence that they were "racialist" in nature, they "could conceivably be a source of future trouble". The Investigating Committee (1970: p.1) also believed that the high proportion of Polynesian youths involved in gangs was a "cultural response to their urban environment" and they were not emotionally disturbed but were rather a product of "inadequate socialisation" and a "cultural void" and that the gangs provided them with an identity that their homes and school life did not. Moreover, the young gang members were typically from state housing areas where poorer (often large) families were concentrated, creating an "unbalanced" type of community with an over-representation of unskilled, young adults and young families, and the 'casualties' of society" (Investigating Committee, 1970: p.21). The observations were rather astute given the ideas of multiple marginality put forward by Vigil (1988, 2002) many decades later.

¹⁹ Interestingly, even when accounting for 'fringe' members, the total number is still shy of the 250 members who were said to have rioted in the Papatoetoe incident that sparked the investigation into gangs. Although it is possible the committee underrepresented the figures, it is more likely to be media error, raising the possibility that the original incident was overblown by exaggerating gang numbers and/or ignoring non-gang involvement.

Given that the gangs were seen as a response to wider social forces, the Investigating Committee's recommendations focused solely on social imperatives, primarily aimed at Maori and Pacific Peoples. These included: changes to education curricula to be more relevant to Maori and Pacific pupils; dealing better with truancy; promoting Maori and Pacific teachers and encouraging them to live in problem communities; education for citizenship; ensuring state housing did not create unbalanced communities; and appointing special job placement officers to work with school leavers. Despite the accusations levelled at them by *Gallery*, the police received only a single, rather ambiguous, sentence in the report: "The Committee recommends that the police authorities improve morale of the force and its standing in the community by recognising the unique contributions they can make in situations of domestic discord and crisis" (Investigating Committee, 1970: p.33). However, using the idea that gang cohesion is enhanced by conflict, which I outlined in the previous chapter, it is reasonable to assume that any undue, or heavy handed, police activity aided rather than diminished gang development at this time.

Ultimately, it appears that little, if anything came of the report, and gangs remained a concern for police to deal with as and when they became a law and order problem. In fact, the recommendations of the Investigating Committee were such that the Joint Committee deemed them "too numerous and lengthy to summarise individually" and, "Most of the recommendations...are addressed to this wider social malaise rather than to

any specific problems of gangs". The recommendations were considered beyond the original terms of reference that were "essentially to consider and report on the gang situation" and "because the recommendations extend well beyond the question of the gang situation" any action would need "further direction" and "further information" (Joint Committee on Young Offenders, 1971: pp.6&12).

Despite the Investigating Committee's obvious concern for the wider social environs, the gangs themselves appeared to cause little concern. Representing a more liberal tone than that common in the 1950s, the report suggested that the formation of gangs was not new "nor is it necessarily an unhealthy or anti-social one" (Investigating Committee, 1970: p.1). Furthermore, the Investigating Committee said that many "activities involving significant numbers of gang members are not disruptive or socially unacceptable ways of behaving" and that, largely, the gangs provided a "public annoyance" through informal gatherings in shopping centres giving rise to claims of "loitering, obstruction and molestation" (Investigating Committee, 1970: p.7). They further found that offences committed by gang members tended to be done in isolation and rarely involved more than two or three associates. Thus they concluded that "gangs may provide the environment in which delinquents come in contact with one another but...organised criminal behaviour is isolated" (Investigating Committee, 1970: p.7). It is important to note here, particularly in light of discussions later in this thesis, that the gangs were by no means criminal groups. Their

membership may have engaged in petty crimes, but the gangs' existence was not determined by criminal activity.

Due to this apparent lack of concern about the perceived gang threat, the Joint Committee asked the Investigating Committee to clarify their position on the "extent to which gangs pose a problem to the community" (Joint Committee on Young Offenders, 1971: p.7). The reply was that "the majority of the Committee do not believe that gangs constitute a serious social problem to the community at the present time" and that "sensational and often incomplete [media] coverage has tended to place the situation out of true proportion" (Joint Committee on Young Offenders, 1971: p.8). It cited as evidence for this the fact that "serious breaches of the law committed by gangs as such are rare and in recent years only one incident of planned gang activity is recorded in Auckland Probation Office files" (Joint Committee on Young Offenders, 1971: p.8).

This somewhat ambivalent attitude toward the gangs was echoed, at least in part, by both Labour opposition and National government Members of Parliament (MPs) in 1970. Labour MP for Mangere, Colin Moyle, said he had talked to leaders of some gangs and they demonstrated "leadership qualities and a certain attitude of responsibility that could be built on" (*NZPD*, 1970, vol.368: p.3441). The Minister of Police, David Thomson, agreed saying they "would provide good leaders in the future" (*NZPD*, 1971, vol.368: p.3443). In December of that year, the Minister of Maori and Island Affairs, Duncan MacIntyre, who had taken over the role after Ralph Hanan died in 1969,

visited a music festival and met members of the Stormtroopers, and was taken for a “hair raising” ride by one of the youths who owned a motorcycle (*NZ Herald* 7.12.1970). It clearly made an impression. In parliament in June 1971 he said, “I am not singing the praises of gangs but some gangs have been unduly criticised. I instance the case of the Stormtroopers from Otara” who, he said, had run dances and other social activities (*NZPD*, 1971, vol.372: p.836).

Another factor that possibly reassured the Investigating Committee and perhaps MPs, that the gangs were not a serious problem, was the fact that the gangs tended not to last long and membership turnover was high. This finding was the same as those found by Levett (1959) and Green (1959) over a decade before. The majority of gangs identified by the Investigating Committee (1970: p.4) had been in existence for less than 18 months and most, less than 12 months. Moreover, gang membership remained a youthful occupation with the vast majority of gang members being teenagers. Although some of the junior gangs had members as young as eleven, few remained after their teenage years. The Investigating Committee (1970: p.6) found that, “Most gang members appear to lose interest in gang activities once they have reached young adulthood and are settled in steady jobs and have steady girlfriends”. With a strong economy, gang members were offered an easy way out of the gang by plenty of unskilled jobs. Notwithstanding the Polynesian influence and their great number, at face value, the gangs were little different to what they had been in the late 1950s. There were, however, signs of change; signs that were recognised by the Committee, but the true

significance of them can only be appreciated with the benefit of hindsight. Notably, the Investigation Committee (1970: p.1) reported that: “In recent years there have been several features of gangs in Auckland which suggest that the present fluctuations of gang membership and general fluidity of structure could be supplanted by more structured and permanent organisations”.

The most important trend toward greater organisation of the Polynesian street gangs was exhibited perhaps exclusively by the Stormtroopers, which adopted the organisational structure and identifiers of the outlaw motorcycle clubs. This was to prove a crucial development that would soon be adopted by all Polynesian street gangs and was further evidence of the importance of the pivot point provided by the Hell’s Angels in 1960. The Stormtroopers’ “formal organisation” was recognised by the Investigating Committee (1970: p.5) but was unique and not reflective of the Polynesian street gangs generally at that time. However, the moves toward greater organisation within the scene “slight though these trends are” were nevertheless of “some concern” (Investigating Committee, 1970: p.1). The Stormtroopers wore patches – painted on the back of leather jackets, had a clear hierarchical structure, regular meetings, membership fees (and a club bank account), calling cards, and distinct chapters in Mangere, Otara, Otahuhu and Manurewa (*NZ Herald*, 20.5.1970; Investigating Committee, 1970: p.5; Edwards, 1971: pp.177-178). Using my definitions, the Stormtroopers were transitioning from ‘incipient gang’ to ‘gang’. And many others were to soon follow them.

Nevertheless, like the early outlaw motorcycle clubs, gaining membership was not difficult. One youth to join the Stormtroopers was Wayne Doyle, who joined the group for a short time before becoming one of New Zealand's leading gang figures with another gang. Doyle told me in 2008, "Anyone could be a Storm Trooper, you just fuckin' signed up – you just made your own patch...you painted the fuckin' things. It was no great mission to become one... 'You wanna join up? Yeah, sweet as, here's your patch. We were kids, 15 or 16 years old. That's how it was". Doyle also told me that the influence of paperback books about the Hell's Angels internationally, and other fictionalised accounts of biker gangs were an important influence on the formation of patched street gangs.

The donning of back patches by street gangs proved a significant evolutionary shift, and the outcomes of this shift were the same as those evinced by outlaw motorcycle clubs described in the previous chapter, namely, that the gangs became obvious entities and more visible to prospective members, the media and the police. It is no surprise, then, that the Stormtroopers were the biggest street gang and were often named in media, police and political commentaries. Moreover, the organisational elements they adopted – with varying degrees of exactness – from the outlaw clubs helped these gangs endure over time. The Investigating Committee was correct in thinking that the majority of gangs were fluid. Of all of the Polynesian street gangs it identified, only the Stormtroopers and the King Cobras achieved a prolonged

existence²⁰. The gang scene, however, was evolving rapidly and gangs, were emerging that copied the Stormtroopers' organisational lead, including an offshoot of that group, formed by Wayne Doyle and others in 1969 or 1970, called the Head Hunters. These groups grew quickly and the problem of gangs was never again seen in such benign terms. In fact, in 1979, the Stormtroopers, held up by the Minister of Maori and Island Affairs as an example of an 'unduly criticised' gang, would be involved in an incident of such violence it would change the way the entire gang scene was approached: something that, as will be shown in the following chapter, marked the second pivot point in New Zealand gang history.

The Mongrel Mob (Part II)

Although not initially in Auckland, and therefore not covered by the study noted above, one 1960s group that became a permanent fixture in the New Zealand gang scene, and indeed become the country's largest gang, was Mongrel Mob. The transformation of the Mongrel Mob from a small Pakeha to a large Polynesian, primarily Maori, membership was in part a consequence of the problems affecting Maori youth and their desire to join gangs in search of such things as identity, power and belonging. However, it was not until the gang followed the lead provided by the Stormtroopers in wearing patches and adopting a hierarchal organisational structure that it spread with great rapidity and became New Zealand's largest gang.

²⁰ The King Cobras were identified in the report but were said to be 'inactive'.

As previously discussed, by the end of the 1960s, the Mongrel Mob had a, perhaps fluctuating, presence in the Wellington region as well as in the Hawkes Bay. But at the turn of the decade, small independent groups of predominantly Maori youths – inspired by stories told by friends and whanau as well as media reports – were also emerging in parts of the middle/lower North Island and calling themselves ‘Mongrels’. One group in Palmerston North grew quickly under the leadership of Norm Hura during the early 1970s. Another group, made up largely of high school children, established itself in Waipukurau. Fights below the Waipukurau Bridge under the influence of sherry during 1970 proved who had the mettle to gain membership to the fledgling gang. However, one member of the young Waipukurau group, Ngavii Pekapo, told me in 2005 that none felt brave enough to say anything when the older ‘real’ Mongrels from Hastings – known informally as the ‘Dirty Dozen’, and including some of the original Pakeha members – stopped in Waipukurau one night and fought a number of the town’s locals.

We were younger, we stayed out, we had already made the commitment ‘hey we are the Mongrel Mob’ – but when they came to town [me and] my mates freaked out...freaked out because *these* were the Mongrel Mob coming into town hammering these cunts (Ngavii Pekapo 2005 pers. comm.).

Following the fight, the Hasting Mongrels roared out of town giving the Waipukurau ‘Mongrels’ the fingers. It would be a year before the young gang

had the courage to approach some younger Maori members of the Hastings group to get 'official' recognition, which they achieved in 1971.

In April of 1971, a rock festival was held at Pekapeka, a small country town between Palmerston North and Wellington. It proved to be a defining event for the Mongrel Mob, which they enshrined in chanting-type song – something that would become a unique hallmark of the gang:

In 1971 the Mongrels went to war,
Down to Pekapeka, to the rock festival.
They took a little puha and they took a little pork,
They stole a Mark 1 so they didn't have to walk...

Opening verse from an early Mongrel Mob song

The Satan's Slaves – a Pakeha outlaw motorcycle club that formed in Wellington in 1969 – and its supporters were at the event. This group was building a reputation as one of the wildest outlaw motorcycle clubs in New Zealand, and they and the Wellington Mongrels had been in conflict in the weeks leading up to the festival (*Evening Post*, 23.4.1971) – a fight was perhaps inevitable. The Mongrels stormed the bikers. The verse continues:

...Joe Moke said, 'let's take them by surprise',
So we crept up behind them and we stabbed them in the eyes...

The brawl was long and brutal and the subsequent media coverage extensive. One young Mongrel Mob member remembers seeing a photo published in the media of a group of Mongrels carrying a large swastika flag. On the back of one of the gang members, written in block letters at the bottom of his jacket, were the words *Mongrel Mob*. It was an image that inspired many of the young Mongrels (Ngavii Pekapo 2005 pers. comm.). Some members began to paint “Mongrel Mob” on their jackets. However, the older members of the gang were resistant, seeing a back patch as a symbol used by bikers and thus something to be scorned.

The battle at Pekapeka established the reputation of the Mongrel Mob as a formidable gang and subsequently more youths were drawn to emulate the gang or join it. It was suggested that in the media-aftermath of Pekapeka, “every Maori youth who came into contact with officialdom, was to claim he was a member of the Mongrels” (Howman, 1971: p.11). Membership in the groups surged and they began to identify themselves with T-shirts, with different colours representing different towns. At this time, the gang adopted the Bulldog as a motif but like much of the Mongrel Mob’s history the exact reason for the choice appears lost:

Don’t fuckin’ ask me how the Bulldog became the fuckin’ Mongrel Mob because I don’t fuckin’ know that. I had it because I knew somebody else fuckin’ had it. I mean I could have put a rottweiler or something on there. But it was a bulldog. Perhaps the ugliest motherfucker of the lot. We resembled everything ugly (Norm Hura 2006 pers. comm.).

With the Stormtroopers in Auckland now wearing patches, and other street gangs following that lead, younger Mongrels saw no reason for them not to don them also. The patch had become something akin to an item of fashion and it spread among rebellious youths. One Mongrel Mob member, who recognised the importance of succumbing to the growing trend in order to maintain relevance, was Norm Hura, the leader of Palmerston North crew, who was in prison with Gary Gerbes at this time. Hura recalls asking Gerbes – who he calls ‘the Godfather’ – for permission to don a patch. Gerbes told him to do as he wished but he, like most of the other original Mongrels, never wore one. To this day Gerbes is adamant on the matter:

I’m a fuckin Mongrel Mobster, I don’t have to wear a fuckin’ patch...Niggers [Black Power] know who I am, Angels [Hell’s Angels] know who I am. I make sure they fuckin’ bleed so they remember me (Gary Gerbes 2004 pers. comm.).

Another founding member of the gang, Chappy Steffert, saw the decision not to wear a patch as a practical measure:

“I’m not wearing a patch. You’re just sticking out like dogs’ balls. You’re just a target for the coppers – but a lot of them did” (Chappy Steffert 2007 pers. comm.)

Interestingly, given that the remaining original members resided in the area, it appears that Hastings was the first Mongrel Mob chapter to collectively don patches. It was, perhaps, an indication that the gang was now mainly Polynesian, largely Maori, and the influence of the Pakeha members, who by this time were much older than most members, had faded. In 1971, a reporter for the *Hawkes Bay Tribune* (25.3.71) asked some young Hastings members what was difference between youths, like them, who wore jackets bearing the gang's name and the Mongrel "originals" - the youths replied that they "didn't know". After the Hastings chapter started wearing patches, the other chapters quickly followed including, Napier, Wairoa, Palmerston North, Wellington City, Petone, Porirua and Waipukurau. The impact of the patch can again be seen to be considerable and important as visible manifestations of rebelliousness:

In 71 we bowled the town with the colours, we bowled Waipuk[urau] with the colours. Oh, mate, I tell you what, all hell broke loose and people weren't happy at all. They weren't happy at all with what we were doing. We stood out and we were loud (Ngavii Pekapo 2005 pers. comm.).

The chapters also adopted a formal organisational structure like that of outlaw motorcycle clubs and the Stormtroopers, and they continued to spread throughout the country. Although the gang, initially at least, maintained semantic distinctions by calling their leaders 'boss' instead of president, prospects (which came about later) were called 'understudies' and associates were 'cling boys' the Mongrel Mob now had all the trappings, structure, and

look of the bikers, without, of course, the motorcycles. Of note, their patches were also slightly different, in that 'Mongrel Mob' was written on the bottom rocker while the town or city was at the top – a reversal of the outlaw motorcycle club norm – and many of the groups had different bulldog motifs as a centre patch as well.

However, while the patch clearly identified the different chapters as one gang, it failed to unite the Mongrels who had often developed as autonomous groups and each chapter remained focused on its own sense of identity, leading to conflict and fights between chapters.

Helping draw the disparate Mongrel Mob chapters together was continuing conflict with other groups. During Easter 1972, a network of outlaw motorcycle clubs that had formed an informal alliance – which later became the core of the Bikers' Federation, discussed in the next chapter – was visiting Palmerston North, a city in which the Mongrels had grown to a considerable number under the leadership of Norm Hura. In order to party together, the Epitaph Riders from Christchurch, the Outcasts from Hamilton, the Sinn Fein from Upper Hutt, and the Satan's Slaves from Wellington arrived to meet the Mothers in their hometown. The earlier Pekapeka battle between the Mongrel Mob and the Satan's Slaves as well as ongoing hostilities between local Mongrels and the Mothers, meant the weekend was likely to be fraught with violence.

Evincing a certain link between the liberal student base and the working class bikers, like that between Tim Shadbolt and the Hell's Angels discussed in the previous chapter, a University of Canterbury student travelled with the Epitaph Riders to Palmerston North. In the student magazine *CANTA* (vol.42, no.6: pp.8-9), he wrote that trouble between the bikers and the street gang started when two members of the Mothers were attacked by Mob members and one was knocked unconscious. This aggression culminated in a fight when approximately 40 motorcycles – mostly two-up – were ridden from a camp just out of town into the city's main square where about 70 Mongrels, many of whom were described as “youngsters”, were waiting (*NZ Herald* 3.4.1972). A photographer from the *Manawatu Standard* was on hand to take photos of the fight that occurred and a number of these adorn a wall in a staff-only area at the Palmerston North police station. Many of the outlaw club members were armed with chains, bottles, knives and bits of wood and road marker posts that they had collected along the way. One biker was carrying a large and unwieldy iron bar about five feet long.

I have been told that the Hastings Mongrels had been intercepted by local police in a successful attempt to stop them joining the violence in Palmerston North (Ngavii Pekapo 2005 pers. comm.). Without their support, the young Mongrels of Palmerston North scattered when attacked by the bikers and the rest were routed, including some who were badly beaten. Later that night, police intercepted five carloads of Mongrels as they travelled to the bikers' camp to exact revenge. The police found and confiscated two rifles and ammunition (*NZ Herald* 3.4.1972) and almost certainly averted a more serious

confrontation. In all, some 30 members from both gangs were arrested (*NZ Herald* 14.4.1972). *The New Zealand Herald* (3.4.1972) described it as “unprecedented gang violence – a weekend of beer and blood”. It was, as will become clear in the following chapter, an early indication the gang warfare and conflict that became widespread during the 1970s.

But while inter gang conflict was becoming commonplace; it was ongoing conflicts between different chapters of the gang that troubled some of the Mongrel Mob’s leaders. In an effort to promote greater brotherhood within the group, many members have told me that it was decided at a meeting in Wellington in 1976 to swap the rockers of the back patch to elevate ‘Mongrel Mob’ to the top and thus give primacy to the gang’s name and not the town or area name: something the gang implemented. At the same meeting, it was decided that a common Bulldog motif would be decided on at the up-coming Gisborne convention to standardise the patch. For unknown reasons this never occurred. In fact, the independence of different chapters was such that they have never achieved a unified structure under a single command, something they would not attempt until 1987 which, as will be shown, failed amidst tremendous controversy and was never attempted again. To this day, the separate chapters use different versions of the bulldog as a centre patch. However, the font used on all patches did change in the mid-1970s from block lettering to the exact, Gothic-like style used by the Hell’s Angels – something Ngavii Pekapo told me he was first to do in Borstal using the red cotton from his prison blanket and, on his release, it was copied by the whole gang.

By the end of the 1970s, the gang had spread throughout much of New Zealand, and while they maintained hostility toward outlaw motorcycle clubs, it was the emergence of another street gang that provided them with a nationwide counter balance and their most consistent and formidable adversary.

Black Power

The rise of the Black Power gang is in many ways similar to the Mongrel Mob's second stage of development. By the time of Black Power's inception, patches and a formal organisational structure were the norm throughout the street gang scene. Although the congruities of Black Power and the Mongrel Mob are numerous, certain differences are both evident and important and these differences shaped the future directions of the gangs. I contend that the term 'mongrel' had a significant effect on the development of the Mongrel Mob. Similarly, I will argue that the term 'Black Power', with its largely positive connotations to ethnic equality in the U.S, may have in part shaped the nature and activities of Black Power, despite the gang being distinctly apolitical.

The name Black Power derived from the Black Power movement that was prominent in the U.S. in the 1960s and 70s. In New Zealand, it had been used by at least one Polynesian youth gang in West Auckland in the early 1970s (Edwards, 1971: p.182) but the genesis of the gang as a national force had its beginnings in Wellington.

In 1970, a group of Maori youths in Wellington formed under the name the 'Black Bulls'. The Black Bulls were a loose-knit street gang like many others at that time. As a group, they were regularly confronted by the Mongrel Mob. Seeing the expansion of the Mob and sensing a need for protection, the Black Bulls joined forces with some other predominantly Maori gangs and established themselves as Black Power under the leadership of Reitu (Rei) Harris. The name change is said to have come about at a party in 1972 on Patterson Street in Wellington after a fight broke out when members of the Mongrel Mob attacked a girl. The Mongrel Mob members grouped together and challenged the youths who sought to protect the girl. The Mob had a challenge that was sung in a chant, "We are the Mongrel Mob/ Who are you?" One of the youths called back with the defiant cry, "We are Black Power!" (Dennis O'Reilly 2002 pers. comm.). Again inspired by the images from America's civil rights movement, the gang adopted the clenched fist as their symbol and with an unknown genesis the rallying cry of 'Yo! Yo!'. As was by this time the norm, the gang adopted back patches and a hierarchical command structure.

In these ways, Black Power, as the Mongrel Mob had done before them, was creating subcultural elements that defined the group. The patch, the rallying cry, and the hand signal were signs that aided the identification of the youths as a gang, but to members they were means by which they could differentiate themselves and express a unique identity. Everything became imbued with meaning, right down to colour choice; blue for Black Power, and red for the Mongrel Mob. To an outsider the difference between the Mongrel Mob thumb-

and-little-finger salute and Black Power clenched fist was negligible, but to the members of each group these visual symbols became thick with meaning and, depending on one's affiliations, were either revered or despised.

Many early Black Power members had whanau connections throughout the North Island and, in a situation similar to that which had occurred with the Mongrel Mob, different groups began to rally under the same banner – although often with slight variation in the back patch²¹. A number of Black Power groups with loose connections formed in Wellington as well as in the Bay of Plenty, from where many of the Wellington members had migrated. Word of the new gang quickly spread. In 1974, it reached a Maori trade-training hostel in the South Island city of Christchurch where a group formed using the Black Power name. Interestingly, as the group grew, one of the gang's founding members, Shane 'Baldy' Turner told me that more than half of the gang were Pakeha, reflecting the demographics of the predominantly Pakeha city and a lack of real racial political motivation.

By the mid-1970s, there were a number of groups wearing the Black Power patch, but apart from the Wellington and Bay of Plenty groups, they were independent of one another. In contrast to the various Mongrel Mob chapters, however, the charismatic and ambitious Rei Harris had succeeded in getting all the disparate Black Power groups to join a national structure under his leadership. The previously independent groups from Auckland, Papatoetoe and Christchurch formally joined the gang at a convention in Waiohiki in 1978.

²¹ Many of the original patches had wings stemming from each side of the fist.

The Black Power as a national force had arrived, and like the Mongrel Mob, it grew quickly throughout the country, but predominantly in the North Island where Polynesians were more numerous.

The gang's quick spread throughout New Zealand provided an important counterbalance to the Mongrel Mob. Researchers, such as Decker and Van Winkle (1996) and others, have found that gang membership begets gang membership as isolated youth join together due to threats initiated by an existing gang. Across New Zealand, the Mongrel Mob could call on large numbers from numerous areas to support a chapter in conflict, thus encouraging groups of youths to establish Black Power chapters in order to garner a similar level of assistance. In certain ways it produced a cold war-like standoff effect. Numerous brawls and attacks occurred between the groups, but a precarious balance was always maintained that assured the survival of both sides. Notwithstanding this, certain chapters were more vulnerable than others. Denis O'Reilly described the Black Power experience in the Mongrel Mob stronghold area of Hawkes Bay from the mid-1970s:

In those days the Bay was a sea of red, from Wairoa to the Manawatu Gorge, except for this one beautiful patch of blue at Waiohiki. The blue house – The Tareha homestead – and the walnut tree provided the focal point and the Mob would hit regardless of why or whatever. The bros were completely outnumbered but what they lacked in numbers they more than compensated for in balls, and their ability to scrap (O'Reilly, 2010).

Despite the linguistic and symbolic link to African American politics, Black Power was initially apolitical and, like other gangs, was involved in anti-social behaviour, drinking and fighting. Nevertheless, Black Power was distinctive, undertaking early efforts to curb certain anti-social tendencies. Harris, sometime around 1977, banned any of the chapters from wearing Nazi regalia (Walker, 1990: p.261) in an attempt to better connect with their predominately Maori roots and also to distinguish themselves from the Mongrel Mob. The rich irony of a predominately Polynesian gang wearing symbols denoting white superiority was too great for a group named Black Power. In these efforts, Harris was supported and influenced by people such as Denis O'Reilly and political activist Bill Maung, who saw the gang as a form of Maori resistance and tried to angle it toward positive endeavours in keeping with the ambitions of its U.S. namesake. The efforts of these individuals proved to have lasting effects.

Denis O'Reilly, a Pakeha from Timaru, had a stint in Seminary training before moving to Wellington in his early 20s and becoming an activist and a member of Black Power. An intelligent and quick thinking man with a strong social conscience, O'Reilly sympathised with the plight of urban Maori and was often shocked by police attitudes toward them. O'Reilly saw Black Power as a modern urban tribe that could be a vehicle for positive social change in the lives of its members. His ability to consume alcohol and his sense of humour made him popular, and his capacity to organise and inspire the group made

him useful. He could also fight. Despite some stirrings about his ethnicity, he quickly earned a patch.

By contrast, Bill Maung – who died in 2011 – was a softly spoken and thoughtful Buddhist who had previously been a magistrate in colonial Burma before the Burmese government was overthrown in a coup in 1962. Forced to flee his homeland, Maung immigrated to New Zealand in 1967 where he saw the Black Power as a voice of the frustration felt by the Maori community and felt compelled to help them. He set about becoming a mentor and advisor to Black Power:

It was quite tricky because, you know, because you've got to prove yourself to these guys...[But] anyway over the years I've managed to prove my integrity and so they still look on me as someone they can rely on. Like when the sky is falling, 'Oh, can I borrow twenty bucks, Bill?' (Laughs) You know you are never going to see it again. But so what? You know (Bill Maung 1999 pers. comm.).

For Maung the appeal of the gang to young Maori was obvious:

They stood tall. And when you go Black Power! Well, people treat you with respect or fear or whatever. But before that you had to crawl and cringe and all that. But belonging to one of the two gangs [Black Power or Mongrel Mob], you really could go places (Bill Maung 1999 pers. comm.).

As will become clear, while Harris, O'Reilly and Maung did make a significant and lasting impression on Black Power as it grew and spread, these efforts need to be kept in context. Attempts to make the gang more positive were fraught with difficulty and frustration. Although the Black Power chapters in Wellington formed work cooperatives, and had some success in this, the gang lifestyle of heavy drinking, partying and travelling around the country were not conducive to regular work practices. Many of the members simply wanted to rebel, against their own culture as well as that of the mainstream, and anything of authority was held in disdain. The overriding ethos of the gang was simply to live for the day. But the influences of men such as Harris, O'Reilly and Maung were nevertheless a positive influential force and consequently Black Power became more organised and open to change than the Mongrel Mob.

At that time, because we were so disorganised, alcohol played a great part in the early 70s. Say if I went for run from here to Auckland to see the members there. Two weeks [later] I might be home...it was cool. This is how we wanted to live. But as things went along we started to look at other things like identifying where we are from. Do we know anything about our culture? How many of us can't speak the language? Then it started to hit home, so we moved into that area (Rei Harris 1999 pers. comm.).

These positive early developments certainly shaped Black Power in significant ways, but as will become clear the gang nevertheless often struggled to rein in many of its more anti-social elements, and this was most evident in the formation of a splinter group called the Nomads.

For some members of Black Power, the positive endeavours being heralded by its leaders were seen as un-gang-like and thus were rejected. A breakaway faction formed in a flat in Aro Street Wellington. In 2003, a prominent member of the this group, Dave 'Skull' Williams recalled:

Yup, we were Black Power Nomad back then and um because a lot of us who were associated to the Black Power, some would say, I guess, we were the rebels within the movement... The Black Power wasn't [acting as villains]. That wasn't generally the rule. It wasn't actually part of the kaupapa. Yes, entered into that behaviour. Yes, they were involved in it but it wasn't actually part of their drive. It wasn't on their menu (Dave 'Skull' Williams 2003 pers. comm.).

The Black Power Nomads broke away from Black Power in 1977 with about 20 members (Payne & Quinn, 1997: p.64). Thereafter simply known as the Nomads, the gang, under the leadership of Dennis 'Mossie' Hines became a fearsome street gang that maintained territory in lower parts of the North Island including Wellington, Wairarapa and Horowhenua.

The Nomads, along with the Stormtroopers, the King Cobras and the Head Hunters, built regional gangs able to survive in a nationwide street gang scene dominated by the Mongrel Mob and Black Power. And therefore by the 1970s, the main Polynesian street gangs that would define the New Zealand gang scene for at least two decades were in existence. The rapidity of their migration and emergence meant battles over territory were now inevitable. As a consequence, the gangs quickly became a specific public and political concern.

Conclusion

By the early 1970s, the ethnic makeup of New Zealand's gang scene had transformed, and by the end of the decade the gang problem was largely seen as a 'Maori problem'. The roots of this transformation, however, were obvious more than a decade before, and were to mark New Zealand's social landscape for decades to come.

The rise of large Polynesian, predominantly Maori, gangs was a direct consequence of the rapidity with which these peoples moved to New Zealand's urban centres and the issues that this created, like social disorganisation, lack of parental supervision, cultural conflict, school failure, and the clustering of ethnic minorities in both semi- and unskilled labour force and housing 'enclaves'. Given what is known about gang formation and maturation, the emergence of the major street gangs came during this period of New Zealand history was inevitable. Only in recognising these issues can

we appreciate that gangs were not an outcome of ethnicity; rather, gangs were formed because of specific social factors.

Importantly, these factors were occurring against a backdrop of wider social change, and this proved to be a potent mix. As outlined in the previous chapter, a more liberal social environment emerged in New Zealand that was challenging social norms, and the emerging gangs were one element of this environment creating their own sub cultural norms. Unlike the hippies or members of protest movements, however, their activities were not based on ideological or political goals or a sense of 'greater good', they were a negative and anti-social rebellion. Reflecting their members typically lower class situations and the problems they faced, they had little buy-in to society and did not seek to shape it, they simply sought to rebel against it and in doing so create a sense of identity. They may not be able to achieve mainstream success, but by actively rebelling and embracing a rebellious spirit they could become *something*.

One element that is unique to the New Zealand street gangs that formed during this period was the adoption of back patches and the organisational elements of outlaw motorcycle clubs, without which, the street gang situation in New Zealand would have been fundamentally different. These factors aided and hastened street gang development, making them at once more obvious and more organised – just as had occurred with the milk bar cowboys in the 1960s. And, like many of the outlaw clubs of the 1960s, the street gangs that adopted these styles became permanent fixtures. Again, these factors almost

certainly aided gang longevity. While these factors may not be necessary, numerous less organised and non-patch wearing gangs exist overseas, in New Zealand at this time gangs that did not adopt these elements did not survive. In comparison to overseas street gangs, the New Zealand situation overall appears to be much more structured and organised.

Notwithstanding this, unlike the outlaw motorcycle clubs, the street gangs – and even different chapters of the same street gang – did not achieve the same degree of uniformity of organisational structure. Certain groups may not have had the formal positions of secretary or treasurer, for example, and often times leadership change was undertaken by violent insurrection rather than by democratic means. Nevertheless, these changes were enough to see them transitioning from ‘incipient gangs’ to ‘gangs’, a process which was soon completed with the advent of prospecting and the groups rules that supersede those of the state, which I will discuss in the following chapter.

Despite these important developments, for most of the 1960s and early 1970s, the easy availability of work meant that street gang membership, just as that of the outlaw motorcycle clubs, remained typically a passing teenage phase: although for many this was changing and certain individuals with gangs of the early/mid-1970s remained gang stalwarts for generations to come.

Also during this time, what became New Zealand’s largest, nation-wide street gangs, the Mongrel Mob and Black Power, emerged as significant forces.

Although by the mid-1970s both gangs were near identical in look and demographic make up, important factors in their early maturation were to prove significant to their future development, outlook and activities.

Because these groups were new, they had no history from which they could guide their behaviour. As noted, both their style and structure were borrowed from outlaw motorcycle clubs, but the internal dynamics, by way of the sub cultural norms that they were fostering, were developed by important personalities within the groups. The Mongrel Mob, for example, was shaped by extreme anti-social behaviour fostered by its original Pakeha members and this was passed on to younger members via cultural transference through the likes of Nazi salutes and barking like a dog. Indeed, growling like a dog was just one example of how the gang began to define itself around 'mongrel' in its name, and thus created an ethos of 'mongrel' behaviour. The Black Power, by contrast, and despite numerous similarities with the Mongrel Mob, was shaped by people who attempted to drive it – often with limited success – in a more positive direction. Perhaps inspired by the political associations of the gang's name, the gang actively tried to foster a more socially aware sub culture – or at least its leadership were capable of espousing this effort. Therefore, although the period was fertile for gang development, the variations between gang dynamic and action had internal influences.

As noted above, and in the previous chapter, New Zealand's changing social landscape provided an important fillip to gang development, but it also influenced mainstream and political thinking. It was within this environment of

greater liberal thought that gangs were not seen as a pressing social issue. Although a governmental committee felt the gangs in the early 1970s were of little concern, the rapidity of their migration and emergence as the decade progressed led to significant conflicts as different gangs sought to control territory, and these conflicts were soon to heighten public and political concern.

Nevertheless, the findings of the governmental committee that gangs were a social manifestation of their social environment were to endure within mainstream political thinking until late in the 1980s, by which time gangs were no longer just the realm of youth and social and political attitudes toward them began to change dramatically.

Chapter Six.

Conflict and its Consequences: 1970-1980

Introduction

As noted in the previous chapter, as the gang scene expanded during the 1970s, anti-social behaviour and conflict between different gangs became increasingly common. Initially, such conflicts were largely between different outlaw motorcycle clubs but toward the end of the decade, with the rapid growth of patched street gangs, it was the activities of these groups that became most obvious. One upshot of the violence in the 1970s was that the 'gang problem' became a specific political issue for the first time.

This chapter will begin by looking at the rise of gangs as a political issue in the 1970s when competing ideas of tough police action and liberal social policy clashed. Following this, two examples of outlaw motorcycle club 'wars' will be examined to highlight the nature of these disputes, the changes that occurred within warring gangs, and, in relation to one of the examples, the unforeseen consequences that signalled future developments within the gang scene.

Furthermore, this chapter will explore the importance of New Zealand's social and political environment of the 1970s, as well as a major street gang incident that marked the second pivot point in New Zealand gang history. The effect of this pivot point was the widespread acceptance – driven by key people, including the prime minister – that gangs required social redress, and consequently the development of the social initiatives that would dominate the political response to gangs for the greater part of the 1980s.

Politics and Policing: Norman Kirk and Gideon Tait

In the election year of 1972, National's politically skilful leader, Keith Holyoake, resigned as Prime Minister and made way for his deputy and friend Jack Marshall. The leadership change was part of an effort to re-jig the party that had governed New Zealand since 1960, but it failed to impress the electorate. Led by the strong and increasingly popular Norman Kirk, the Labour Party surged to victory with a resounding 23-seat majority.

The new government was a reflection of the more liberal and questioning elements within society that had been evident since the late 1960s. The Labour Party was no longer just the party of working class New Zealanders but was also made up of a number of young university-educated and left-leaning people (McRobie, 1992: p.386) undoubtedly influenced by the politics within the campus orientated protest movements. This influence was evident in a number of major policy decisions such as: withdrawing New Zealand troops from Vietnam in 1972; forcing the New Zealand Rugby Football Union to cancel a planned tour to apartheid South Africa in 1973; and, also in that

year, the diplomatically radical step of sending a naval warship to protest against French nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

Although it was progressive and liberal influences that came to dominate policies around gangs in the 1970s, interestingly, it was not the Kirk government that pursued them. In fact, being conservative in areas of law and order became a trait of governing Labour parties - suspicious, perhaps, of the *lumpenproletariat* but certainly attuned to the popular appeal of a hard hitting stance on such matters.

In the lead up to the 1972 election, and following a number of high profile incidents involving outlaw clubs, both Kirk and his deputy, Hugh Watt, promised to take tackle the gang issue by 'taking the bikes off the bikies' (*NZ Herald*, 6.4.1971; *NZ Herald*, 1.11.1972). Although Polynesian street gangs were fast emerging in 1972, it was the outlaw motorcycle clubs that were the most obvious gang problem. And after several high profile incidents involving such groups – including the Palmerston North brawl between various outlaw clubs and the Mongrel Mob described in the previous chapter - this tough-sounding stand had electoral appeal.

The call to confiscate motorcycles was important as it signalled the first time that gangs had become a specific election issue; it was also the first of many popular political calls relating to gangs to fall flat. Once elected, Kirk faced resistance to the motorcycle confiscation proposal from within his own party and soon dropped the idea, saying it was "not as easy as I thought" (Tait &

Berry, 1978: pp.68-69). This lack of follow-through gave the National opposition many opportunities to attack the government as warring outlaw clubs became a significant public issue during Labour's short stay in office.

One person who was "dumbfounded" to learn that Kirk had abandoned his policy to confiscate gang motorcycles was Christchurch police Superintendent Gideon Tait. Tait (1978: p.69), an old school cop who, like those who overzealously policed the gangs outlined in the previous chapter, was unequivocal that the only way to deal with gangs was through hard line policing, and he was frustrated by "liberals" who ignored the troubles created by such groups but were quick to call "fascism" if police "resort to violent measures". How else, Tait (1978: p.69) wondered, "do you deal with 'animals' who have no respect for life or property or for the dignity of others...?" If many of the young Labour MPs reflected the emergence of a growing portion of the country challenging traditional thinking, Tait was an extreme representative of the large portion of conservative New Zealanders who did not.

Tait's attitude was supported by many but not by all of his colleagues²². George Twentyman, who became Tait's successor as police superintendent in Christchurch, was acutely concerned about gang activities and policed the gangs with vigour, but he was highly critical of Tait's tactics. Twentyman told me in 2003 that he had "stories [about Tait] that would put your hair on end". Although unwilling to elaborate in detail, he did say:

²² Former Detective Inspector, Dave Haslett, who early in his career worked in Christchurch under Giddion Tait said that his style of policing did not sit well with certain members of the police (Haslett, 2007).

Gideon Tait thought that the police could do anything as far as the law was concerned. He thought the old fist could [solve all problems]. His theme all the time was this (hitting his fist into his palm)... He thought the police were the law, but it's not, it's only a segment of it. I was very conscious of that and I think he was dead wrong... Of course, he had a following because of that attitude. He seemed to believe that the police were all-powerful; could do anything. And that if there were difficulties in society, police were the answer for them. But we are only part of the solution; we don't assume responsibilities that are not ours.

In late 1973, Tait was fuming that, following an internal police inquiry, some senior police officers had been disciplined over their heavy-handling of outlaw club members from numerous clubs at the Alexandra Blossom Festival in September of that year²³ (Tait & Berry, 1978: p.69). Tait said he was "itching for a chance to get a crack at the bikies" (Tait & Berry, 1978: p.70). So when the same clubs that were at Alexandra travelled from around the country to celebrate the impending New Year with the Epitaph Riders in Christchurch, Tait saw his opportunity to confront them.

On the morning of December 30, Tait put the Epitaph Riders' Kerr's Road headquarters under surveillance, and, according to the media, by 8.30pm there were complaints about loud music, broken bottles, and urinating on the street (*The Press* 31.12.1973). Tait moved in with 25 carloads of police to close down the party, eventually using tear gas to break it up – the first time

²³ The fact that the Hasting Blossom Festival (noted previously) and the Alexandra Blossom Festival were destinations for outlaw clubs speaks volumes of the limited entertainment options in New Zealand in the 1960s and 70s.

such measures had been used in a situation not involving firearms (Tait & Berry, 1978: p.74). Eighty-one people were charged, mostly with unlawful assembly, a law targeting gangs that had recently been passed by parliament via an amendment to the Crimes Act. With similarities to the events in KioKio described in Chapter Four, various members of the different clubs complained that police had deliberately damaged their motorcycles while they were in custody (*Otago Daily Times* 4.1.1974, *Sunday Times* 6.1.1974, *Evening Post* 3.1.1974). Although initially convicted by a Stipendiary Magistrate, all of those charged were subsequently acquitted on appeal to the Supreme Court (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.170).

The recently created provisions of unlawful assembly did not come into effect until the New Year; just over one day after the arrests were made. Moreover, the Supreme Court hearing revealed that neighbours of the house where the party occurred did not think the situation serious until the police arrived, and one resident said in evidence that he only laid a complaint after being put under pressure by the police (Jeffery, 1981: p.30).

Despite the failure to obtain convictions, and questions being raised surrounding the raid, Tait took from it a “moral victory” (Tait & Berry, 1978: p.74). Moreover, his hard line approach must have impressed his superiors as in 1974 he was promoted to Auckland district commander as well as Assistant Commissioner of the New Zealand Police; although, his tactics in that city quickly drew criticism.

As district commander, Tait took control of the police Task Force that had been established in Auckland in 1974 to curb public drunkenness and violence, often associated with Polynesian street gangs. Numbering some 200 specifically trained officers, the Task Force became highly controversial after complaints of racism and provocative behaviour. It was argued that their hard line tactics were creating more harm than good. Research by one lobby group, the Auckland Committee on Racism and Discrimination, concluded that the Task Force was a failure in law enforcement and a disaster in community relations (*The Press* 16.4.1975). The official police view, however, was dismissive of such allegations. The 1975 Annual Report of the New Zealand Police stated that,

Public reaction to the task force varied from strong opposition to police methods from some vociferous minority groups of ten claiming racial prejudice by the Police, to a growing support from the usually silent public who were greatly pleased with the restoration of law and order (*AJHR*, G.6, 1975: p.11)

Those calling for Tait to resign due to his hard line tactics did not have to wait long. In 1975, the aging officer retired from the police, still adamant that the hard line policing was appropriate. Unrepentant to the end, the 'old school' cop used his retirement speech to call for the return of the birch in order to "flog the toughs!" (*The Press* 7.11.1975). Not long after, the Task Force squads were revamped and renamed Team Policing Units, although controversy over the police approach toward gangs did not end there. By the

end of the decade a chorus of questions were being publicly raised as to whether hard line tactics were, in fact, counterproductive.

In Christchurch, at least, Tait's approach was a reflection more of his personality than of good policing, and whether or not such hard line tactics resulted in cohesion within the gangs, as discussed in Chapter Four, is moot. Demonstrably, however, such actions failed to quell the gangs' growth, increased organisation, and activities.

Far from being weakened after the police action at Kerr's Road, the outlaw clubs involved drew closer together. Cementing a plan that had been under discussion since 1974, the network of clubs formalised their association under the banner of the 'Bikers' Federation' in 1976. Small symbols were made with the letters 'BF' inside a triangle and attached to members' cut-offs²⁴. The founding members of the Bikers' Federation were the Grim Reapers (Auckland), the Outcasts (Hamilton), the Outlaws (Napier), the Vultures (Gisborne), the Magogs (New Plymouth), the Mothers (Palmerston North), the Sinn Fein (Upper Hutt), the Satan's Slaves (Wellington), the Epitaph Riders (Christchurch) and the Antarctic Angels (Invercargill). The Bikers' Federation covered much of New Zealand and meant those clubs could travel around knowing they had allies and places to stay. All but two of the clubs, the Vultures and the Grim Reapers, are still in existence, although not all remain in the Federation, which has undergone a number of changes over the years.

²⁴ This is an almost exact response to police pressure by outlaw clubs in the California that gave rise to 1% badges being worn by an alliance of different clubs in that state. For more on this, see Wethern (1978: p.54).

In a mark of arrogance, Tait (1978: p.70) believed that before he was promoted to Auckland he had tackled the “bikies [when they] reached a zenith in their rampaging in 1973” and he believed his actions had made a positive difference. On the contrary, in the months after he left Christchurch, clashes between two outlaw motorcycle clubs, the Epitaph Riders and the Devil’s Henchmen, in that city were to produce levels of conflict and concern unprecedented anywhere in New Zealand; indeed these events were significant enough to be mentioned in the police annual report in 1975 (*AJHR*, G.6, 1975: pp.11-12). It was the first time gangs had received a specific mention in such reports and was an indication of growing concern around their activities.

The First Gang War

Whether or not the hostilities that occurred in Christchurch between the Epitaph Riders (the ‘Riders’) and the Devil’s Henchmen (the ‘Henchmen’) during 1974 and 1975 constituted New Zealand’s first ‘gang war’²⁵ is perhaps open to debate. The conflict between the Mongrel Mob and the Satan’s Slaves that included the battles at Pekapeka in 1971 and Palmerston North in 1972, the early clashes between the Mongrel Mob and the early Black Power chapters in Wellington, and hostilities that occurred between the Hell’s Angels and the Grim Reapers that started in 1973, all have some claim to that mantle. However, the close proximity of the gangs in Christchurch and the fact that the violence was so intense sets it apart from the others as far as gang wars are concerned.

²⁵ I use the term ‘war’ advisedly and only to separate conflicts of such intensity, commitment, and duration that they require separation from lesser gang conflicts.

A confidential police report completed in April 1975 stated that,

The recent gang warfare here in Christchurch is the first time in New Zealand that hostilities between gangs has [sic] reached such intensity; with one being stabbed to death and others being shot. There have been serious assaults, stand-over tactics, arson, throwing of Molotov cocktails, large scale disorder, large groups acting in extremely threatening and provocative ways, and other occurrences. Up to the present, there had been no other situation even approaching the extent of this (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.2)

One of the combatant groups in the Christchurch war, the Epitaph Riders, was formed in 1969 by a youth named Ross Jennings who, I am told, did not then, and never would during his time with the gang, own a motorcycle. Living with a couple of friends who did own bikes in a large house on Geraldine Street, Christchurch, and inspired by Hunter Thompson's (1967) book *Hell's Angels* as well as by media reports of such groups in other parts of the country, the young men decided to set themselves up as a motorcycle gang. A number of sources have reported to me that although there was a nominal president, initially there were few, if any, rules and no club structure. Like other outlaw motorcycle clubs in the South Island around this time, such as the Antarctic Angels of Invercargill and the Highwaymen of Timaru, before significant contact with the more mature scene in the North Island, the Epitaph Riders took their cues largely from popular media.

That book *'Hell's Angels'* that Hunter Thompson I think wrote – that was out and we just – it all just sort of happened and we were all running around with this stuff [patches] on our back and um that's how it started...We didn't [know what we were doing] we were just a bunch of young guys, mate, that just hung around. We're all fuckin' 17, 18 the oldest would have been 21 probably. And it's just the way it happened. We all used to meet on Friday nights and just go drink piss – it just started from there... Drink piss and fuck women. There was nothing else in life – riding bikes (Bruce O'Malley 2004 pers. comm.).

By 1973, however, the Epitaph Riders had matured significantly and this was captured by an undergraduate project undertaken at the University of Canterbury²⁶. Comprised of young men from working class backgrounds aged in their late teens to mid-20s, the club boasted now some 22 patched members, including an executive consisting of a president, two vice presidents²⁷ and a Sergeant at Arms (Rutherford & McLennon, 1973: pp.13-14). By this time, rules were in place within the club and efforts were being made to ensure the gang was a significant part of the lives of its members.

²⁶ The project was undertaken by Margaret Rutherford and Susan McLennon in 1973 for a stage three paper titled 'Social Movements'. I have been told that one of the students had an association with 'Sparrow' a member of the club.

²⁷ Two vice presidents is different to the outlaw club norm and appears to have been an adaptation devised by the Riders. The role of the vice presidents was to "act as joint presidents when the president is not around" (Rutherford & McLennon, 1973: p.13). I have been told that the arrangement did not last long and may have been brought about as a compromise between two competing candidates for the position.

The increasing commitment to the club is reflected in a decision made in August 1973 making it compulsory to attend weekly meetings and a Sunday run as well as any parties the group decided to have (Rutherford & McLennon, 1973: p.6). A rented flat was used as a clubhouse and weekly fees of two dollars were collected along with an additional one-dollar levy for beer on the Sunday rides. Fees were used for club expenses including subsidising major runs, helping members in trouble, and paying fines incurred during group activities. The communal behaviours of the group are, in substantial measure, a reflection of the wider social environment – a large part of which focused on community and sharing – stemming from the 1960s and discussed in previous chapters.

The club's colours were held in significant esteem by the group but were only compulsorily worn on runs; however, it was against club rules to deny being a member of the gang (Rutherford & McLennon, 1973: p.15). Whether or not it was the case within the Riders at this time is unclear – I have conflicting reports – but certainly it became standard within outlaw clubs that back patches were compulsory whenever members were riding a motorcycle. I have been told that, in the mid-1970s, one member even rode to teacher's training college on his bike wearing his patch (Cos Jeffery 2009 pers. comm.). It would be impossible to conceive of this occurring now without a public uproar, reflecting a dramatic change in attitudes toward such groups.

Although the Epitaph Riders' motorcycles were kept meticulously clean, members had adopted the 'ridgies' style, that was by this time standard within

the gang scene. 'Ridgies' (derived from 'originals') is the set of original clothing a member was wearing when he was initiated into the gang and given his colours. These clothes were seen as sacred and were never washed, and thus they soon became dirty and tatty. The exact origin of ridgies is difficult to assess, but they may have come about as an inevitable outcome of working on their machines and travelling and sleeping rough while on runs. They soon, however, became the desired look – a form of gang uniform – but there was more to ridgies than that.

Grease from vehicle breakdowns, dirt from motorcycle trips around New Zealand, blood from fights and fluids from sexual encounters all mixed together to become part of the sub-cultural, or counter-cultural, style and were imbued with symbolic meaning. As one Mongrel Mob member put it, "To wash them would be to wipe away the memory of our conquests and history" (Isaac, 2007: p.10). When they fell apart, they were either patched up or a similar item of clothing was sewn underneath them.

As they were for all gangs, the clothes undoubtedly represented a visible expression of the Epitaph Riders' anti-social stance, and many of the members had convictions for petty offences (Rutherford & McLennon, 1973: p.16). In what is now a common – and important - refrain, the police were perceived as an enemy and many of the club's members thought they were unfairly targeted and victimised (Rutherford & McLennon, 1973: p.16). Fighting was a significant group activity that demonstrated machismo as well as instilling an all important group loyalty that the gang actively fostered. With

an 'all for one, and one for all' philosophy, if any member got into a fight, regardless of fault, other members were required to back him up (Jeffery, 1981: p.24; Rutherford & McLennon, 1973: p.15). Protecting the gang's reputation was seen as paramount and a member running from a fight would be a significant loss of face for the whole club (Television New Zealand, c1970). This ethos was important to enhance the group's reputation and to ensure other people thought twice about confronting its members. There were many conflicts with other would-be gangs as the Riders became increasingly territorial and none of the fledgling gangs that were emerging in the city was immune from attack, but particular attention was given to other motorcycle clubs that were quickly stomped out. The Riders, like many other fellow Biker Federation Clubs, had determined that they would be the only outlaw club in their city. In the early 1970s, I have learned of three groups - the Apostles, the Heaven's Outcasts, and the Highwaymen - that were beaten or intimidated by the Riders and had their colours taken.

By 1973, then, the Epitaph Riders were a well established outlaw motorcycle club and with their frequent travels around the country, it is widely acknowledged by those in the scene at the time that they held a reputation as among the country's staunchest, and consequently one of the most respected groups within the biker – and indeed the entire gang – community. In biker parlance, they were *class*.

In May 1973, a group of eight working class teenage friends from broken, violent and neglectful home environments – previously established as

important factors of gang formation in chapters One and Two - met in a sleep-out connected to a Christchurch family house. Inspired by the movie *Easy Rider*, by other overseas media images, by the Epitaph Riders, and also by the Satan's Slaves who had recently been visiting Christchurch, the youths were determined to start a motorcycle gang²⁸ of their own (Ferris, c1995: p.23).

Conscious of the image required of a gang, they set about accelerating the process of the 'ridgies' look by rubbing cigarette ash into their jeans (Ferris, c1995: p.24). One of the youths sketched a patch based on that of the Hell's Angels – a skull with wings and a piston protruding from its mouth. A number of names were bandied around before they settled on the Devil's Henchmen – a name they either pulled out of *Easy Rider* magazine (Ferris, c1995: p.24) or from Jan Hudson's book *The Sex and Savagery of the Hell's Angels* ('John' 2003 pers. comm.). The initial patch – like that of the Epitaph Riders, but unlike the outlaw club norm – did not identify the territory of the club; instead the name was divided between the top and bottom rockers²⁹. The patches were sewn onto denim cut-offs along with other decorations. One member also attached a bottle opener, a Norton badge and a 'Patrol Second' badge that he pulled from his Boy Scout uniform (Ferris, c1995: p.24).

²⁸ Interestingly, in Ferris's (c1995) unpublished memoir that traces the rise of the young group, he makes clear they wanted to be a 'gang' and not a club. It is unheard of in the scene now for outlaw club members to consider themselves as being part of a 'gang'.

²⁹ Within a short time the Henchmen changed to the outlaw norm, the Riders, however, still maintain their name across both rockers and are the only New Zealand club to do so – their area name is noted in a small banner that runs underneath the bottom rocker.

A brother of one of the group had been an Epitaph Rider and thus he was aware of what was required of an outlaw motorcycle club. A weekly fee was levied to start a club fund and an executive was elected that included a president, a vice president and a secretary. The first president was 'Shorty' Jordan (Ferris, c1995: p.23). Also inspired by popular media portrayals of the U.S. Hell's Angels, the members gave themselves club names; Shorty, Angel, Pretty Boy, Eagle, Monster, Wally, Turtle and Mouse. Alternative names remain common within the both the outlaw biker and street gang scene. These adopted names can be seen as an important ritual of initiation into a gang, particularly in more evolved groups where commitment to the patch and the gang was viewed as all encompassing. Initially taken up simply because they were considered 'cool' or the 'done thing', a gang name signals a separation from a member's former life and is something akin to a symbolic rebirth. A birth name ties you to your family and therefore to your past, but for gang members, the gang becomes their family. By the end of the 1970s, in both outlaw clubs and street gangs, the gang was upheld to take primacy over all elements of a member's life.

Many of the group, however, were missing the primary ingredient of an outlaw club – motorcycles. They thus determined not to wear their patches until all members had bikes, and conforming to standard 'outlaw' practice, these were to be of British – and later American – manufacture. In fact, it was later decided that the patches were not to be worn at any time without motorcycles, to ensure the group was not confused with a street gang (Ferris, c1995: p.43). This rule became common in the outlaw club scene, and many clubs – with

the notable exception of the Hell's Angels – have a specific rule about not wearing patches in cars.

For some months, the fledgling club drifted. Some of the Henchmen remained in awe of the Epitaph Riders and tried to join them, but the harsh treatment they received from members of the Riders while attempting to ingratiate themselves ensured they turned angrily against the club. Indeed, a fistfight was organised between the pro- and anti-Epitaph Riders factions of the Henchmen (Ferris, c1995: p.29). It was only after the anti-Rider faction won the fight that the young friends reconciled and again decided to build the Devil's Henchmen Motorcycle Club.

With its handful of members now all owning motorcycles, the young gang went on runs to the countryside, drank and partied. Former members of the Apostles, a patched gang that had been wiped out by the Riders, joined forces with the Henchmen. While the patched membership remained small, the group had a number of supporters and thus appeared bigger, certainly big enough to catch the eye of the Epitaph Riders. The Riders had claimed Christchurch as their exclusive turf and vowed that no other outlaw club would be allowed to set up there. They felt that their reputation within the Biker Federation rested on it. 'Blu', who became the Rider's Sergeant at Arms during the war, told me in 2006: "We had something to prove to the rest of New Zealand, it wasn't just [to] us we had to prove ourselves, it was other [Federation] clubs as well".

Sometime in early 1974, the Henchmen were ambushed in the Carlton Hotel by the Riders. The members of the fledgling gang had known a showdown was inevitable and they were angry that they had been taken by surprise (Ferris, c1995: p.33). While the Henchmen plotted revenge, it is most likely the Riders thought little more about the group, simply expecting them to drop out of the scene like others before them. In fact, it was just the start of the conflict and beginning of New Zealand's first gang war.

Having collected numerous media articles, obtained a detailed confidential police report, an unpublished memoir written by one member of the Devil's Henchmen, interviews with several club members, the police and others involved in the conflict, I am able to draw a detailed description of the war. Aside from being a fascinating snapshot of New Zealand gang history, the account that follows offers insight into how these wars escalated and why they drew such significant public and political concern. It also highlights changes that occur within gangs because of conflict, and the non-utilitarian nature of these battles, something that will become important to later discussions.

The police, rather aptly, described the war between the Devil's Henchmen and the Epitaph Riders as, "that of a young lion challenging the old lion for his domain" (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.4). The Riders were older, aged mostly in their early to mid-20s, while the Henchmen were all teenagers. The Henchmen had eight patched members; the Riders had 20 as well as connections around the country – via membership of the Biker Federation – a history of gang confrontations, and a well-deserved reputation for being

staunch. It was a group of wild youths attempting to stare down a club of battle hardened young men.

The Devil's Henchmen knew that in an all-in confrontation (something proposed by the Riders) they would be easily defeated (Ferris, c1995: p.33). So, inspired by the tactics of the Viet Cong and the IRA that they saw in the news media, they decided to fight the Riders with guerrilla attacks, or when opportunity meant they had sufficient numbers to be successful. Their preparations included collecting firearms and experimenting with Molotov cocktails (Ferris, c1995: p.33).

On 24 August 1974, members of the Henchmen attacked two Riders with some success. Elated by their victory, the group then went to Cathedral Square and fought a group of soldiers, on leave from their base at Burnham, before gate crashing a party, where they destroyed property and assaulted the hosts (*The Press* 26.8.1974). The following day, the Riders, angered by the attack on their members the day before, raided the Henchmen's headquarters in an effort to take the gang down once and for all. Steve Hollis, the president of the Riders, took a shotgun and fired off several rounds (*The Press* 26.8.1974). The outnumbered Henchmen escaped out of a back window, leaving the female supporters to fight back – which they did. Members of the Riders have told me that they derided the Henchmen as 'Henchwomen' for a time after that. It was the first significant battle of the war, and the young outlaw club had not fared well.

Thankfully for them, the Henchmen's hasty retreat was unknown to the press, but the media made a great deal of the raid by the Riders, the fight the Henchmen undertook with the soldiers, and the violence they engaged in at the party. The Henchmen were elated with the media attention, feeling they were being granted public recognition as a major gang in the city:

At last we were centre stage, elated at what this publicity was achieving for us, instant notoriety! The name of the Devil's Henchmen was printed many times over in nine newspaper articles that led up to the final sentencing of those that were involved (Ferris, c1995: p.43).

The new gang was, quite literally, making a name for itself. The young men, now known as the Devil's Henchmen, who hitherto had a marginalised existence, were suddenly an identity, and that made the members *somebody* and with this came tremendous feelings of worth and power:

I had no job and didn't care, I was wild and free. There were other feelings within me too. I could taste the power that we had a martial force and I had a sense of peace and joy in contention with hatred and anger... We were now truly rebels, having made ourselves outcasts, we moved in society, but made our own laws and to hell with anyone else (Ferris, c1995: pp.47-48).

The media coverage of the war was important. As Klein (1971: p.15) has pointed out, gangs are "seldom seen" by most people and interaction with

them is rare, and thus the public is reliant on media to form their opinions. Equally important but less discussed, however, is the effect the media have on the gangs themselves. If one psychological factor that makes gang membership appealing is the desire for status (Carlie, 2002; A. K. Cohen, 1955; Jankowski, 1991; Klein, 1995; W. B. Miller, 1958/1969; Short & Strodbeck, 1965), then the media can play an important role in fulfilling this.

Importantly, however, I believe that this occurs primarily in a gang's early development. More mature gangs learn that media attention brings about police attention and therefore it is best avoided. Indeed, most, if not all, patched gangs in New Zealand have a rule that prohibits members from speaking with the media, although in rare instances this is relaxed if the use of the media is seen as efficacious; and examples of this will become evident.

This 'no media' rule appears to have been customary within the established outlaw motorcycle clubs in New Zealand by the early 1970s, and the Epitaph Riders did not cooperate with the journalists at all³⁰. Their young rivals, however, seeking media attention to achieve status, were often cited in newspapers. For the Epitaph Riders, the fact the Henchmen did this was further evidence that they lacked class (Blu 2006 pers. comm.). But despite this perception, the young group was proving to be an unexpectedly stubborn adversary.

³⁰ In the middle of the war the Epitaph Riders approached the editor of the *Christchurch Star* and requested the paper refer to the group as a 'club' and not a 'gang' (Jeffery, 1981). But at least until 1973, the group diligently collected all media articles that mentioned them (Rutherford & McLennon, 1973: p.18).

In early November 1974, after a further attack on one of their members, the Epitaph Riders launched another full-scale assault on the Henchmen's headquarters. Although a firearm was presented, it was only used to strike a member of the Henchmen to the ground. Many of the Henchmen were woken from sleep and, unable to mount an effective defence, were beaten. Injuries included a dislocated shoulder, a broken arm, a badly injured leg and a gash to the head requiring 14 stitches (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.54). The Riders wrecked the house and damaged the motorcycles on the property. It was a decisive strike and the Henchmen felt they had to retaliate – not with an opportune attack, but a full counter offensive: “Our self respect as men, as a bike gang was in question if we had not taken immediate action” (Ferris, c1995: p.49).

The Henchmen called a special meeting, a war council, whereby usual meeting rules³¹ were relaxed and prospects and supporters were invited to attend (Ferris, c1995: p.49). Because of the conflict, the Riders had fortified their headquarters with concrete posts, mesh fencing, and barbed wire. They had erected a guard tower that was manned 24 hours a day. The Henchmen therefore decided to attack a flat in Dunn Street where a number of Riders lived. They rounded up weapons including a .22 rifle, a shotgun and made a batch of Molotov cocktails (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.49). As proved common during significant attacks by outlaw motorcycle clubs throughout the country, motorcycles were seen as too vulnerable and impractical from which to launch a raid, so the Henchmen made the journey in three cars. Each

³¹ Attendance at regular gang meetings is reserved for full members only – prospects are expected to be at the meeting premises, but are not involved in the meeting itself in any way unless called upon.

carload of people had a specific role: one group to go through the front door, one to go through the back door and the other group was to wreck motorcycles and firebomb the house when the raid was finished (Ferris, c1995: p.49).

In the darkness of early morning, the raiders entered the front of the house in Dunn Street by kicking in the door, but the back door failed to open even when the handle was blasted with a shotgun. One Rider repelled an attacker and forced him to jump out a window where he had to be carried back to one of the cars injured (Ferris, c1995: p.50). The attack was not going smoothly. Perhaps panicked by his lack of support inside the house, one of the Henchmen opened fire with a .22 rifle. A member of the Epitaph Riders was shot in the head (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.59). As the Henchmen left, more shots were fired into the house and the Molotov Cocktails were thrown through the smashed windows. Despite being unable to enter the back of the house and the Molotov Cocktails failing to ignite, the raid was seen by the Henchmen as successful. The young gang had shown they were prepared and able to make significant attacks on their bigger rival. The shot man, Tony Eastmore, survived but lost an eye and his sense of balance forever. I have been told by many people that the bullet remains lodged near the top of his spine; too dangerously positioned to be removed.

It was a well-planned attack but the subsequent escape plan was as basic as it was predictable and the police quickly rounded up the Henchmen as they made their way back to their headquarters (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.59).

Later that day the arrested Henchmen appeared in Christchurch District Court and the Riders were there to jeer at them and record their personal details with which to compile a dossier – something that was confirmed at a subsequent court trial (*Star Sports and Magazine* 21.6.1975). Such dossiers became common to warring gangs. Two that I have seen outline basic details of opposition members, including where they live, place of employment (if any), and descriptions and number plates of vehicles they drive. One of these included details of at least one police officer.

At least four members or associates of the Devil's Henchmen were found guilty on charges of unlawful assembly arising from the raid on Dunn Street (*The Press*, 21.2.1975), and the person who fired the bullet that hit Eastmore told me that he managed to escaped conviction on “serious” charges.

Following the shooting, and reflecting the club's immaturity, the Henchmen continued to oblige journalists. Sensational reports were aired in much of the media but particularly *The Truth* (12.11.1974) and the *Star Sports and Magazine* (23.11.1974); the latter covered bizarre rituals undertaken by the Henchmen that were full of wild stories made up by the gang for amusement (Ferris, c1995: p.51). As police attention became more acute, however, the Henchmen began to spurn the media, as well as modify other behaviour in order to conform to the code of outlaw club norms. During the war, members of the young gang appeared to have few qualms about speaking with police regarding issues or incidents between them and the Riders – even, on at least one occasion, testifying in court against members of the Epitaph Riders

(*Christchurch Star* 8.9.1975). Such actions were certainly in breach of the code developing within the gang scene whereby disputes between gangs were the business of the gangs only. Gangs seek out their own forms of retribution for offences made against them, and this does not involve the criminal justice system. It was a rule the Henchmen quickly learned and adopted, and, in an odd twist, was probably an instruction in outlaw club etiquette given to them by their adversary, the Epitaph Riders (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.97), almost certainly because they were unhappy about being prosecuted on the basis of the statements and testimonies of their rival's.

With numerous members up on police charges, the Epitaph Riders became more reluctant to engage in large-scale assaults, and they too adopted the tactic of attacking their enemy when they were alone or in small groups. On 20 November 1974, they also attempted a covert operation to burn down the Henchmen's headquarters (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.64).

In an effort to stop the war, the police proposed a coming-together of the gangs to broker a truce. Sir Ron Scott, who was the chair of the Commonwealth Games organising committee, an event held in Christchurch in 1974, agreed to chair the meeting on 21 November 1974 at the Methodist City Mission (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.6). At the meeting, the Riders made it clear that they considered themselves the established club in Christchurch and that they had affiliations with other groups throughout New Zealand. They argued that this status gave them right to exclusivity as a patch-wearing club in the city. They were prepared to accept the Henchmen's

presence only if they took off their patches. The Henchmen argued that they had the right to wear patches and would continue to do so. Police described the long discussion on this point as “bitter” (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.6). Ron Scott drew on his experiences in negotiating employer and union disputes, but concluded that such examples were scarcely relevant and his arguments were ultimately unheeded (Jeffery, 1985: p.40). Both sides said they were going to continue to attack each other until one side acquiesced, although the four-hour meeting concluded with agreement on three points, which were recorded by police as:

1. There be no further use of firearms in any gang clashes
2. There would be no further wrecking of flats occupied by either gang
3. No damage of individual gang vehicles (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.6).

The agreement proved hollow. Within a week of the meeting, the Riders were in New Brighton tauntingly close to the Henchmen’s headquarters and the Henchmen confronted them. The young gang was disorganised in attack and its members leading the assault were beaten by the Riders and forced to abandon two of their bikes during the fight. The Riders smashed the headlights of the bikes and damaged their petrol tanks. The Henchmen reported to the police that the agreement had been broken but they refused to make any formal complaints, simply informing the police that they were no longer bound by the rules of engagement (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.7). Fortifications on both sides increased at their respective headquarters, and

the 'pads' went from places of party to places under siege. But despite the erection of palisades, the next telling battle was to occur far from both of their headquarters and indeed out of the city itself.

On 22 December 1973, the Riders had taken a run to Ashley Gorge, approximately 60km out of Christchurch. On their return, one of their bikes had mechanical difficulty and fell behind the pack. The Rider, John 'Hoppy' Hopkins and his pillion were met by around 16 Henchmen and supporters who were also out for a ride that day. The Henchmen surrounded Hoppy's motorcycle then slowed down so that he was eventually forced to pull over to the fringe of the motorway where he and his passenger were beaten badly enough to require hospital treatment (*Press*, 14.2.1975). However, the Henchmen did not just gain a small victory that day; they also rode away with an Epitaph Riders patch, which they had torn from Hoppy's back. The back patch is the ultimate symbol of the gang, and to gain a set of opposition colours is therefore the ultimate trophy of war. Equally, to lose a patch is the greatest gang humiliation. The Epitaph Riders, who had vowed to rid the Devil's Henchmen of their patches, had instead lost one of their own. It was a significant blow.

The onus, initially at least, was on Hoppy to get his patch back. He and a couple of Riders attempted this by offering one-on-one fights with the Henchmen, but the young group was unwilling to risk losing such a valuable prize. Retrieval of the patch therefore became the business of the entire club. On Christmas Eve 1974, three Epitaph Riders went to the Henchmen's

headquarters with a shotgun but it was full of members and even the gun – which was not discharged - was not enough to force entry to the house or the return of the patch. The Riders left empty-handed. That same day a patched Henchman and three supporters were in a car in Fitzgerald Ave when two Riders saw them. One of the Riders, Nigel Kerr, pulled out a knife. The Henchmen supporters ran but Greg Slack, the Henchmen member, stood his ground and fought with Kerr. During the fight, Slack was stabbed. He stumbled several metres to a nearby dairy where he collapsed and died (Ferris, c1995: p.56).

Fuelled by grief, the Henchmen attempted to raid the fortified headquarters of the Riders but were repelled. In their haste, they had been unable to muster any significant weapons, and continual police raids had starved them of guns. At a Court hearing for Nigel Kerr, one of the Henchmen said to two Riders outside court, 'You've gone too far this time'. They replied, 'This is just the fuckin' start' ('John' 2003 pers. comm.). The animosity between the groups had escalated to extreme hatred, and in this a number of important elements stemming from gang wars can be highlighted.

As members of both sides suffered physical assault, property damage or loss of face, the dispute became personalised and therefore more meaningful and serious. In this way, the abstract concept of an enemy or opposition is replaced by being genuinely aggrieved, creating an escalation of ill feeling and hostility: "The hatred and feelings of hostility just built up more and more and it just carried on" ('John' 2003 pers. comm.).

I have found that oftentimes these increasingly bitter feelings are exaggerated or compounded by narratives – which often exist in a gang’s folklore for years – that stem from such conflicts. One’s own side is seen as cunning for undertaking a surprise attack, whereas the other side is seen as treacherous for a similar initiative. One side’s shortcomings are glossed over, downplayed and forgotten, whereas the opposition’s are highlighted, replayed in anecdotes and seen as characteristic. Although in similar instances the enemy is portrayed as being soundly defeated, one’s own loss is put down to unfair numbers or bad luck and seen as atypical. In these ways a mythology is produced that exemplifies the nature of one’s own group.

Therefore, battles, between groups with ostensibly similar attitudes and beliefs, that lack tangible utility, and to outsiders appear pointless, become steeped in meaning and to a great degree define a gang’s existence. The opposition becomes something of a yardstick upon which a group measures itself.

Moreover, during the war between the Riders and the Henchmen, it is clear that the rigours of battle forged a deeper commitment in the membership of the clubs and helped define their internal cultures³². Both the advent and prospect of death and imprisonment serve to highlight this point.

³² As discussed in Chapter Four, the theoretical underpinnings that conflict leads to cohesion has been outlined by, among others, Tannenbaum (1938), Thrasher (1927), and Klein (1996).

The Henchmen had a martyr. In Greg Slack, not only did they have a member prepared to live for the club, but also one who had died for it and it became paramount to honour his sacrifice, not just through retribution against those who killed him but also by staying loyal to his club.

The night he was killed it was an awful shock. It was terrible. It was a real wake up call. This is serious business...I personally thought that it was an affront to drop my guts and bail out of it [the club] ('John' 2003 pers. comm.).

The death, then, did not dissuade membership, it worked to adhere it. Staying with the club became a deep obligation and therefore membership was seen as something greater than it previously had.

Also stemming from the killing, the Riders lost one member, Nigel Kerr, to prison on a manslaughter charge and several others on various charges stemming from the war. The Henchmen had two patched members jailed. But far from prison being seen as a deterrent, serving jail time for the gang became seen something akin to a badge of honour (Jeffery, 1985: p.41), and this supports Klein's idea (1996: p.208) that attacks by the justice system can be manipulated by gang culture to create cohesion. Certainly, it appears that prison, or the threat of it, was taken in their stride. One of the Epitaph Riders told me:

It [going to jail] is just a fact of life. If it happens, it happens, that's basically it. A couple of stages we had more members in jail than out of jail. We still kept tight. There might have been half a dozen out and a dozen in jail, but the half dozen out were still very tight (Blu 2006 pers. comm.).

Only those who can withstand the pressures of battle, the constant police attention, and the possibility or rigours of jail, maintain their membership; those that cannot, leave. Once again this is often supported by rhetoric, for example in the slogan, 'Devil's Henchmen Forever, Forever Devil's Henchmen' the club's survival is directly linked to the commitment of its members³³. By contrast, those that left were often labelled as 'betraying' the club and unworthy of association. Gang membership was becoming seen as a lifelong commitment. Similar rhetoric reported by Decker (1996: p.264) in the U.S., that the "only way to leave is to be killed" became common. The reality was often different, but the intra-gang bonds being formed during conflicts and wars were ensuring a tightness of brotherhood that meant many members remained in the outlaw clubs or street gangs for much longer periods than in the past.

Consequently, the members that remained during the Rider/Henchmen war were, it appears, totally committed to their cause and their club. Similarly, it was only those who could withstand these pressures that joined such groups so that, somewhat organically, a staunch membership exponentially develops.

³³ Using their own name, all outlaw clubs in New Zealand use this catch cry.

Logically, therefore, such wars instil in gangs a strong and often aggressive collective mind set. This is one of the reasons why different gangs – or different chapters of the same gang – often uphold different internal cultures.

This process of greater commitment to the gang and changing internal dynamics were reflected in, and aided by, a greater and more rigorous initiation process. By this time, both the Epitaph Riders and the Devil's Henchmen, like all outlaw motorcycle clubs, had taken to 'prospecting' potential members. As previously outlined in Chapter Four, joining a club in the past was a simple and relatively quick affair, but by the mid-1970s, prospective members had to wait many months so that the existing members could fully vet them to ensure they had what it took to defend their patch and uphold the demands of gang life. But a recruitment decision is not just undertaken by the existing membership and requires a decision by the prospect too. A long prospecting period ensures a potential new member partakes in a formal process that allows for what Jankowski (1991: p.30) describes as a "calculated" decision to join a gang. It means that joining a gang is not a whim and allows both the prospect and existing membership to get a feel for whether or not the new recruit is a 'fit'.

In the mid-1970s, prospecting may have taken six months. In recent times, however, it is most likely to take more than a year, and often a 12-month minimum is a formal rule. Gang prospects wear partial colours – almost exclusively the bottom rocker – for what amounts as their trial period. Certain groups initiated rules whereby prospects that did not make the grade or

withdrew from the process were fined; the rationale being that the club had invested time in training them and that this needed to be compensated. In reality it was – and is – little more than a money-grab, or what became known as a ‘tax’³⁴. Generally, a prospect requires a 100 percent vote from the gang’s existing membership; this ensures the group remains loyal, tight, and strong³⁵. Moreover, it will be recalled from the definitions I have devised, that an exclusive membership is a key definitional component of a ‘gang’; a point to which I will return.

Reflecting this growing primacy of the relationship between gang and gang member, the Henchmen, exhibiting a claim of ownership, tried to steal the body of Slack from the funeral home – to give it a “biker send off” – but failed (Ferris, c1995: p.58). Slack’s mother appealed for calm on the day of her son’s funeral saying, “When Gregory was alive he was with you, but now that he is dead I don’t want him to be used as a means of reprisals” (*Star Sports and Magazine* 28.12.1974). The plea was ignored – as was her wish that Slack’s back patch not be put in the ground with her son. The Henchmen waited until all of the other mourners had left and then filled in the hole, placing the dead youth’s colours on the coffin. On discovering this, his family was angered and there were suggestions of legal action (*Sunday Times* 9.2.75). Such conflicts following a gang member’s death became common as relatives and gang members clashed over who had primacy of relationship;

³⁴ ‘Tax’ and ‘taxing’ are defined and explored in Chapter Eight.

³⁵ Patched street gangs also adopted this form of prospecting (with varying degrees of exactness), but certain chapters of the Mongrel Mob and Black Power transitioned into this by having ‘junior’ members – distinguished by ‘JNR’ on the back patch. When the JNR tag was removed by the gang, full membership was gained. Notwithstanding this, even now, in the street gangs it is not uncommon for this process to be scrapped and patches given out if a person is deemed to be particularly worthy.

reflecting gang member belief that the gang was the primary association of its members. Within the gang scene generally, this change was becoming evident; the fictive kin relationships between gang members were seen as superseding those of true kin or other forms of familial relations.

The Riders were ruthless in maintaining the pressure on their rivals; taunting the Henchmen as they grieved at their headquarters on the day of the Slack's funeral. And then, on 8 and 13 January 1975, attempts were made to burn down the Henchmen's pad (*The Press*, 14.1.1975). The final effort caused extensive damage and was enough to force the gang to move their headquarters from Covey Street to Havelock Street in Phillipstown. Also, opportune strikes against members of both sides continued.

On one occasion, the Henchmen ambushed a couple of Riders and managed to knock one member off his bike. By cruel luck, once again it was John Hopkins. In the space of a month, this Rider was twice treated in hospital and twice lost his patch. I have been told that Hoppy never asked for or received another one; although he remained an associate of the club. Critically, the Henchmen now had two sets of Epitaph Riders' colours. Of the second attack on Hoppy, one Henchman told me:

When that guy got done over and lost his colours for the second time there wasn't much sympathy for him, he got a hell-of-a beating. Just left in the middle of the road in a hell-of-a state. Fuck you, mate, you know ('John' 2003 pers. comm.).

On 25 January 1975, another incident occurred at the Lion Tavern on Lincoln Road when the Henchmen raided a small group of Riders who were drinking there:

We stopped and went over and the Epitaph Riders were lined up at the front of the pub. And the guys started charging and I stopped to pick up a hunk of wood. And the next minute they bolted as we got quite close. And I thought, 'ah, we've got the upper hand here'. And then I looked and the guys ahead of me were running back with somewhat worried looks on their faces. And I saw this big, bearded, solid looking guy with a Three-O [303 calibre rifle] yelling expletives and I thought, 'Oh shit'. Then I heard the shots. And I thought 'bugger this' and I legged it across the road. Now I'm a pretty small guy, but I was trying to make a small target even smaller as I leapt over that fence. I was expecting to get a bullet up my arse and I thought why the hell did I get involved in this [laughs] ('John' 2003 pers. comm.).

The 'big, bearded, solid looking guy' was Bob James, a Vietnam War veteran who fired shots in the air and then severely beat a Henchman who had been on the back of a bike with a broken leg. The crippled biker could make no escape and was beaten with his own crutches as he lay on the ground (*The Press* 8.2.1975). In a change of fortune, Hoppy was at the pub and, taking his chance for revenge, he attacked the prone Henchman and removed his patch. After the Henchmen regrouped, they came back to rescue their felled member but were met with more shots. This time a bullet ricocheted off the ground and

struck a Henchman in the lower back. He survived but had to have part of his bowel removed (*The Press* 27.1.1975).

After this incident, the police upped their pressure on the clubs further, undertaking an operation called 'Bikewatch', which meant the headquarters of both gangs were under constant surveillance from police cars parked outside the gate and the groups were trailed from Friday to Sunday when they went on runs (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.36). The attention led to a number of arrests for offences such as breaches of probation and obscene language, but their real purpose was to deter conflict between the groups (George Twentyman 2003 pers. comm.). The pressure certainly stifled the groups' activities and added to the burdens brought about by the war.

While the police upped the pressure on the groups, the judiciary was not, as far as the police were concerned, backing up these efforts, and bail was regularly given to the outlaw club members despite strong opposition (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.30). Consequently, gang members on bail committed many of the offences undertaken during the latter part of the war. Police also questioned the appropriateness of sentences being handed down. When, in the incident described above, Bob James fired off several shots in the Lion Tavern car park, severely wounding a man and risking the lives of passersby, he was sentenced to just 3 months in prison, increased to 9 months after prosecutors appealed (*Christchurch Star* 23.4.1975).

In a confidential report, the Christchurch Police were careful to avoid being directly critical of members of the judiciary but did opine that bail, delays in sentencing, lenient sentencing, and concurrent sentences allowed the war to continue and escalate (New Zealand Police, 1975: p.32). The then District Commander, and the report's author, George Twentyman told me he was frustrated by the judiciary but never criticised the judges openly, seeing that as "bad form". Years after the events, however, he was more forthcoming:

We were arresting them and they were getting out on bail. And we were re-arresting them and they were getting out on bail. And the whole judicial system was slow and, I believe, ineffective... They [the judges] slowly changed. They couldn't help but read all the media and realise they've got a serious situation here. [But initially t]hey were out of touch. They were a poor group of magistrates. I mean how do you say that in a report? (George Twentyman 2003 pers. comm.).

As previously mentioned, initially at least, prison was proving no significant deterrent to stopping the war, but it was from within jail that efforts toward peace were made in earnest. In early 1975, members from both sides, including the two vice presidents, were in the same prison wing of Christchurch's Papanui prison. The jailed members agreed to leave the war at the prison gates, and in close contact during prison work detail, certain members became friendly. Facilitated by Cos Jeffery, a detached youth worker employed by the Presbyterian Church to work with biker groups, members of both clubs met for weekly workshops while in jail (Cos Jeffery

2008 pers. comm.). These workshops led to another attempt at brokering a peace agreement. The incarcerated members drew up two proposals, and the war would be over if either one could be passed by both clubs. The first proposal was that the Henchmen patch-over and become a new chapter of the Epitaph Riders. The second was more watered down and suggested the Henchmen keep their name but officially become a chapter of the Riders.

Both incarcerated Henchmen (who had been pro-Epitaph Riders in the initial internal Henchmen dispute mentioned earlier) put their votes in favour of either proposal but members on the outside rejected both deals (Ferris, c1995: p.65). The Henchmen were unwilling to concede in any way, and their tenacity was rewarded. In October 1975, a final peace was brokered with the continuing assistance of Cos Jeffery. The Riders conceded. The rigours of the war had taken a toll and worn the Riders down. The Henchmen had fought for the right to exist and had won. The patches taken by both sides were returned. It was agreed that the chosen hotels of each side were exclusive territory, and with obligatory handshakes, after more than a year of fighting, the war was over. The superior strength of the Riders had failed to stop the new outlaw club.

Despite the truce, the bitterness from the war endured for years and the Henchmen never achieved friendly status with the Epitaph Riders or any of the other Biker Federation clubs around the country. Indeed, they became something of a lone force in the gang scene, but despite this, they grew. By the early 1990s, the Henchmen had two chapters in Christchurch and well as

chapters in Timaru and Invercargill, around which time they formed an alliance with Mothers and the Tyrants. Moreover, in Christchurch, neither the Henchmen nor the Epitaph Riders were able to stop the migration or emergence of other groups to the city. By the 1990s, three other outlaw motorcycle clubs – the Highway 61, the Templars³⁶, and the Road Knights – had bases there, as well as chapters of the big two street gangs, the Mongrel Mob and Black Power. Although the war that occurred in Christchurch in 1974 and 1975 heightened public and political concern regarding gangs, it was just the first of many such conflicts and therefore such concern only increased. The gangs were evolving due to the wars, but so too was the public response.

The Hell's Angels: From Prison to Profit

In 1975, the same year the war in Christchurch ceased, ongoing conflict between the Hell's Angels and the Highway 61 Motorcycle Club in Auckland culminated in a high profile killing of Highway 61 member Bradley Haora and the incarceration of nine members or associates of the Hell's Angels. As noted above, in Christchurch, the short jail sentences given to warring club members had the unforeseen consequence of a brokered truce, but in Auckland the long lags in the maximum security prison at Paremoremo had the unintended outcome of providing the bikers with a nefarious education as they were introduced to some of New Zealand's most hardened criminals, including many of the county's biggest drug dealers.

³⁶ The Epitaph Riders did exert a certain influence over the Templars, however, forcing a name change from the Templeton Riders because both might be referred to as 'The Riders' and that was seen by the Epitaph as a street-form of copyright infringement.

The Auckland conflict began toward the end of 1975, when tensions between the Hell's Angels and the Highway 61 were becoming more intense. In December of that year, a Mt Eden house that was rented by two female associates of the Hell's Angels was firebombed. The firebombed property had also been the scene of an attack by the Highway 61 on members of the Hell's Angels earlier in the month (*R v Hartley* – [1978] 2 NZLR 199). The Hell's Angels held Highway 61 responsible for the firebombing, and at a war council meeting, plans were made to attack a house in Onehunga, thought to be their rival's headquarters.

On 29 December, the Hell's Angels rounded up a number of weapons, including a shotgun and a .22 Winchester repeater rifle. The club's patched members and a number of supporters then pulled on masks to disguise themselves as they pulled up to the house in Onehunga (*NZ Herald* 9.6.1976). The group split in two, and half of the group entered the back of the house while the other half stormed the front. Although aware that the Hell's Angels may attack (*NZ Herald* 17.3.1976), the residents were seemingly unprepared and were woken from sleep and assaulted. Highway 61 member, Bradley Haora, was given a beating before a shotgun blast tore into his head from close range as he lay on the floor.

Twelve members or associates of the Hell's Angels were charged with Haora's murder, including the man who fired the shotgun, Chris Hartley. At the time, it was New Zealand's largest murder trial and the High Court in Auckland had to be modified to accommodate the number of defendants (*NZ*

Herald 9.6.1976). The Hell's Angels defence argued that there was no intent to kill, that the firearms were carried only to scare the victims and that the shotgun was only discharged accidentally, something repeated to me many years later by one of the Hell's Angels who took part in the attack (Richard Dalhousie 2008 pers. comm.). The defence was plausible, given that the raid was not sparked by an incident that would have led to murderous retaliation and that execution style killings were completely unheard of in the gang scene at that time.

After a four-week trial, the jury found nine of the accused guilty of manslaughter and sentenced each to between 7 and 10 years (*NZ Herald*, 24.7.1976)³⁷. Their fate appears to have been aided by the fact that some of Hell's Angel members gave detailed statements to the police. That a few talked with police investigators suggests, perhaps, they were shaken by both the killing itself and the prospect of its consequences, and also that the predominately young group (most of those convicted were in their early 20s) had yet to establish the underworld savvy of not cooperating with authorities. At least four of the sentenced men spent much of their sentences at the newly constructed maximum-security prison at Paremoremo, North of Auckland.

The convictions meant that a significant portion of the club, including the president 'Bunny' Batt-Brown, was incarcerated. But the club's situation was further compounded as the seriousness of the incident and fear of reprisals from Highway 61, also resulted in a number people moving away from the

³⁷ In August the conviction against one of the group was quashed because of "a serious breach of the spirit and purpose of the Judges' Rules in a police interview" and seven others had their sentences reduced (*NZ Herald*, 6.8.1977).

club, leaving only a hardened core of patched members (*Sunday News* 30.4.1978). As previously noted, in times of conflict this is a common occurrence within gangs, leaving groups smaller but tighter and more committed, and consequently more mature.

Perhaps one sign that the outlaw motorcycle clubs were maturing was their efforts to legitimise their clubs. In 1977, Petar Vitali took over the reins as president of the Hell's Angels, and in a public relations effort in the wake of the Haora killing, posed for a *Sunday News* photographer and told one of the paper's journalists that the club was turning away from violent, anti-social activities and making a fresh start³⁸ (*Sunday News* 30.4.1978). The Hell's Angels became an incorporated society³⁹ on 18 October 1978, and their constitution outlined the organisation's primary objective: "To promote motorcycle interests in general and in particular to promote and encourage riding of motorcycles". It was a rather prosaic goal; however, other events were set to determine certain activities of its members and the public's perception of the club.

As New Zealand's only maximum security prison, many of the less than 200 inmates at Paremoremo were among the country's criminal elite, including some of the country's top drug dealers. Some of the jailed Hell's Angels members became involved in the black economy of the prison, dealing drugs and bookmaking, and they gained contacts with, and the confidence of, many

³⁸ I am informed that Vitali was removed as president for his comments to the media. He was later ejected from the club in bad standing.

³⁹ The Hell's Angels in Auckland were not the first to become an incorporated society. The Epitaph Rider had registered in 1975, and was almost certainly the first outlaw club to do so. The Riders had done so to apply for community grants to help expand their club house (Jeffery, 1985).

underworld figures. The criminal code within Paremoremo at that time was particularly strong (Newbold, 1989b), and by the time the Hell's Angels members were released from prison they had learned and adopted it. One inmate from Paremoremo, who ran a book making operation in the prison with one of the Angels told me, "With the exception of one, who I met later on...he really changed – they all learnt how to be criminals, proper criminals". Along with the many practicalities involved in undertaking criminal endeavours, the lessons learned within Paremoremo ensured the gang always upheld criminal sub-cultural values, which have been well detailed by Newbold (1989a). In fact, their strict adherence to this criminal code ensured that from this time they gained the mantle of being New Zealand's most elite outlaw club; tight, uncompromising, and well organised. This title is widely recognised by both gang and police fraternities alike. Moreover, the adoption of a criminal code was the final evolutionary shift that signalled the shift from 'incipient gang' to 'gang' – as I have defined them in this thesis – by ensuring such groups developed formal rules that superseded the rules of the state. This adoption of the criminal code was a critical – literally, the defining – element of this transition.

Although the incarceration of the Hell's Angels offers an acute example of this transition, it was one that was occurring throughout the country in the 1970s as gangs were increasingly targeted by police and thereby introduced to the criminal justice system. An increasing sense of rebellion was being reinforced through a process of 'differential association' (Sutherland, 1947) whereby criminal codes were being transferred from older existing criminals to the

young rebel gang members; and in turn it spread throughout the gang scene. The Hell's Angels education, however, was perhaps the most concentrated and elite and aligns with the findings of Cloward and Ohlin (1960: p.163) that different gangs are defined by the distinct criminal communities with which they have the opportunity to interact.

While the confines of prison, then, were impacting on the imprisoned Hell's Angels, influences far from New Zealand shores were simultaneously having an effect on the outlaw club. As outlined in Chapter Four, after Jim Carrico left both the club and New Zealand in 1961, contact between the Auckland Hell's Angels and their U.S. counterparts ceased. Indeed, as the Hell's Angels expanded out of California and began establishing chapters throughout America and many parts of the world, the New Zealand chapter was forgotten.

As will be recalled from Chapter Four, New Zealand members had helped establish the Hell's Angels in Australia in the late 1960s, but the club's official charter is recorded as 1973 (Veno, 2003: p. 31) or 1975 (Lavigne, 1993: p.62). Contact between the Australasian chapters was evident – an Australian member was said to be present, though never charged, during the Haora killing⁴⁰ (*NZ Herald* 24.6.1976) – and it was in fact the Australians who alerted the Auckland Angels to the first world meeting of the Hell's Angels in Oakland in 1977.

⁴⁰ Although this was denied to me by a member of the Angels changed in relation to the killing, he acknowledged some Australasian contacts were occurring.

Bill Sorby, a half Fijian member, was sent to represent the Auckland club. At first glance, given Sorby's ancestry, it appears a strange selection as internationally the Hell's Angels evinced racist tendencies (Lavigne, 1993: p.65), and it is said they have been reluctant to 'patch-over' clubs with black members (T. Thompson, 1995: p.159). Realistically, the Auckland Angels had few options; club numbers were depleted due to the incarcerations related to the Haora killing and there were difficulties obtaining a visa to the U.S. for a person with convictions. Reluctant to discuss the trip, Bill Sorby's only comment to me in 2006 was that the visit went "well". However, I have been told by other members of the club that he participated in numerous fights that gained him respect. Sorby also stated the case for Auckland's official (re)inclusion into the Hell's Angels organisation. Sometime after the world conference, the records of the Hell's Angels were amended so that the Auckland club became recognised as the first chapter outside of California and the fourth anywhere in the world (Lavigne, 1993: p.62). Apart from correcting the history books, the trip proved crucial to the Auckland Hell's Angel's development.

Back in the international fold, the Auckland Angels were now connected to chapters around the world and representatives attended world meetings and participate in international runs. Like its individual chapters, the Hell's Angels as a whole was, and remains, a particularly democratic organisation, and this is the outlaw motorcycle club norm (Veno, 2003: p. 88). Internationally, I have been told that Hell's Angels votes for and against any motions are counted individually (rather than each chapter having a single vote), and the decisions

of these votes are then disseminated back to all chapters, with such decisions being binding. Similarly, information, for example, how to best run a motorcycling event, can be passed from one to all chapters to assist or inform. Of course, interaction between the groups also established informal channels of communication. In the 1970s, some members of the Hell's Angels in the U.S. were making a great deal of money from the manufacture and sale of illicit drugs (Wethern & Colnett, 1978) and in 1980 a member of the Melbourne Hell's Angels went to America and secured instructions on how to produce methamphetamine (Noble, 1989: p.89-108).

It is unknown whether or not international connections gave members of the Auckland Angels tuition in the drug's production, but in 1982 the Auckland Drug Squad received information from a "reliable source" that a senior member of the Hell's Angels (who I will not name) was purchasing one-kilogram lots of red phosphorus. This I have confirmed with the named person. A noting on the police database made available to me said that he had been doing so for "some time". Enquires by the police to the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) drew a blank, and they advised that it was not an ingredient of any known drug. Confused, the police surmised that the gang was making moves into the sex industry and that the red phosphorus was going to be used to make smoke bombs. The smoke bombs, they assumed, would be used to set off alarms in massage parlours to create panic while causing little real damage and thus allowing the Angels to muscle in on a slice of the action. It is unclear when police, and the DSIR, discovered that red phosphorous is an ingredient in one of three methods

used to illegally manufacture methamphetamine (Anonymous, 2006: p.241). The purchase of the red phosphorus tells us two things: one, Hell's Angels members were becoming involved in the drug trade; and two, that police intelligence is not always accurate.

The timing of both the jailing of a number of Hell's Angels members and their reintroduction to Hell's Angels chapters around the world was somewhat opportune. During the 1970s, a drug culture that had tentatively emerged in the late 1960s became more significant. From 1970 to 1973 reported drug crimes almost quadrupled (Newbold, 2004: p.56). Aware of the trend, police established a National Drug Intelligence Bureau in 1972. Initially, marijuana was the only drug on the scene, but as the 70s progressed, the use of LSD became more popular and by the mid-1970s, substantial heroin use was also apparent. In a few short years, New Zealand had joined the list of Western countries with an obvious drug culture and with this, of course, a significant underground economy. Petar Vitali's insistence that the club was making a fresh start was quite true, the overt anti-social activities of the group largely ceased as some of its members engaged in profit driven crime. Once again, the Hell's Angels were forging a path that, in time, other gangs would follow; something I will return to in Chapter Nine.

Politics and Social Changes: Rob Muldoon and Denis O'Reilly

High profile gang conflicts, like those described in the previous two sections, allowed National Party to continually remind Labour of their failure to fulfil their 1972 pre-election promise to 'take the bikes off the bikies' (for example,

NZPD, vol.383, 1973: p.1025; *NZPD*, vol.385, 1973: p.3197; *NZPD*, vol.390, 1974: p.1201; *NZPD*, vol.398, 1975: p.3369). Although this gained the opposition political mileage, the economic problems that beset the country were what truly shook the government. The golden economic period New Zealand had enjoyed in the period since World War II was ending, and this had significant consequences for both the Labour government and for the country's gang scene.

At the forefront of economic concerns were a number of international developments that greatly influenced the New Zealand economy. In 1973, Britain joined the European Economic Community (EEC). New Zealand was suddenly not the 'farm of Britain' and thus lost privileged access to its most important export market. Although Britain's intentions had been known since the early 1960s (Hawke, 1992: p.436), New Zealand was poorly prepared for the economic realities that followed. Despite some modest and temporary special arrangements put in place until 1977, New Zealand had to reform its economy and find new markets. The outcomes of these changes were painful and enduring.

The same year that Britain joined the EEC, the first of the oil shocks occurred when the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) decided to halt all oil exports to countries that supported Israel. Petrol prices skyrocketed; quadrupling in a matter of months. At the same time, the price of wool collapsed, inflation was increasing, and the large balance of payments surplus enjoyed in 1973 had, by 1975, turned into a deficit of some \$1,300,000,000

(Sinclair, 1991: p.312). New Zealand was heading for its greatest economic crisis since the depression of the 1930s.

Prime Minister Kirk died in office in August 1974, and his replacement, Bill Rowling, did not have his predecessor's kudos or political abilities. With the economy looking dire, the electorate turned its back on Labour and sought the comfort of the party it knew best. Under the strong leadership of Rob Muldoon, the National party reversed the heavy defeat of 1972 and in 1975, with a 23-seat majority, was once again elected to power, where it remained until 1984. The new government, however, failed to counter the effects of the economic situation and the country continued to flounder. Toward the end of the decade, the problems that had been identified by Muldoon as priorities of his new government in 1976 remained: high inflation, large balance of payments and budget deficits, low levels of savings, and rising unemployment (McRobie, 1992: p.395).

While some of the economic indices were abstract concepts to many New Zealanders, the lack of jobs was a harsh and unfamiliar reality of the economic downturn. Unemployment, which had been negligible in the early 1970s, reached 26,889 by the end of 1979 (Statistics New Zealand, 1980: p777). While that number indicates a sharp downturn in the labour market, the actual situation was worse than this but was masked by temporary employment schemes. The government sought to pick up the slack created by falling employment levels and put more than 21,000 people to work through government departments, subsidised work with local authorities, and

subsidising private sector job creation programmes. Despite these initiatives, unemployment continued to increase. To further compound matters, a second oil shock in 1979 put further pressure on the fragile economy.

Clustered in the semi- and unskilled workforce, Maori and Pacific Peoples were the most affected by the economic downturn and unemployment soon became systemic in many Maori and Pacific communities: the seeds of an underclass, seen as so crucial to gang maturation and increased criminality (Hagedorn, 1988; Klein, 1995; Short, 1990), were being sown. The ease of finding work, a significant factor that had meant gang membership was a temporary youthful dalliance, was no longer on offer, and the growth of Polynesian gangs meant they overtook the outlaw motorcycle clubs as the county's principal gang concern, and importantly this occurred during a period of growing racial unrest.

For migrants from the Pacific, who had been encouraged to move to New Zealand during the boom times, their welcome was over. And in 1976 and 1977 there was a controversial crackdown and early morning 'dawn raids' on Pacific families who were thought to have among them people who had overstayed entry permits or ignored conditions about not working (Belich, 2001: p.535). Despite Pacific Peoples comprising a minority of overstayers, they were an easily identifiable target and thus made up the majority of arrests (Belich, 2001: p.535).

Further unsettling New Zealand's apparent racial harmony was the rise of Maori protest movements, themselves a part of a widespread cultural renaissance. Maori public figures and academics like Ranginui Walker, Syd and Hana Jackson and Tipene O'Regan began to speak out about the injustices surrounding Maori in a forceful manner not previously seen (King, 2003: p.481). Nga Tamatoa, a Maori protest group grew out of Auckland University in 1970. Whina Cooper led a land march to parliament buildings in 1975 and in that same year, the Waitangi Tribunal was established to investigate Treaty of Waitangi breaches. In 1977, the Bastion Point land occupation began and did not end for over a year when 800 members of the police and the army forcibly removed the protesters.

The relationship with the maturing Maori protest movement and predominantly Maori street gangs was both fluid and fraught. On one hand, many educated Maori saw the gangs as a sharp and tangible consequence brought about by the rigors and racism of colonisation, but on the other hand publicity around highlighting their extremely negative anti-social stance brought disrepute to Maori as they were, undoubtedly, seen by many Pakeha as indicative of a primitive culture.

Despite the reservations of some kaumatua, within this environment of cultural rebellion and resurgence, the gangs' anti-social outlook was undoubtedly bolstered in similar ways as the protest and hippie movements bolstered outlaw clubs in the late 1960s, as described in Chapter Three.

Within this environment of unease, the gangs' anti-social outlook was undoubtedly bolstered, in similar ways as the protest and hippie movements bolstered outlaw clubs in the late 1960s, as described in Chapter Four. The Polynesian gangs, however, were, with few isolated exceptions, distinctly apolitical.⁴¹ Although, as will become clear, the threat such groups may become politicised, anti-social forces became a concern toward the end of the decade. During most of the 1970s, however, such gangs remained an issue of law and order that was dealt with when the need arose.

This law and order approach, however, was becoming increasingly common as conflicts escalated between the major street gangs, primarily the various chapters of the Black Power and Mongrel Mob, which were, probably due to their use of back patches, often misreported in the media as 'bikie gangs' (for example, *NZ Herald*, 10.2.1976; *Evening Post*, 30.3.1976; *Sunday News*, 3.9.1978). However, along with the Haora killing of 1975, it was a conflict between police and the Mongrel Mob that sparked a specific political response. In January 1976, in the small King Country town of Taumarunui, Daniel Houpapa was shot dead when he brandished a shotgun at police as he and fellow Mob members attempted to storm a police station to free two of their members who had been arrested (*NZ Herald* 5.1.1976).

Having berated the previous Labour government for its lack of action to address the gangs, specifically their promise to confiscate vehicles, the new government moved quickly. In 1976, the National government introduced and

⁴¹ For example, some gang members had involvement with a fledgling Black Panther political group in the 1970s, and certain street gang members were evident in the 1981 South African rugby tour protests.

passed an amendment to the Criminal Justice Act, which empowered the courts to confiscate an offender's vehicle if it had been used in the commission of a crime. Moreover, in an attempt to stymie activities taking place within gang headquarters, the Police Offences Act was amended so that it became an offence when three or more persons with a recent history of criminal activity behaved in a way on any private premises that on reasonable grounds could give rise to fear that violence or disorder could take place. Further amendments to the Police Offences Act increased police powers to stop and search people suspected of carrying weapons and made it illegal to print or distribute documents that depicted the method or manufacture of explosive devices or unlawful weapons. And so began what would become a long trend of ever increasing suppressive legal measures targeting gangs.

Although clearly intended to target gang gatherings and violence, the new laws did not discern between gang and non-gang citizens, and some of the measures drew the ire of critics who believed they were too vague, that the state was creeping into the privacy of people's homes and that what the police may consider weapons could, in fact, be legitimate tools of work. Such detractors, including the New Zealand Law Society and a liberal orientated National party ginger group called Pol-Link, had little time to influence the legislation, as the public submission process was open for just two weeks. Muldoon brushed away any concerns, saying that if there were any problems with the laws the "courts can make their displeasure known" (*NZ Herald* 26.3.1976). It was a reflection of, what some contemporaries considered to be, Muldoon's dictatorial style.

While Muldoon pursued legislative measures and continued with his rhetoric of ‘cracking down’ on the gangs, in the face of numerous incidents of violence, this approach was as much to appease a nervous public, and particularly the conservative membership base of the National party, as it was to control gangs. Indeed, his most significant measures were social initiatives targeting such groups, particularly in relation to the Black Power. Unpublished letters show that Muldoon and Black Power member Denis O’Reilly were building a close relationship and there is little doubt that O’Reilly influenced the Prime Minister’s views on gangs. The conservative but enigmatic Prime Minister was becoming entwined with the liberal activists and thinkers of the day. Muldoon had a number of meetings with O’Reilly, Rei Harris and others from Black Power. This in itself is quite remarkable – that a much maligned group could solicit such an audience. It is perhaps even more remarkable because Muldoon, who had few sympathies with the emerging Maori protest movement and historian Keith Sinclair argues was at his most “insensitive” regarding issues of race relations (Sinclair, 1991: p.317), became the vanguard for social action targeting predominantly Maori gangs.

In early November 1976, Muldoon met 20 or 30 Black Power members in the Royal Tiger Tavern in Wellington. Being a short man, it is possible that the hotel’s management did not know the Prime Minister was present because members of the gang obscured him (Gustafson, 2000: p.206). But if management did know, it was not enough to convince them that such a large contingent of gang members was not going to destroy their hotel, and so they

stopped serving alcohol and called the police. On arriving, the police, not surprisingly, refused to believe the Prime Minister was there until he emerged from the pack and asked them what they wanted. Despite the fact the group was causing no trouble, Muldoon and the Black Power members moved on from the tavern and adjourned to a gang address to finish their discussion and drinks. One member of the gang began flicking beer at Muldoon. The Prime Minister ignored this taunt until he came to the end of his whisky, at which point he threw the dregs at his young assailant. The Black Power members were impressed. Not only did the Prime Minister enjoy a drink, but he was also prepared to stand up for himself, two attributes the gang admired (Denis O'Reilly pers. comm.).

Following this unusual meeting, Muldoon found accommodation for the gang to use as their headquarters and therefore "obviate the necessity for members congregating in hotel bars with consequent possible disorder" (*NZPD*, vol.407 1976: p.3763). It is important to note that the motivation was clearly not to destroy the gangs, but to mitigate their anti-social elements.

Furthermore, in February 1977, the Minister of Recreation and Sport, at Muldoon's request, approved a salary for an individual worker doing "innovative social work" with a gang of Maori youths (Henley, 1980: p.1). That worker was Denis O'Reilly. O'Reilly became the government's first funded detached youth worker – although at least two had existed independent of government previous to that. J. R. Grimes had been employed by the Auckland City Mission (later called Anglican-Methodist Social Services) to

work with young street gangs in Auckland between 1970 and 1974 and Cos Jeffery was employed by Presbyterian Social Support Services to work with the Epitaph Riders in Christchurch in 1974⁴² (Donnell, 1976). Though funded by the government, O'Reilly reported to a trust established by a church because the scheme's aims were thought to be better achieved if the social worker was not seen to be connected to the state, and thus "undertaken by non-governmental agencies and local authorities" (Department of Internal Affairs, 1983: p.10).

Detached youth work was seen as a somewhat radical form of social work that had found favour in the U.S. in dealing with urban social problems – often gangs. Such workers attempted to break down 'them' and 'us' barriers by working closely with gangs at a street level. Detached youth workers commonly formed close bonds with gangs, advocated on their behalves, and offered support and direction to members in what has been called "curbside counselling" (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993: p.164). Needless to say, detached youth work was a product of liberal influences stemming from the 1960s and 70s. The philosophical framework within which the social workers tended to exist was one where gangs were not seen as wholly negative, and indeed that the group could positively assist the lives of its members (Spergel, 1995: p.174).

By mid-1977, the Ministry of Recreation and Sport had funded three detached youth workers and by the early 1980s the schemes had expanded rapidly.

⁴² Jeffery was actually employed to work with both the Devil's Henchmen and the Epitaph Riders but found it impossible to work with two warring clubs at the same time (Jeffery, 1985: p.39).

National's Minister of Internal Affairs, Alan Highet, reflected the government's enthusiasm about detached youth work:

The Detached Youth Worker approach appears to have a number of significant advantages over more conventional forms of social work. It affords the youth worker, freed from normal social work agency constraints, a degree of freedom and flexibility which if used effectively, can enable the worker to get alongside certain groups of young people who are for the most part unresponsive to the approaches of social workers attached to government agencies (Department of Internal Affairs, 1983: p.10)

One important task of the detached youth worker was to engage the gangs in temporary employment programmes that the government was initiating to absorb the increasing number of unemployed. Denis O'Reilly and Black Power had already established a work cooperative – through Walton House and the Te Kaha Trust – in Wellington, and it was these types of initiatives that Muldoon saw as a way to turn gangs into positive organisations. Muldoon argued that: "It's far more constructive if these young people can do this kind of work, earn some money, and gradually build their organisation into a club, rather than a gang" (*NZPD*, vol.407, 1976: p.3764). It was also a remarkable turnaround from the man who, earlier in the decade, had called for the banishment of young 'Maori louts' to the countryside (Kelsey & Young, 1982: p.102).

Although the Wellington Black Power work trust, established by O'Reilly, received some praise (*Dominion*, 18.8.1978; *Evening Post* 25.10.1978), and Muldoon's social initiatives appeased those who saw gangs as a consequence of social conditions, the Prime Minister was harangued by conservative elements who saw the approach as pandering to anti-social groups. Throughout the latter half of the 1970s, the *Truth* tabloid newspaper ran a campaign calling for a hard line police approach to counter what had become known as the 'gang problem' with editorial headlines such as; "Stamp on Bikies" (20.1.1976), "Misguided Charity for a Gang of Bludgers" (29.6.1976), "Gangs Must be Smashed" (12.12.1978), "Vicious 'em Now" (25.1.1979), "Get the Kid Gloves Off" (30.1.1979), "Yes, Police are Too Soft" (6.2.1979), and "Gang menace: Stop These Creatures" (13.2.1979), the newspaper also often published pages of letters from outraged New Zealanders supporting calls for tougher action.

But Muldoon, pugnacious as ever, was steadfast in the face of criticism, saying his government had made it easier for police to control gangs through changes to legislation but that prison was not the answer to the problem. He said, "these men will come out of prison again and be little different from what they were when they went in" and that detached social workers and work programmes are "turning the gang psychology to constructive effort" and therefore the government "will not be diverted from its two pronged policy" (*Dominion*, 26.1.1979). But of this two pronged policy, it was the government's social initiatives that were to be more greatly bolstered following an incident in the small Northland town of Moerewa. It was an incident of such violence that

it led to a widespread belief that significant social action was urgently required.

The Moerewa Incident: The Second Pivot Point

As noted, significant gang conflicts had increased throughout the 1970s – and largely dominated by patched street gangs – as they fought to mark out their territory, leading one Auckland judge, Justice Mills, to remark that, “the gravity of many of the offences by members of gangs and what had become known as ‘gang warfare’ was a great concern to everyone” (*NZ Herald* 7.9.1978). This ‘great concern’ reached its zenith in August 1979 in the small North Island town of Moerewa, where an incident of such severity occurred that it can be seen to mark the second pivot point in New Zealand gang history. This incident greatly influenced the response to gangs for most of the 1980s by giving tremendous impetus to the social initiatives being undertaken at the bequest of Prime Minister Muldoon.

The incident that occurred in Moerewa perhaps had its genesis in Auckland in October 1978 when an estimated 350 members from the country’s Black Power chapters converged on Otara to hold a convention. The local Stormtroopers considered Otara to be part of their turf, and local and outside chapters of the gang gathered peacefully outside the weekend-long meeting to show their displeasure at the Black Power’s intrusion into their territory (*Auckland Star* 21.10.1978). The gangs engaged in several conflicts in early 1979, but it was an assault by a Northland Black Power member on an

Auckland Stormtrooper, in either late July or very early August 1979, that sparked the drive for a showdown (Kelsey & Young, 1982: p.27).

Regarding battles such as these between gangs, one Black Power leader, Mane Adams, told me

Basically it was tit for tat. If you went and did a tit, you were waiting for the tat and if the tat didn't come back, well you know you won that battle sort of thing. It worked like that, sort of thing, eh, tit tat, tit tat. But tit tat leads to very serious consequences, if you don't get on top of it (2003 pers. comm.).

On 3 August 1979, Stormtroopers from Auckland travelled north and joined members from Moerewa to find the local Black Power members in order to seek revenge. Initially unsuccessful in their search, many of the Auckland members returned home, leaving 40 or 50 primarily local Stormtroopers to drive to the Okaihau Hotel in further search of Black Power. Failing again to find the enemy, they set about drinking and then, in what the bar's publican described as an abrupt 60-second outburst of destruction, the members uprooted pool tables and threw bottles through windows and a stool at the jukebox (*NZ Herald* 6.8.1979). Leaving the hotel and travelling through Ohaewai on their return to Moerewa, the gang was confronted by two members of the police, who were forced to retreat by the advancing gang. A warning shot fired by one of the officers was not enough to save the police car from extensive damage as the gang set about attacking it. The Stormtroopers

then went on to the Moerewa Hotel where more police were called. Angered by their fruitless search for Black Power, the gang's collective and alcohol fuelled frustration turned toward the only enemy they could find – the police. Kelsey and Young (1982: pp.27 & 56-57) suggest that the animosity toward the police was bred from aggressive police tactics by Team Policing Units in South Auckland in late 1978 and early 1979 and, without elaborating, they reported a “strong suggestion” that the gang members themselves had called the authorities, presumably in an effort to provoke a confrontation. Similarly, O'Hara (1986: p.133) says that one of the gang encouraged a younger member to break a shop window, “so that the cops'll come and then we'll do them!” Be this as it may, the publican is almost certain to have made a frantic call to authorities, and the two officers under siege at Ohaewai would also have raised the alarm with their colleagues.

Police were called in from throughout the region, but some were diverted to an unconnected armed robbery in Whangarei (*NZ Herald* 6.8.1979). Those who could respond immediately were heavily outnumbered, and attempts to persuade the gang to disperse were fruitless. Indeed, the efforts by the police to confront the gang were described by one gang member as “suicidal” (O'Hara, 1986: p.136). The police were attacked with an assortment of makeshift missiles and weapons (*NZ Herald* 6.8.1979). Offering insight into the loyalty and adherence to the gang leaders' commands, one of the Stormtroopers said later, “when we are told to hit, we hit” (*NZ Herald*, 20.11.1979).

In the melee, the police officers became separated and were beaten. One described being held against a fence and kicked and punched by as many six gang members, but others fared even worse. A police van was set alight and several Stormtroopers attempted to throw Senior Sergeant Charles O'Hara, who was already injured, into the fire yelling, "Burn the bastard". As the Senior Sergeant cried out, "Mercy, mercy" (*NZ Herald*, 6.9.1979), he was rescued by battered colleagues and fire fighters (Kelsey & Young, 1982: p.28). During another offensive surge, the gang members began chanting, "Kill, kill", and Sergeant Walter Douglas retrieved a .38 revolver from his glove box and fired several warning shots before shooting a gang member in the thigh (*NZ Herald*, 31.8.1979). Despite this, in different pockets of the hotel car park the battle continued, and one gang member raided a fire truck and handed out the fire axes to use as weapons (*NZ Herald* 31.8.1979). Constable Ralph Davis was beaten to the ground and kicked unconscious. Constable Arthur Turton went to his rescue and found him choking on his own blood, but in his first attempt at rescue he was driven off by Stormtroopers with whom he pleaded: "I yelled at them that they had killed a cop and to let me help him" (*NZ Herald*, 29.8.1979). Despite being hit with a steel rod, he and another police officer managed to drag the severely injured constable to safety. Davis did not regain consciousness for 48 hours and suffered depressed and linear fractures of the skull, a fractured cheekbone and the loss of eight teeth. Without medical treatment, his injuries were life threatening.

Sergeant Walter Douglas attempted to reason with the gang's leader to call a halt to the attack, but it is believed, by one witness at least, that a series of

shotgun blasts from a local resident, alarmed by the lawlessness, signalled an end to the violence (O'Hara, 1986: p.135). Supported by an influx of reinforcements, police were able to arrest 28 members of the gang. Following two trials, 25 members were convicted on various charges and received jail terms of between four months and eight years, but not before the arrested men were taken to the Whangarei police station cells, where one member of the police told me they were made to walk a "gauntlet" of officers and given a beating as they went through. The police were incensed by the attack on them and were unprepared to let the courts monopolise the gang members' punishment. Interestingly, unlike much of the police activity complained about by gang members, it is likely that this gauntlet beating would have been seen by most as a 'fair cop'. In numerous dealings with gang members – and in listening to scores of different stories – it has become quite clear that as a general observation, if gang members feel they have overstepped the mark then they are quite prepared for the consequences; a point on which I will elaborate later in this thesis.

Kelsey and Young (1982) argue that the media reporting around the Moerewa riot and the subsequent political response was one of 'moral panic'. Although they make the case for moral panic strongly, I do not agree that the political response was as confined to 'criminalising' gangs, as much of their primary thesis contends. Certainly, two laws were introduced, which I will outline shortly, and police around the country were thereafter issued with riot

equipment⁴³ but, as will become clear, following Moerewa there was a significant amount of commentary suggesting the gangs were not just a problem of law and order and that social policies targeting the causes of gang violence were desirable; indeed necessary. In fact, the incident at Moerewa, I argue, was a pivot point that sparked a concerted drive of socially orientated policy to combat the problems surrounding gangs. This outcome, however, although starting immediately, did not become fully clear until the 1980s – after Kelsey and Young had reached their conclusions.

In response to the incident at Moerewa, parliament adjourned for an urgent debate on the matter. Certainly concerns surrounding law and order and protecting police officers were evident in the debate. In fact, there was a good deal of breast beating on both sides of the house, and one National MP, Ben Couch, mused about the possible return of corporal and capital punishment (*NZPD*, vol.474, 1979: p.2080). Equally, however, both National and Labour MPs acknowledged that long-term solutions were not to be found in law and order legislation or suppressive police tactics.

The leader of the Labour Opposition, Bill Rowling, said that he agreed with an editorial from *The Press* newspaper that a “sudden whiplash reaction of bashing back is not going to solve the problem” (*NZPD*, vol.424, 1979: p.2072). Furthermore, he said, “Parliament must examine closely the social, economic, and community climate that breeds and fosters the kind of

⁴³ Interestingly, one of those pieces of equipment was the long PR24 batons, which were being informally demonstrated in New Zealand at the time of the Moerewa riot by John Ball, a crime novelist and reservist member of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, while he was researching a book (O’Hara, 1986: p.136).

alienation and brutal desperation – one cannot describe it any other way – that we saw last weekend. I stress that I am not talking about apportioning blame. I suppose that, in some ways, we can all take a share of that” (*NZPD*, vol.424, 1979: p.2073). He saluted work cooperatives being undertaken by some gangs and, like many other MPs, identified the problem of burgeoning unemployment: “They must have work. We will never get decent citizens from an element of young people who feel that they have no stake in the country” (*NZPD*, vol.424, 1979: p.2073).

The Minister of Justice, the young and idealistic Jim McLay, agreed saying, the “problem will not be solved by throwing a law at it” and that the issue required a community approach (*NZPD*, vol.424, 1979: p.2078). Furthermore, he highlighted the initiatives being supported by the Prime Minister, who was overseas at the time:

“I believe that the type of work being done by the detached youth workers represents a positive long-term contribution to solving the gang problem. The notion of the work co-operative – something that I might tell the house is now attracting international attention – is working in a viable way to solve the problems of alienation, lack of job opportunities...and above all, the feeling that society offers nothing and gives nothing to these young people” (*NZPD*, vol.424, 1979: p.2078) .

In the wake of Moerewa, parliament passed two pieces of legislation toward the end of 1979: the Police Offences Amendment Act, which gave police the

power to stop and search any vehicle should they have reasonable grounds to suspect it is carrying weapons, and the Sale of Liquor Amendment Act, which gave publicans the right to ban gang patches from drinking establishments. However, as will become clear in the following chapter, the government's expansion of the detached youth worker schemes, and work programmes were its most significant undertakings.

Calls for the gang problem to not just be seen as one of law and order but one that required social initiatives, were becoming more common even before the incident at Moerewa. In January 1979, the research officer of the New Zealand Police Association, Graham Butterworth, formerly a lecturer specialising in Maori history, opined that Maori gang warfare was akin to the "hapu rivalries" of the 1860s. Looking ahead, he said, "Police can no more solve the social and economic problems of the 1980s than the military could solve the problems of the 1860s" (Butterworth, 1979: pp.2-3). Noticing his long and considered piece in the Police Association newsletter, the *New Zealand Herald* (20.1.1979) interviewed Butterworth and also Maori academic, Dr. Patrick Hohepa. Both men agreed that repressive tactics from the police would only make the situation worse, although the article's front-page headline was particularly misleading: "Police Claim Gangs Are Now Beyond Their Control".

As a reaction to the headline, rather than the content of his argument, Deputy Police Commissioner, Ken Thompson responded by saying that Butterworth's ideas were not the "official police view" (*NZ Herald* 24.1.1979). The official

police view was, however, expounded by the Commissioner of Police Bob Walton in the annual report of the New Zealand Police in 1979, which was tabled before parliament several days after the Moerewa incident. In it, he supported the ideas of Butterworth, saying, “as advocated by some, the gang problem cannot be eliminated by force. Whatever short-term gains that may accrue, the long-term results would be greater disorder...It must never be overlooked that any group can assemble providing it acts within the law” (AJHR, G.6, 1979: p.4). His sentiments were quoted in the major newspapers (for example, *Evening Post*, 10.8.1979; *NZ Herald* 11.8.1979; *The Press*, 11.8.1979), and this gave further credibility to the idea that the gang problem required social redress. The liberal agenda had taken ascendancy even within important elements of the police, although just how prevalent they were among the rank and file must surely be questioned in a largely conservative institution.

Furthermore, concerns were surfacing that the radical political environment could create a potentially volatile situation. Commissioner Walton further argued that, “Harassment [by the police] could also convert a gang problem into a racial one and there are some who would exploit the situation to their own ends” (AJHR, G.6, 1979: p.4). Walton was clearly influenced by concerns that Maori gangs could turn – or be turned – into aggressive political bodies. It was a similar concern held by some civic leaders in the U.S. in the late 1960s (Jacobs, 1977: p.139). The idea that gangs could become politicised in New Zealand appears to have been first raised in 1971 by Dr. Ranginui Walker (1971: p.43), who cautioned that Polynesian gangs could turn militant and

racist if hijacked by radical political groups using Black Panther and Marxist literature to stir them into action. Such concerns were reignited in the late 1970s. In 1978, a “senior Auckland policeman” told the *New Zealand Herald* (30.9.1978) that gangs would emerge as ‘urban guerrillas’, and in January 1979, Doug Sinclair, the leader of Te Matakite O Aotearoa, a Maori land group, said he was going to turn gangs into “forces for the eventual independence of New Zealand” (*Daily News* 23.1.1979).

Such claims of gang politicisation proved to be fanciful, but the sober 1979 annual report of the Race Relations Conciliator, Harry Dansey, said, “Maori gang violence...[is] a catalyst for deteriorating Maori/pakeha [sic] relations”, and as such his office was working on eliminating gang violence (*AJHR*, E.17, 1979: p.20). Almost certainly, the links between gangs and racial tensions added to the environment of political concern, and therefore they gave urgency to the agenda of social initiatives. At a time of increasing Maori activism, the concern was that gangs might not just attack the police in an unorganised orgy of violence as they had in Moerewa, but start systematically doing so as an attack on the state. The thinking seems to have been, that if police hard line tactics were used exclusively, it may hasten the advance of this perceived threat.

In fact, immediately following Moerewa, proactive steps were undertaken by the government to counter gang violence before it became an issue for the police. The Minister of Maori Affairs, Ben Couch, arranged for the leaders of Black Power, the Mongrel Mob, the Head Hunters, and the Stormtroopers to

come to the Beehive for a meeting to work out a truce. This meeting had the appearance of success as the Black Power and the Stormtroopers agreed to stop warring (*NZ Herald*, 17.8.1979). The same meeting organised an arms amnesty that rounded up a number of weapons, including firearms, from the gangs (*Auckland Star*, 17.8.1979; *NZ Herald*, 21.8.1979). Couch said that he was not soft on gangs and that law should always be upheld and he was undertaking the approach personally because, “Gangs see the police as representing the community coming at them” and without such efforts the country faced the risk of “race riots” (*NZ Herald*, 1.9.1979). Even the *Truth* (21.8.1979) newspaper momentarily halted its campaign calling for strong police action and applauded his efforts.

While many police, and much of the wider population, remained sceptical of an approach that they considered showed gangs too much respect, the policy drive toward social initiatives was widely supported by those in power. Interestingly, the detractors had a point. Following their violent actions, the gangs were rewarded with a top-level meeting and more respect from figures in authority than most of their members had ever experienced. Arguably, this aided gang cohesion as the mana of the groups involved increased. Moreover, the truce agreements made in the Beehive all proved to be hollow. However, the fact that these attempts were made at all demonstrates the degree to which the government sought to remove gangs from a purely law and order context.

The perceived efficacy of this social policy drive was bolstered further by the findings of the Select Committee of Violence (1979). Initially proposed as a general investigation of violence in New Zealand, the select committee's research was almost complete when the incident at Moerewa occurred and so the government extended its deadline to allow a specific examination of the gang issue. Its final report found that "the gang organisation can provide a constructive and productive means of drawing people, mostly young, whose loss of identity through migration to urban areas, absence of family or tribal influence, socio-economic disadvantage, unemployment or resort to alcohol or drugs cause them to fail to fit into accepted social environments" (Select Committee of Inquiry into Violent Offending, 1979: p.35). However, the report went on to say that violent confrontations were of concern to the public, and although it said there was no need for increased police powers, it added that efforts should be made to dissolve gangs and reintegrate members back into the community. The report largely confirmed the prevalent political feeling that gangs were a problem requiring social solutions, but, as will become clear, it was another more important report, commissioned in 1981, that led to the development of a concerted social policy agenda targeting gangs.

Conclusion

In the 1970s, New Zealand first witnessed significant gang warfare as gangs battled over territory, real or perceived slights, and attacks made against them by rivals. The occasional 'big knuckles' discussed by Levett (1959: p.2) in the late 1950s had transformed into large scale conflicts that increasingly involved weapons, including firearms. Although retaliation from opposition gangs was

the primary threat stemming from warfare, acute police attention and the increased chance of being arrested and jailed were also pressures brought to bear on warring gang members. These factors often served to strengthen the gangs. Certainly, weaker members left during times of serious dispute, but those who remained appear to have forged closer bonds and greater group commitment. Ironically, this may have been aided by member imprisonment as criminal codes were learned and adopted inside jails. These criminal codes became infused within gang culture and the gangs thus became more criminally savvy. Combined with the introduction of prospecting and therefore a more exclusive form of membership, the patched groups in the 1970s were clearly 'gangs' as defined by this thesis. Despite certain indications, on-the-whole, however, the scene was not involved in significant profit driven criminal enterprise. Indeed, the wars of the 1970s were remarkable for their lack of utility, and were fought for reasons imbedded in gang culture and largely foreign to outsiders.

As the decade progressed, Polynesian street gangs began to overwhelmingly dominate the gang scene, and this occurred at a time of increasing ethnic tensions, and led to concerns that such gangs may become, or be manipulated by, radical political bodies. These large street gangs also came about during a period of increasing economic troubles, and unemployment meant that youths were maintaining gang membership for longer as they were unable to shift easily into work.

Within this cauldron of increasing ethnic and economic tensions, the Moerewa riot happened. What occurred in the small Northland town was the most serious incident of gang violence that the country had experienced. Nevertheless, similar violence was becoming increasingly common. Perhaps what most distinguished Moerewa from other conflicts were the injuries to police and fire fighters. Although there was public concern when the gangs were maiming and killing each other, when the violence was directed at police and emergency services personnel the levels of community anxiety increased, and in the wake of racial concerns, the gang threat appeared more immediate and urgent.

The riot at Moerewa was the second pivot point in the history of gangs in New Zealand. In the aftermath of Moerewa, issues around gangs gained a focus – these groups were a significant social problem that appeared to have permanency and consequently needed to be dealt with in new ways. Tough policing had proven ineffective and it was, perhaps, desperation as much as anything that allowed social policies to be given primacy in the 1980s. As will become clear, however, the urgency of social action was arguably a decade too late. The horse, as they say, had bolted.

Chapter Seven.

The Rise and Fall of the Social Agenda: 1980-1990

Introduction

During the 1980s, New Zealand's first and only concerted policy drive targeting gangs as social phenomena occurred. This social policy agenda sought to put gangs to work in an effort to alleviate the growing problem of gang violence by ensuring gang members were not further alienated from mainstream society by being locked out of the labour market, which by that time had become anaemic. Up until August 1986, the social policy agenda was heralded as a success, but following this, in the midst of a dramatically changing political and economic environment, it became controversial and its end was swift.

This chapter will look at the formation of the Group Employment Liaison Service, the primary vehicle of the government's social policy agenda, and plot the positive reviews of the work it coordinated. It will then examine the radical changes occurring in New Zealand's economic and political environments, and the importance of these to the changing attitudes toward gangs. Three major issues and events will then be explored, which on their own may have been of little consequence but, because they collectively

occurred in the space of a few months, created a 'perfect storm' of controversy that led to the demise the social policy agenda.

A Social Experiment – The Group Employment Liaison Service (GELS)

As will be recalled, following the Moerewa riot in 1979, a consensus formed that gangs were a social problem requiring specific social redress, and a 'Committee on Gangs', established by Muldoon's Cabinet in early 1981, further confirmed this view. As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Minister of Internal Affairs, National MP Ken Comber chaired the committee, which was made up of high-ranking public servants, including the Deputy Commissioner of the New Zealand Police. The *Report of the Committee on Gangs* became commonly referred to as the Comber Report.

The committee's terms of reference were to outline the existing gang situation, examine the efficacy and relevance of policies targeting gangs, explore the social conditions that give rise to gangs, and provide a report to the Prime Minister. It was a significant undertaking, given that the committee had just one month to complete its work (Committee on Gangs, 1981: p.i). It was a further example of a hurried inquiry into the matter of gangs, although this time there was no obvious reason for the haste. In spite of the tight timeframe, the committee interviewed and received submissions from numerous people "directly involved with the gang situation" including the police, detached youth workers and a small number of gang members (Committee on Gangs, 1981: p.i). A number of different issues were explored,

including: education, employment, law enforcement and penal policy, community and recreation issues as well as media coverage of gangs.

The committee said that gangs “will probably always exist since they arise from a particular set of social and economic conditions” and that it did not object to gangs but only gang violence (Committee on Gangs, 1981: p.6). Among the social and economic conditions identified by the committee were housing problems, unemployment, cultural change, education failure and family breakdown (Committee on Gangs, 1981: pp.1, 10 & 12). These findings, therefore, are similar to those in the gang report of the Investigating Committee of 1970, discussed in Chapter Five, and numerous international researchers discussed in chapters One and Two.

One lasting contribution made by the Comber Report was the tripartite categorisation of gangs into ‘Bikie’, ‘Ethnic’ and ‘Other European’ gangs (Committee on Gangs, 1981: pp.4-5). Based on police statistics, the report said there were about 630 members in 20 bikie gangs in New Zealand, the largest of which were the Devil’s Henchmen and Highway 61. Ethnic gangs were much larger, numbering 1,650 members in 57 gangs, with the largest being Black Power and the Mongrel Mob. Total gang numbers were estimated at 2,300. The remaining grouping, ‘Other European’, was acknowledged by the committee as being new and few gangs of this type were evident, but, as will become clear, such gangs, primarily skinhead groups, grew in number and significance in the 1990s.

Although they are still used, there are a number of problems with these categories. By 'ethnic' gangs, the committee meant 'ethnic minority' gangs, but no 'ethnic' street gangs specifically excluded Pakeha members and most had a small percentage of them. Also, while 'bikie' gangs are predominantly Pakeha, and many, like most of the Biker Federation clubs, had or continue to have racist tendencies, certain groups, like the Hell's Angels, are open to all ethnicities, and others, like the Tribesmen and Highway 61, are largely made of Maori and Pacific members. Furthermore, 'other European' gangs sometimes have ethnic minority (most often Maori) membership, even in self-proclaimed white supremacist groups, like the Fourth Reich. It is for these reasons that I have not utilised the Comber categorisations in this thesis, preferring encompassing definitions and specific categories including: outlaw motorcycle clubs, patched street gangs, skinhead gangs etc.

Although the committee recognised the need to uphold law and order, it also pointed out that the much trumpeted measure enacted to counter the gang problem, the confiscation of gang vehicles ('take the bikes off the bikies') first proposed by Norman Kirk and discussed in the last chapter, had been used no more than seven times since 1977 (Committee on Gangs, 1981: p.40). In short, the populist law was an unmitigated failure that had little or no impact on the gang scene.

Indeed, the most significant outcome of the Comber Report was the acknowledgement of gangs as a social problem requiring social redress – and, more particularly, a focus on the need for a coordinated approach to

deliver existing social programmes. In doing so, the Comber Report affirmed political thinking of the time that law enforcement measures should be superseded by a social agenda targeting the problem of gangs.

The Comber Report had a significant impact on government agencies. The report, as well a faltering economy, were said to have been “major influences” on the Department of Internal Affairs in the early 1980s, “particularly in the area of alternative employment” (Church, 1990: p.45). Similarly, the Comber Report spurred the Department of Education to launch the Community Education Initiative Scheme (CEIS). The CEIS provided funding for at “risk youth” (The Alternative Employment Programme Evaluation Working Party, 1991: p.59) and aimed to reduce gang recruitment by “responding positively to the needs of underachieving students who had difficulty moving from school to employment” (Bellamy, 2009).

The major policy outcome of the Comber Report, however, was the establishment of the Group Employment Liaison Scheme (later, Service), known as GELS, in early 1982. Although set up primarily to target them, political expediency was presumably behind the fact that the terms of reference for GELS, as outlined by the Cabinet Committee on State Services (SS(81)140), did not specifically mention gangs. In fact, the organisation did target other groups, like those in small rural towns affected by job losses and urban ‘street kids’. In other words, GELS also targeted groups who “often possess similar characteristics of gangs but may not have the same public profile (ie patches)” (Plunkett, Hynes, & Crossan, 1986: p.14).

As an extension of the work undertaken by the detached youth worker program that, it will be recalled, the government began in the mid-1970s, the role of GELS was to engage with gangs to encourage members to seek either training or employment to transform gangs into positive entities. The primary driver for getting the gangs into employment was the work schemes that were introduced by Prime Minister Rob Muldoon's interventionist National government (1975-1984) to combat rising unemployment. Government funding was available to start small businesses with the aim of making them self sufficient, but mostly the schemes were community-based work initiatives funded by the state.

Government funded community work had begun in the mid-1970s. As previously discussed, unemployment was on the rise, but it was seen as a temporary aberration and full employment was a key government priority. However, the economy began to seriously falter as the 1970s progressed, unemployment grew and the various work schemes expanded under the title of the Project Employment Programme (PEP). These schemes usually involved work of manual labour using basic tools. By 1987, a survey of the long-term unemployed reported that of all the people who had accessed any government work schemes, over 50 percent had used PEP (Gill, 1989)

PEP schemes did not just benefit the unemployed; they also benefited the wider community by creating an "auxiliary workforce" that served local community needs (Spoonley, 1993: p.15), a point that will become important

in later discussions. These schemes enabled community organisations and city councils to have work undertaken at the government's expense. Such work included the maintenance of parks, gardens and cemeteries, the creation or renovation of existing facilities like walkways and trails, beautification work such as clearing streams or planting native trees, and upgrading marae (Department of Labour, c1983).

In 1986, Denis O'Reilly completed a remarkable transition from Black Power member (a membership he maintained advertised advisedly), to detached youth worker, to GELS field officer, to GELS Chief Executive. He described the PEP schemes to me thus:

Classically 'make work', eh. An invention of work. An example would be that hill of unsightly gorse on the periphery of the town belt, or something. Or MOTAT [Museum of Transport and Technology], laying railway line – all that stuff done at MOTAT was done on PEP. The whole development of MOTAT. And there will be lots of examples around the country – and some marvellous stuff – just like was done in the depression, you know (Denis O'Reilly 2003 pers. comm.).

Despite some wider community benefit coming from them, the work schemes were not linked to the country's economic production and thus created no wealth. The reasoning behind the schemes was that keeping people in employment would stop the growth of social ills – unemployment would create idleness, which would in turn create social problems like gang violence and,

among other things, impair people's ability to readjust to permanent work when that became available.

GELS was initially staffed by two head office workers based in Wellington, and ten field workers around New Zealand, but positive reviews led to a significant staffing increase in 1983 to 25 fieldworkers and three head office positions (Plunkett et al., 1986: p.9). In order to gain access to the gangs, many of the field workers were current or former gang members. Interestingly, hiring gang members to work for GELS does not appear to have been controversial, but the gang members themselves faced scepticism from their peers. One GELS worker and Nomad gang member, Dave 'Skull' Williams, initially thought it was somebody's idea of a "bad joke" when he was approached to work for GELS. But after realising it was a bona fide offer, he had to overcome his gang's scepticism. Williams told me in 2003:

My own people have their own views and it's a major compromise on its own going in on a salary that is provided yet that same salary provides the police with their salary. Everybody comes from the same salary. At the end of the day, there is a general belief that if you come out of that chequebook you are somebody who has sold out.

In the end, the Nomads put it to a vote and allowed Williams to work for GELS, seeing benefit in having a member close to work scheme funding. Other gangs that had members working for GELS included Black Power, the Mongrel Mob, Highway 61, and the Road Knights (Denis O'Reilly 2006, pers.

comm.). Given that the idea of GELS was to reconnect alienated gang members with mainstream society, these appointments provided a direct link.

Williams told me:

The only way it [the gang problem] will ever be acknowledged, respected and understood and seriously addressed with some sort of common sense and logic is when scum like me – that's what they would call me – actually get to be in those positions.

It was acknowledged at its inception that GELS was an independent body, despite being responsible to, and funded by, the Department of Labour. GELS' first Chief Executive, Tony Johns, made it clear from the outset that he saw the organisation having a role in policy development (*Auckland Star* 11-8-1982). One such policy initiative was to mediate in inter-gang disputes. Given that GELS officers were largely following the lead that had been provided by detached youth workers, this role was not surprising. As outlined in the previous chapter, detached youth worker Cos Jeffery was crucial in ending the hostilities between the Devil's Henchmen and the Epitaph Riders in the mid-1970s. Moreover, because GELS often employed active or former gang members, and thus insider status, they generally had the respect of members of clashing gangs. O'Reilly says the role was vital:

The whole idea was to engage the people on the periphery, you know. That was the whole idea. So in order to fuckin' do that you better have some people who related with them and if they related with them when

some shit hit the fan then – you can't be starting up your work contacts or whatever if you're having to fight a war. It was apparent that we needed to resolve these things (Denis O'Reilly 2003 pers. comm.).

Dispute resolution was not an officially sanctioned part of GELS work and their success in this area was rarely publicised. However, I have spoken to members of warring gangs from the 1980s who found the mediation, in certain circumstances, to be of value in stopping conflicts and preventing the escalation of wars through retaliation.

A further, and ultimately controversial, policy development devised by GELS was the Contract Work Scheme. The Contract Work Scheme was created for two reasons: firstly, to target people who would be more easily integrated into the work force if they were able to work in a group (i.e. gangs) and, secondly, as a pragmatic solution to the ongoing problem of gang members not turning up to work when employed on PEP projects. The heavy drinking, partying and impulsive life of a gang member often meant that attendance at work was intermittent. This unpredictability caused significant administrative stress and in response, GELS devised the idea of contracting the work to registered trusts established by the gangs themselves.

For example, instead of hiring six gang members to work for 40 hours per week for a month, the overall labour cost of the project was calculated by Labour Department officials – it is important to note this was not a responsibility of GELS workers – and the gang's trust was paid at the

successful completion of the job. Some intermediate payments were often made, but only to the amount equating to the percentage of the job completed. Therefore, it was up to the gang members how they managed their time. In theory, at least, the idea was a good one, but as will become clear, it was open to abuse. But before this was realised, as the following examples will show, both inside and outside the gangs, many were lauding GELS and the work schemes as a resounding success.

In Auckland in 1982, seven King Cobras were laying curbing and erecting a fence for the Auckland City Council under the PEP scheme. Asked why the gang sought to work, one member of the gang, Teina Temeamea, said, "To keep us going. If you sit in the gutter for a long time you get lazy". The project's supervisor, Trevor Bennett, said that the group would be "work-ready" and able to take up permanent jobs when they were found. But the gang thought the chance of that happening was low and hoped that the council work would become permanent (*NZ Herald* 18.12.1982).

Similarly, in 1983, it was reported that four Mongrel Mob members "toiled to make a five-year-old dream of the Auckland Sheltered Workshop come true". The gang members had built a 600-metre concrete footpath for "the mentally retarded people who...had to walk through mud and puddles daily during winter" (*NZ Herald* 30.9.1983).

Prime Minister Muldoon said he was pleased with the outcomes of the work being done by GELS as he thought work trusts established by the gangs to

gain government funding had calmed them down and resulted in decreased gang conflict (*Evening Post* 11.5.1983). He was not alone. In May 1983, *The Evening Post* reported that gangs in Wellington had matured in “recent times”, were starting families, and settling down. The manager of one work scheme being undertaken by Black Power was effusive, he said the gang members were doing “beauty [excellent] work” and that the schemes had stabilised their lives. A member of the Nomad’s Wellington chapter said, “It’s nothing like it used to be, it’s a lot mellower these days. It’s not that we’re going soft or anything, there’s just more opportunity for work and there’s co-operation with the public” (*Evening Post* 11.5.1983).

The secretary for the Ministry of Maori Affairs, Kara Puketapu, also supported work and training schemes, suggesting their success flew in the face of those seeking harsher penalties for gangs in the wake of the Moerewa riot (*Dominion* 16.5.1983). Even the police were acknowledging the benefits of putting the gangs to work. The Commissioner of Police, Bob Walton, told MPs in 1983 that while gang violence remained a serious concern, particularly the use of firearms in disputes; work schemes were having some success in turning gang members away from anti-social behaviour. He said:

Several larger gangs, notably Black Power ‘chapters’ in Auckland and Wellington have become committed to work schemes and as a result some decrease in the level of offending by their members is apparent (*Dominion* 18.8.1983).

That same year, Black Power national president, Rei Harris, said that previously the police may have been correct in needing to crack down on his gang, but that had all turned around: "At that time our members were out of work and seemed to spend their time drinking and brawling. Today all that has changed". He said serious offences in his gang had dropped off over the past two years (*NZ Herald* 23.7.1983). Similar sentiments were echoed by the 'Gold Coast' (an area on the Kapiti coast just north of Wellington) chapter of the Mongrel Mob, which established a farming operation with the help of grants from the Department of Labour. After telling a reporter that the group had named each of their first litter of pigs after members of the local constabulary, the president said that since the gang had been farming, his members had attracted very little attention from the police. Employment, he said, meant members "kept out of trouble" (*Auckland Star* 23.10.1984).

The efforts made by gang leaders to encourage their members to work were not, it seems, lost on certain members of the judiciary either. In 1984, Judge Robert Kerr decided not to jail Mongrel Mob member Colan Latoa for the destruction of an Auckland bar because he was the spokesperson for the gang and he organised work for his members. Latoa said, he "couldn't believe it. I thought I was looking at nine months (jail) at least" (*Sunday News* 8.7.1984).

Smaller communities also reported a drop in anti-social and criminal behaviour. Below the headline, "Fear No Longer Stalks Wairoa" it was said that the Mongrel Mob, which had had "a hold on the town" for a year, had

established the Triple M Trust (the three 'M's standing for 'Mighty Mongrel Mob') in an effort to gain government grants to put the gang to work. Gang member and trust vice president, Rangī Tamati, was happy with the achievement: "We have managed to keep eight or nine boys out of jail. Before we were lucky to have two or so out at one time" (*NZ Herald* 28.6.1985).

In Dargaville in 1986, a town that used to be "terrorised by gang bravado", the chairman of the Dargaville Borough Council said that as PEP schemes took hold, the town's social problems had fallen away. He said, "When people are not working, they have got all day to sleep and all night to play up" (*NZ Herald* 8.9.1986).

Up until 1986, then, putting gangs to work was producing widespread positive publicity and to many people it appeared that a solution, at least in part, to the gang problem had been found. However, this positive publicity was soon replaced by controversy and the concept of providing government funding to gangs quickly became a political liability. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, this transpired during a time of dramatic political change.

Political and Economic Change

The controversy that was set to erupt around gangs receiving government funding occurred against a backdrop of great economic and political change, which proved crucial in changing attitudes toward government funded work programmes. In 1984, Muldoon's National government was ousted from office in a landslide election defeat. Having taken the leadership role from Bill

Rowling in 1982, David Lange, a former lawyer with tremendous oratory skills, led Labour to a 17 seat parliamentary majority. The new government dramatically transformed the political, economic and social landscapes of New Zealand, and in doing so impacted on the gang scene in two important ways: the first was latent and long-term, and was a consequence of policies that proved to have a negative effect on marginalised groups and communities; the second was more immediate and deliberate, that being the slaying of Muldoon's social policy agenda.

As will become clear, the ideological outlook of the new government could scarcely have been more different from the one it replaced. In an effort to counter the economic problems that flowed out of the 1970s, Muldoon, as both Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, had intervened in the New Zealand economy to an unprecedented level. In 1982, he ordered a price and wage freeze to rein in inflation that was at nearly 20 percent. While these measures did in fact tame inflation, they also created "serious economic distortions", but Muldoon was seemingly unfazed; when the price and wage freeze failed to drop interest rates to his satisfaction, he stepped in and directly regulated interest rates for home mortgages (McRobie, 1992: p.399).

Furthermore, Muldoon imposed subsidies on anything from electricity to lamb prices, and the government funded work schemes, which gangs were being encouraged to use, were further expanded, to counter rapidly rising unemployment. Despite these efforts, in one decade the unemployment rate more than trebled – in 1976 those seeking work numbered just less than

26,000 or 2.1 percent of the workforce, in 1981 these had increased to just over 60,000, or 4.2 percent of the workforce, and by 1986, by which time Muldoon was out of office, they had increased further still to just under 109,000, or 6.8 percent of the workforce (Department of Statistics, 1987: p.338).

To create economic growth, jobs, and counter the effects of the oil shocks, Muldoon had devised a grandiose policy called 'Think Big' that saw the state fund enormous projects to tap into New Zealand's natural resources, including the construction of the Clive Hydroelectric Dam and the expansion of the Marsden Point oil refinery.

The cost of Muldoon's intervention was enormous; in his last year of office overseas debt ballooned to \$8,266m, the budget deficit was \$3,100m, and the trade deficit was about \$1b (Sinclair, 1991: p.319). With the economy in a shambles, and Muldoon's leadership style becoming increasingly authoritarian, the New Zealand public responded by voting him out and giving Labour the country's helm.

Labour quickly began to radically reshape the New Zealand economy, an effort dubbed 'Rogernomics' after the Minister of Finance, Roger Douglas. Only the most zealous reformers, and indeed only the most hopeful among them, could have foreseen the breadth and speed of the changes that were to occur – and fewer still would have thought it possible from a party of the Left.

Rogernomics was based on a market liberal philosophy, and the new government quickly set about dismantling the regulations and restriction that entangled the New Zealand economy. In quick measure, New Zealand went from having one of the most protected economies in the world, to one of the most open. The dollar was floated; controls on interest rates were removed; tariffs and subsidies scrapped; and competition was encouraged in parts of the economy previously monopolised by the government. Further to this, the top personal tax rate was slashed from 66 cents to 33 cents in the dollar and a tax goods and services was introduced, a move that disproportionately affected the poor (Belich, 2001: p.409).

Striving for full employment, which had been a key policy of all New Zealand governments since the depression of the 1930s, was abandoned in pursuit of the government's new drivers: equity, efficiency and accountability (Rice, 1992: p.488). The public sector, perceived to be bloated with workers (Sinclair, 1991: p.323), was radically reorganised. Government departments that were deemed to have commercial potential, such as the Post Office and the Ministries of Forestry and Railways, were transformed into State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and instructed to operate on a commercial basis. This marked the beginning of a two-stage process; subsequently, a number of the new SOEs were sold into private ownership, partly due to the new ideological drive for greater efficiency and partly to repay the country's burgeoning overseas debt (Sinclair, 1991: p.324). Government departments that were not deemed to be commercial were instructed to adopt management principles

used in private enterprise. The government no longer funded programs, it purchased outputs (Hawke, 1992: p.440).

Some 80,000 workers lost their jobs in the state sector in the wake of the reforms (Belich, 2001: p.410). Moreover, the removal of tariffs and subsidies led to job losses in the private sector too, particularly in the manufacturing sector, which was a major employer of un- and semi- skilled workers. By 1991, census data show that total unemployment reached just less than 164,000 or 10.5 percent; nearly one in four Maori and slightly more than one in five Pacific Peoples were unemployed (Department of Statistics, 1993: p.272). Many became structurally unemployed and their “disadvantage or excluded status...transferred to future generations” (Spoonley, 1993: p.5). It signalled the formation of underclass in certain state housing ‘enclaves’, described and forewarned of in Chapter Six, and this became critical to future gang developments; something I will return to as the thesis proceeds.

Several years later, Douglas said that the rapidity of the reforms was essential in order to outpace the inevitable public backlash (Douglas, 1993). And certainly there was a backlash as the economic reforms impacted large swathes of the community and resulted in unemployment within working class communities. This ‘attack’ on Labour’s traditional support base eventually saw the government’s hierarchy disintegrate and their electoral support plummet.

As will become clear, and as outlined in similar situations in the U.S. by the likes of Jankowski (1991), Moore (1991), and Taylor (1989), the economic

policies that were creating hardship in poor communities contributed to social conditions that fed and affected the gangs in New Zealand. But of immediate importance to the gang scene was that the new government's laissez faire ideals were incongruent with – and perhaps the antithesis of – the make-work schemes that had been the bedrock of the social policy agenda targeting gangs.

Indeed, it was the political and not economic environment that proved more immediately significant for the gang scene with regard to the social policy agenda, as one of the central tenets of the Labour government's reforms was a market orientated approach and the desire to eliminate unproductive state spending. Within this ethos, the government believed that “the state provision of employment through work schemes (and benefits) produced a dependency on the state and discouraged independent paid employment” (Spoonley, 1993: p.12). As was foreshadowed in its 1985 budget, Labour phased out the PEP schemes by the end of 1986, and a greater emphasis was placed on training programmes (*AJHR*, G.1, 1986: p.48).

Perhaps due to the Department of Labour's belief in the successes being achieved by GELS (*AJHR*, G.1, 1984: pp.31-34) and the media reporting positive stories of gangs in work, the Contract Work Schemes remained in place. However, the future of a make-work policy specifically favouring gangs within a political framework disdainful of interventionist strategies, and at a time of high unemployment and hardship for many, was undoubtedly fragile at best. Therefore, when the positive publicity being generated by gang

involvement in such schemes turned negative in late 1986 and early 1987, their demise was all but assured.

Controversy Begins: Black Power's Short-Lived Success

Given that their original chapter in Wellington had formed a work cooperative not long after its inception in the mid-1970s, it is unsurprising that Black Power, with Denis O'Reilly as a member, proved to be the most successful gang in obtaining government funding through work schemes. Although it may have ebbed and flowed, within the influential Black Power leadership there had always been a commitment to get the gang's members into work.

In the 1980s, under the leadership of Abe Wharewaka, the Black Power 'Sindi' (short for Syndicate) chapter in South Auckland adopted the original Wellington chapter's work ethic and achieved unprecedented – albeit short-lived – success. Brought to Auckland city as a child during the early part of the post World War II urban drift, Wharewaka was raised in a large family – he was the oldest of 14 children – and in a reflection of their poverty, he left school after form two⁴⁴ because his family could not afford to buy him a school uniform (*Sunday Star Times*, 11.4.2010). Despite this, Wharewaka, by anyone's standards, went on to display obvious ambition and business acumen. The skills that could have seen him succeed in any area of mainstream business were dedicated to Black Power, a gang he joined in 1977 after stints in other gangs, borstal and prison (Walker, 1990: p.261). After being jailed following a gang brawl with the Head Hunters in 1979,

⁴⁴ Form two is now called Year 8.

Wharewaka emerged from prison in the early 1980s determined to turn his gang chapter around. Making use of government funded schemes; he put his gang to work and created, in appearance at least, a strikingly successful business in the mid-1980s.

The first evidence of this success became public in August 1986, when a Cadillac Limousine was seen cruising the streets of South Auckland (*Evening Post*, 15.8.86). It was a particularly obvious show of wealth in the generally poor suburbs. The stretched limousine – fitted with a television, bar and telephone – was stopped by police, who found the driver was escorting an out-of-town Black Power member to the airport (*NZ Herald* 21.8.1986). The police arrested the driver for outstanding fines, and discovered the car was owned by Black Power. The thought of a gang affording such luxury must have been galling to police. In fact, the Cadillac was just one vehicle imported from the U.S. by Tatau Te Iwi,⁴⁵ a Black Power Sindi Trust chaired by Wharewaka. The other vehicles included a Lincoln Continental and 18 Harley Davidson motorcycles. These displays of opulence were enough to attract political interest and the National Party, now in opposition, raised the issue in parliament, demanding to know how much government money was used to purchase the vehicles (*NZPD*, vol.474, 1986: pp.4502, 4503 & 5232)

The vehicles were the most public example of Wharewaka's expanding empire. Tatau Te Iwi built and owned a complex known as the 'Factory' that served as Black Power's headquarters in Auckland, as well as being the base

⁴⁵ Translated as 'We The People'.

for its business activities. The Factory contained a large bar, a dance floor, a kitchen and eating area, pool tables, electronic 'space invader' games and living quarters. Wharewaka's office was fitted with a computer (rare at the time), a television and video and it was reported that a spa bath and sauna were being installed (*Sunday Star* 17.8.1986). The ceiling of the Factory was painted royal blue and decorated with glitter, which Wharewaka, who had an interest in astrology, said was to remind people of the night sky (*NZ Herald* 15.11.86). To Wharewaka, the examples of wealth were "signs of success" that served to motivate members of his gang (*NZ Herald* 15.11.86). They certainly motivated the police, media, and public officials to question how much of this 'success' was being funded by the state.

Following reports of the luxury car and motorcycle importation, the National Party called for a review into government funding of gang work schemes (*Evening Post* 18.8.86). Consequently, the Labour Department publicly released the amounts being paid to gangs via government funded work schemes, and these created stark headlines, including "\$600,000 paid out to gang projects" (*Dominion* 19.8.1986) and "Gangs Given \$241,000" (*NZ Herald* 3.10.1986). The luxury vehicles were not just raising public interest cruising through the streets; they were also drawing public scrutiny.

Black Power's then national president, Rei Harris, told me in 1999 that the car and motorcycle importation controversy was a beat-up:

It's like going to the \$2 shop in the States; you're picking up a limo for five grand. So, if you work it out, you don't have to be a mathematician, it only cost 10 grand to get the container to New Zealand. They bought cheap bikes they were picking up for \$250, \$500 max, so they were able to cover their costs and deliver all the junk from America. So, when you look at it in those terms, we never had a lot of money. That's the end of the deal.

But to Denis O'Reilly:

That was dumb. The boys are dumb. And they'd done some fantastic things but – it was like the precursor of fuckin' hip-hop or something. It was the 'bling-bling' ... and all that sort of stuff...If it had have been something else there may have been great praise, but it was stretch limos ...And that's what makes them gangsters. They're in for the fun of the moment rather than some deep investment in the future (Denis O'Reilly 2003 pers. comm.).

In many ways, the purchases reflected certain elements of New Zealand society in the mid-1980s prior to the stock market crash of 1987. While many people were suffering job losses, others were doing well out of the post-1984 reforms and the freed up economy had made some people very wealthy. Those in consumer goods, property, and financial services did particularly well (Belich, 2001: p.406), and the stock market went on an unprecedented rise, tripling in value between 1984 and 1987. Ostentatious displays of wealth

among 'yuppies' (young upwardly-mobile professionals) were common place. Certainly, the gang members were not yuppies by common understanding, but their move into luxury goods signalled a significant shift in certain parts of the gang scene whereby some members were no longer prepared to 'drop out' of society but were instead wanting to enjoy its consumerist fruits. Just as the liberal social environment beginning in the 1960s, discussed in Chapter Four, and the Maori cultural resurgence and protest, outlined in Chapter Six, had certain demonstrable impacts – in varying degrees – on gang behaviour, so too, I contend, did excessive consumption and desire for wealth that symbolised much of the 1980s.

Although Black Power's growing asset base was obvious, less obvious was the fact that they were sinking heavily into debt. Banks refused to lend to the gang and thus they were forced to borrow from 'loan sharks' to build the Factory at interest rates of 39 percent, increasing to 49 percent for late payments (Walker, 1990: p.262). These debts eventually led to the demise of the gang's initial flirt with profit driven enterprises and the Factory was sold in 1989 at a mortgagee auction, leaving a \$450,000 shortfall to one Christchurch lender (*Dominion* 26.5.1989). But in late 1986, the gang was still on the rise and a national meeting of the gang's leaders was called in November 1986 to encourage those chapters not already doing so to become involved in the Contract Work Schemes (*Evening Post* 28.10.1986).

As Black Power was looking to expand, however, the flashy spending by the Sindi chapter cast a deep suspicion over government programmes. The intent

of the schemes had been to aid gang members into manual labour work and keep them occupied and not, as it appeared was happening in Auckland, to make them – in appearance, at least – rich. At a time when so many New Zealanders were losing their jobs, the fact that Black Power was a recipient of apparent government largesse did not sit well with the public.

The Role of the Police in Changing Public Policy

Serendipitously, in the weeks before the media reports of Black Power gaining significant profit from the Contract Work Schemes and other government programmes, four police districts in the South Island had commissioned research to investigate gangs in their areas. Operation 'Gang Strategy' was a broad intelligence effort, but it was its findings on gang funding that became its major focus and played a significant part in the downfall of the social policy agenda.

Operation Gang Strategy was devised by the police district commanders from Christchurch, Timaru, Dunedin and Invercargill, and an investigating team made up of one police officer from each district was charged with assessing the gang scene and making recommendations. The investigating team, headed by Sergeant Mark Penn of Christchurch, completed its first report (the 'Penn Report') in July 1986.

Marked as 'confidential', the Penn Report covered a wide range of issues relating to gangs including gang fortifications, police surveillance of gangs, the

use of informants, the need for better police/gang liaison, and the need to keep the public sympathetic to police action against gangs.

The latter point was given significant attention, perhaps in light of the fatal police shooting of Mongrel Mob member Paul Chase in Wellington in 1983. A police Armed Offenders Squad had raided Chase's flat more than a day after Chase and two other Mob members had discharged a firearm in the Hutt Park Hotel, a bar regarded as the territory of Black Power. As police burst into the flat dressed in black in the dim light of early morning, Chase thought the police were Black Power members and sought to defend himself with an exercise bar (Nicholson, 1983). Mistaking the bar as a firearm, police shot him dead. A report into the incident, undertaken by C. M. Nicholson QC, exonerated the police involved of any wrongdoing but nevertheless raised questions around certain police actions during the incident, which included the necessity of the early morning raid, a possible failure of the officers to adequately identify themselves as police, and the attitude of some officers involved (Nicholson, 1983). Similar concerns were reported in the media, and the controversy was said to have set back police gang relations by ten years (*Evening Post* 20.4.1983). Many years later, a police officer of that time wrote that the police handling of the situation was seriously flawed and unnecessarily confrontational (Forbes, 1997: p.155-157).

Following this controversy, Penn and his team of gang investigators were clearly aware of the need to keep the public onside, but he could not have foreseen that his report was to spark events that superseded the Chase killing

as the most significant police activity relating to the New Zealand gang scene in the 1980s.

One of the numerous findings of the Penn investigation was that some South Island gangs were gaining income through various means including, “drugs, burglary/receiving, liquor, prostitution and frauds” as well as “income derived from the State” (Penn, 1986b: p.1). Consequently, one of its many recommendations was the establishment of an “investigation into the funding of gangs from all sources” (emphasis in original) (Penn, 1986b: p.2).

Finished at the end of July 1986, the report was almost certainly under consideration by South Island police chiefs in August when publicity surrounding Black Power’s apparent wealth in Auckland was growing. One can only speculate on the influence this had, but it was gang income derived from the state that now became the police focus. A second report was then requested from Penn, looking exclusively at the funding gangs received from the government through Contract Work Schemes.

The second Penn Report was completed in early October 1986 and found that since April 1985, many South Island gangs, including a number of outlaw motorcycle clubs, had been using Contract Work Schemes, and that in total they had earned about \$1.5 million (Penn, 1986a: p.3) with the “lion’s share going to the Black Power gang and ex Black Power members” (Penn, 1986a: p.9). The report made it clear that many of the trusts were operating contracts for ex-gang members, but its conclusions did not distinguish between these

and other gang member orientated trusts. This is both interesting and important inasmuch as the report was critical of money going to gangs, but it was equally critical of money spent on former gang members; people who had broken their primary gang connections – something that may have been seen as positive. As will become clear, this distinction was missed when the report was made public.

Indeed, of the contract jobs highlighted by Penn, the one that raised the greatest concern was being undertaken by ex- Black Power members who were employed to erect a 327-metre boundary fence and remove a number of trees at the Nga Hau E Wha Marae in Christchurch. The total labour cost of the contract was just over \$55,000, but an independent contractor approached by the police estimated the cost of the fencing at just \$810 (Penn, 1986a: p.3). Appendix two of the report makes it clear that the independent fencing contractor would have used a mechanical digger to do the work, but even allowing for this, and the fact the ex-gang members were “unskilled workers”, the report concluded that “there is no way that this fence should have cost the amount it did” (Penn, 1986a: ap.2). As will be outlined later, this contention was later challenged, but costing estimates by Labour Department officials for Contract Work Schemes jobs became a significant issue of concern – not just for gangs but all groups using the Contract Work Scheme.

Overall, the second Penn Report (1986a: p.11) noted, “[m]illions of dollars are involved and it is clear that huge amounts of public money have been wasted, if not misappropriated or stolen, in the South Island”. The report concluded

that, “Because of the enormous amounts of money involved, it is our strong suspicion that frauds, thefts, extortion and corruption would be revealed in an in-depth enquiry” (Penn, 1986a: p.11).

Consequently, led by Detective Senior Sergeant White, an investigation into these criminal allegations was launched. White’s findings were detailed in his report (the ‘White Report’) dated 19 December 1986. White examined a number of cases in Christchurch, where, in monetary value, around three quarters of the Contract Work Schemes jobs highlighted by Penn had been undertaken. His investigation tracked payments made to the gangs by laboriously following paper trails, and in one instance he was aided by detailed financial and other records belonging to Black Power’s Christchurch chapter, which had been seized by the police in an unrelated gang homicide inquiry (White, 1986: p.20). A significant part of White’s investigation, however, focused on the organisations directly benefiting from the work undertaken at the government’s expense, including the Christchurch City Council and the Nga Hau E Wha Marae, and in particular two high-ranking city officials who had aided the gangs in getting contract work, in an attempt to alleviate gang violence (White, 1986: p.6).

Despite White reporting that both GELS officers and Labour Department officials had been uncooperative “to the point of obstruction”, this did not “unduly prejudice the enquiry”, which found: “There is no evidence as to the commission of any criminal offence by any person in relation to these schemes” (White, 1986: pp.19 & 20).

Given the lack of criminality, police involvement in the issue would ordinarily have stopped there. However, the Invercargill police district commander, Superintendent Tommy Thompson, leaked the reports to the media in January 1987, an action for which he was later censured by the Commissioner of Police, Mal Churches, who “made it very clear to him that he had erred in duty and judgement” (*NZ Herald*, 13.3.1987). A high-ranking police officer at the time of the leak told me that the four South Island district commanders had decided to release the reports to the media in an effort to generate a public backlash against the schemes, and that Superintendent Thompson volunteered to do it as he was close to retirement and his career would not be greatly affected. My source, however, did add that, “He probably didn’t expect the fallout [the censure]; he was a pretty well respected guy”. It is certainly clear from the reports that the police involved in the inquiries were strongly opposed to the schemes and the large amounts of money that the gangs – and others – were gaining from them.

It will be recalled from the previous chapter that in the wake of the Moerewa riot, then Commissioner of Police Bob Walton supported calls for social initiatives to counter the problems of gangs, and as highlighted earlier in this chapter he was of the opinion that work schemes had helped temper the anti-social activities of gangs involved in them. Even the first Penn Report (1986b: p.1) stated that unemployment was the “root cause” of the gang problem, but gangs having an easy source of income clearly became a concern to the police.

Remarking on Contract Work Scheme policy, the second Penn Report stated that over-costing meant that gangs were effectively being paid to do nothing: “It appears that we have reached a stage where we are paying criminals not to commit crime because it is cheaper than sending them to jail” (Penn, 1986a: p.10). It also reported the possibility that, “gang numbers will swell because among the unemployed they seem to be the only people able to obtain well paid employment” (Penn, 1986a: p.10).

Similarly, the White Report said that the “current political attitude toward minority groups” that included “‘falling over backwards’ to assist the disadvantaged or the alienated” and “special concern for the Maori Gangs” guaranteed government assistance (White, 1986: p.20). Furthermore, it stated, “It is repugnant to the average working law abiding citizen to see that gangs of persons with known criminal backgrounds are receiving massive social welfare handouts, but without obvious criminality evident, then the issue is solely political” (White, 1986: pp.20-21).

But when the reports were given to the media, the police findings entered the political realm. The most sensational extracts from the confidential documents were reported widely, and in effect, certain elements within the police became, for all intent and purpose, a lobby group opposing a government policy. As will be outlined, the damning headlines and media reports created by the leaked documents in late January and early February 1987 were a significant influence on public and political support for the Contract Work

Schemes evaporating. Although the upper echelons of the police hierarchy had initially supported the social agenda, a number of senior police officers were influential in its demise, and with that, it will become clear, law enforcement became the primary solution to the problem of gangs – a situation, it will be recalled from the previous chapter, the police had previously believed was untenable.

The Mongrel Mob and the Ambury Park Rape: The Third Pivot Point

The strains on the social policy agenda were building toward the end of 1986; the perception that Black Power was on the end of state largesse was causing public disquiet, and the government had been informed by police that enquiries were raising concerns about the Contract Work Schemes (*NZPD*, vol.474, 1987: p.6691). But it was a violent incident by the Mongrel Mob that most alarmed New Zealanders and further contributed to the swift fall of the social agenda targeting gangs and established a severe backlash against such groups. In fact, the effect of this incident was such that it can be seen as marking the third pivot point in New Zealand gang history.

As outlined in Chapter Five, despite striking similarities between the gangs, Black Power's early development had included certain positive influences that were in contrast to the Mongrel Mob who were, and remained, a highly negative and maverick group.

The Mob was fiercely proud of its reputation as the 'worst of the worst', and the majority of their membership deliberately rejected any attempts made to

change them. An article in the September 1985 issue of *Metro* magazine, said that gangs in Auckland had quietened down (in part due to work schemes) but the Mongrel Mob, with their adherence to 'mongrelism' explained in Chapter Five, was an obvious exception, continuing its public displays of anti-social behaviour and activities (Claydon, 1985).

For the Mongrel Mob, their anti-social attitude had become integral to their sense of identity, and it was for this reason that the gang rarely participated in government work schemes, even when there was a clear monetary advantage. Although GELS hired Mongrel Mob members as field workers, the organisation was closely associated with Denis O'Reilly whose Black Power membership was well known to the Mob, and a number of Mob members have told me this caused many in the gang to shun GELS on principle. In short, many in the Mob thought the schemes were a 'Black Power thing' (Winter, 1998: p.248).

There were, however, exceptions to this, including the 'Gold Coast' and Wairoa Mongrel Mob chapters' activities noted earlier. But the most notable exception was evident in Dunedin where, under the guidance of Mob member and GELS field officer Harry Tam, that city's Mongrel Mob chapter gained work using the Contract Work Schemes, and a total of around \$95,000 was believed to have been paid to the gang or its associates from mid-1985 to late 1986 (Penn, 1986a: p.10). During this period, that gang claimed to have avoided trouble, and Tam said that since participating in work contracts none of their members had been jailed (*NZ Times*, 8.3.1987).

One Mongrel Mob member who wanted to replicate this success and change the gang's overall attitude to government funded work was the King Country chapter president, Tuhoē 'Bruno' Isaac. Isaac established the Nga Kuri Rohe Potae⁴⁶ Trust, and had some success in gaining work contracts for his chapter (Isaac, 2007: p.80). Although at the time, the gang denied they were copying Black Power's lead (*NZ Herald* 11.10.1986), many years later Isaac (2007: p.81) said that it was indeed the example being set by Black Power that had inspired him.

But gaining work and profit for the gang were not Isaac's only ambitions. He felt that the Mongrel Mob needed national structure and leadership – again, like that of Black Power – and he wished to establish himself as the Mob's national president. As noted previously, the Mongrel Mob had a national committee, made up of the different chapter presidents, but, unlike Black Power, it had nobody at its head and the different chapters were largely autonomous. With this autonomy came varying rules between chapters, and Isaac hoped that a national president would give greater consistency and order to the gang and better position them to seek income from government sources. After gaining support from a handful of chapters, Isaac planned to raise the idea of a national presidency at the Mongrel Mob's 1986 convention that he was hosting in Auckland.

⁴⁶ Translated as 'The Dog Territory'.

Both the nationwide patched street gangs, the Mongrel Mob and Black Power, held conventions since the 1970s⁴⁷. Annual events, they drew the country's chapters together to party, play games of rugby league, and give chapter presidents a time to discuss gang business and decide on common policy.

Isaac intended the 1986 Mongrel Mob's convention to be the place where he became the Mob's first national president and to provide a showcase whereby the gang could gain public favour. He hoped that this would show organisations and city councils that they could employ the Mob using Contract Work Schemes and other state assistance with confidence.

The man who gave rise to the idea of a national president was the secretary of the Nga Kuri Rohe Potae Trust, and one of Isaac's right hand men, an Egyptian immigrant named George Mamfredos. Always well groomed and dressed, Mamfredos did not look like a stereotypical Mob member, but he was no saint, having done time for manslaughter after stabbing his brother-in-law to death in 1982 (Du Chateau & Roger, 1987: p.142). Indeed, it was in jail that Isaac first met Mamfredos and, impressed by his business acumen, decided to patch him up after his release, despite describing his fitting in with the gang being akin to "a square peg in a round hole" (Isaac, 2007: p.79). Although strict rules around prospecting existed in most chapters of the street gangs, the Mongrel Mob were, and remain, inclined to give patches out at the discretion of the president if he sees it is in the gang's (or his) best interests, something I have often heard discussed among Mob members. In one

⁴⁷ For a lively description of the Black Power convention of 1980, see O'Reilly (1981).

instance during the mid-1980s, this included – embarrassingly, for the gang - giving a patch to an undercover police officer who was operating in the lower North Island (Former undercover police officer 2007 pers. comm.).

Mamfredos rarely wore his patch and as the person charged with gaining employment opportunities via work schemes, this was seen as sensible. He was often the ‘respectable’ front for his and Isaac’s plans. Chef Inspector Gerry Hugglestone, who had dealings with Mamfredos, said, “Some would say he had a certain charm. I would call it an oily smarminess” (Jones, 1987: p.25). Despite Mamfredos’s pronouncements at the time that his involvement with the gang was to steer it away from anti-social and destructive activities, it is likely his motives were to turn the Mob into a vehicle for obtaining money and power. Inspector Hugglestone told me in 2005 that he felt Mamfredos was only involved with the gang for his own ends. Some members of the Mob told me similar things; namely, that Mamfredos saw the Mongrel Mob as a force that could be turned into vast money making organisation – either through legal or illegal means.

Although he was promising much, Mamfredos’ involvement sat uneasily with many within the gang – despite being patched, he was seen as something of an outsider involved in Mob affairs. A number of members have told me they had never heard of Mamfredos before he appeared in the media prior to the convention of 1986, when he was speaking on the gang’s behalf. At a time when leadership was largely earned by exploits proven during inter (or intra) gang conflict, it did not rest well with many.

Ahead of the conference, Mamfredos was energetically pursuing a Mongrel Mob public relations campaign: “We are taking the opportunity [of this convention] to better ourselves as a whole rather than a token few” (*NZ Herald* 11.10.1986). “We really want to change our ways and become a positive social force, something that will benefit the community and the economy” (*NZ Herald* 27.10.1986). Although he portrayed an upbeat vision for the gang, he also reinforced this with less than veiled threats. Mamfredos warned that without government assistance, the fears of police would be realised and the Mob would become urban terrorists (*NZ Herald* 27.10.1986).

In an effort to ensure that things went to plan, Isaac and Mamfredos proclaimed a moratorium on violence during the convention. Mamfredos also announced that the Mob had banned women from the event; something he said was a “practical” measure because after three days smoking and drinking, members could become “a bit amorous” (*Dominion* 12.12.1986). Indeed, Mob members had become ‘a bit amorous’ during the 1985 convention, after which six members had been convicted of rape.

After being approached by the gang, the Auckland Regional Authority (ARA) granted the Mob use of part of a 160-hectare farm called Ambury Park in South Auckland – despite complaints from locals who felt they had not been consulted. The chair of the ARA’s Reserves Committee, Alan Brewster, said the park was open for any groups to use “as long as they were not disruptive to nearby residents” (*NZ Herald* 11.12.1986).

The major force behind gang work schemes, former Prime Minister Rob Muldoon, walked around the convention on its first day, the 12th of December 1986. Just two weeks before, he had told the Royal Police College that gangs could be turned away from violence and toward constructive work “in spite of the cynicism of many of the public and indeed the police” (*Evening Post* 27.11.1986).

Two days after Muldoon’s stroll among the gang members, and on the third and final morning of the convention, the day on which Isaac was going to press for the creation of a national president, a woman went to the police saying she had been raped at Ambury Park. Surrounded by police, the woman sought to identify the men she said had attacked her in what Justice Tomkins later described as “a series of the most gross and brutal conduct it is possible to imagine” (Du Chateau & Roger, 1987: p.156). But before exploring the details and outcomes of the rape, it is important to consider the sexual dynamics of gangs in the 1980s.

Women in Gangs

Although some changes have occurred since and women began to play a greater role within gangs, in the 1980s females in the gang scene were afforded little regard. As Jankowski (1991: p.146) found in his U.S. based research, “women were considered a form of property”. Notwithstanding a few exceptions during both the outlaw clubs’ and patched street gangs’ formative stages, women were, and are, denied membership to these gangs. As with

the findings of Veno (2003) and Wolf (1991) different status was given to women depending on their relationship to a member of the gang. But even the partners of gang members, who had the highest status among gang women, were generally viewed as instruments to be used for traditional domestic duties and sexual favours (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: pp.88-91). In 1981, a Highway 61 president in Auckland, when asked about girlfriends or wives of members said simply, "They take second place to the club" (Williams, 1981: p.43). But there were clear rules around partners of gang member, who were off limits to the other members, particularly in outlaw clubs: "You'd never touch another patched member's woman or another member's woman or a prospect's woman – I've never seen that happen" (Blu 2006 pers. comm.).

For those females unattached to a gang member, their roles were primarily to provide sexual services to various members. Often this took the form of 'blocking' - group sex consensually or through rape, referred to by some gangs in the U.S. as 'pulling the train' (J. W. Moore, Vigil, & Levy, 1995: p.32). The reasons why women often accepted this sexual treatment are both psychological and social and are discussed in detail in Dennehy and Newbold (2001).

One Mongrel Mob member described blocking like this:

After waiting hours for my turn I entered the room to find a young woman – unwashed, covered in semen, blood and sexual juices, and reeking of sexual aroma and alcohol – waiting for the next taker. The

sex was forceful and impersonal, anything went and there was only one rule: no names were ever to be spoken. Guys would slap your backside to urge you on as they stood around watching the spectacle. If the woman didn't perform for whatever reason – inebriation or being wasted on drugs – it was nothing a punch in the head or a black eye wouldn't fix. It was considered cool to be involved in a block but weak for it to become loving or intimate. This form of sex – whether you want to call it a 'block' or a rape – was the norm to us (Isaac, 2007: p.37).

By the 1980s, certain outlaw motorcycle clubs were passing specific 'no rape' policies, but perhaps the first gang to do so was the Black Power that passed a decree banning rape in 1978 at their convention in Tokoroa (Rei Harris, 1999 pers. comm.). The man who championed the ban, Black Power's National President, Rei Harris, was not there to see his policy pass – at the time, he was in jail for raping a prostitute. Many years later, he told me the charge was a fix-up. Certainly, he appeared sincere in his 'no rape' rule. In 1990, Harris said that raping women used to occur "on a weekly basis" but since the rule was in place, "there have only been three convictions for rape – none of them gang rape" (Stirling, 1990: p.11).

The veracity of the claim is unclear. It appears that rape involving Black Power members did occur, but did not make it to court. The Black Power hierarchy dealt with some instances internally through quasi-traditional Maori methods on marae, involving a form of restorative justice using shame and financial compensation (Consedine, 1995: p.86). In 1999, Harris told me that

the last depatching for rape happened in 1994, “and that was a president so he got it real hard”.

In the gang realm, the act of rape has been clouded in ambiguity due to gang dynamics and logic. For some, if a woman was at a gang address, then the implicit understanding was that she knew the rules and should expect what she got. As King Cobra leader, Nari Felix Meleisea said,

In the King Cobras we used to do that all the time but we were lucky, in those days they didn't report us. When a Sheila came she knew what was going to happen, she was going to be blocked, gang raped (cited in Payne & Quinn, 1997: p.109).

Similarly, one Mongrel Mob leader told me:

I mean, fuck! If a woman comes back to the fuckin' pad what does she fuckin' expect, eh. Assume the fuckin' position, bitch (Dennis Makalio 2004 pers. comm.)

Certainly, many women familiar with the gang scene knew what was expected of them and were complicit in blocks. An entry in 'Jane's' diary, from sometime around the late 1970s, reads, “The Black Power disco [regularly held on Saturday nights in the Aro Valley Hall] turned out to be pretty heavy. Four girls got blocked – the same ones as usual” (cited in Desmond, 2009: p.181). One Black Power leader, in speaking of blocking during the 1980s

said, “It wasn’t rape...at the end of the day some girls came wanting to have fun. They want to be part of the scene”.

In recent times – even though such activities have become much less common – I have witnessed women actively engaging in public sexual acts with gang members and at certain times more than one member at a time. Many gang members and gang women I have spoken to, however, give numerous scenarios when a consensual block has led to a rape complaint. These scenarios include: feeling regret once the effect of alcohol or drugs has worn off; being unable to explain signs of sexual intercourse to a boyfriend; being willing to have sex with one or even several members of a gang but balking when more joined the queue; or being disrespected or beaten during or after sex. One member of the Devil’s Henchmen motorcycle club put it like this:

There were women who would love it and go from one guy to another – for the fun and excitement of it all, as long as it wasn’t too extreme. There are some girls out there. But I tell you this, of all the “rapes” I’ve seen, 99% of them will take it sweet. No problem at all as long as they are treated well. If you send a prospect home with them to give them a cuddle it never becomes rape. It only becomes rape when they get fucked off – their bags rifled through, clothes thrown on the fire, chucked out of the clubhouse naked, that sort of thing (Woody 2006 pers. comm.)

One police officer described a case in Wellington where a woman had been taken from a gang hotel to an empty section next to the pad and raped. The “drunken, foul mouthed young lass” was unconcerned by the sexual activity, but furious that the gang had cut her clothing off with a knife (Forbes, 1997: p.166).

Although blocking was becoming synonymous with gangs by the 1980s, and in one gang rape trial the defence suggested it was a part of gang culture (*Evening Post*, 15.3.1986), as Ritchie and Ritchie (1990: p.55) pointed out in 1990, “all multiple rape is not committed by gangs. It occurred throughout history long before modern gangs emerged. It is a sad fact of bad male behaviour in groups”. Be this as it may, rape was perceived, correctly, as a significant gang activity since the 1970s and had attracted much media interest and attention. Notable cases included, the Biker Federation clubs at Silverstream blocking a 19 year old waitress during Queen’s Birthday Weekend in 1975 (*Truth* 23.9.1975), and an attack by members of the Head Hunters – although wrongly identified in some media as the Mongrel Mob – who took a 14-year old girl from an Auckland city pub back to their pad, undressed, raped and beat her, before throwing her out of a moving car (*NZ Herald* 8.9.1978). But no case received the degree of attention of the Ambury Park rape in 1986.

The Rape and the Beginnings of a Backlash

Indeed, it was the lurid accounts of the rape that created such significant public repulsion and ensured that whatever public sympathy existed toward

gangs turned to anger. The following accounts, then, are important to contextualise the backlash against the social agenda as well as the subsequent turn toward gangs being seen solely as an issue of law and order.

The sexual assault at Ambury Park was reported immediately and widely, but during the trial of those accused of the rape the episode was relived, and at the conclusion of the trial both the *Listener* and *Metro* magazines reported the rape in detail that horrified the public.

In describing her ordeal, the woman said that she had had a fight with her boyfriend and had gone out drinking on her own. On returning from the pub, she found her boyfriend was not home and so she decided to take his dog for a walk in the vicinity of the convention at Ambury Park. It was an unusual decision given that the woman was not naive about the Mob, she had a relation in the gang and therefore knew what they were capable of (Du Chateau & Roger, 1987: p.134). It was after 9.30pm, possibly as late as 11pm – the woman's story varied (Du Chateau & Roger, 1987: p.144) – when she said a dark car cruised up beside her and a man asked her for directions. Not quite hearing him, she moved closer and the man reached out and snatched her cardigan and dragged her through the car window. Mob members that I have spoken to dispute this, saying she came to the convention of her own volition – something whispered about around the courthouse but never raised during the rape trials (Jones, 1987: p.29). Either way, she was soon in the midst of 400-500 Mongrel Mob members. Initially, some of the members

offered her a drink and a smoke and some teased and jostled her, but the horseplay soon became rougher:

All I can remember is being mucked about on the grass. Bit by bit they were taking my clothes off... First they ripped off my cardigan and took my purse and hand bag. Then they threw me on the ground and ripped my jeans and tank top off. I was screaming but nobody took any notice...One of them ripped my knickers off. They weren't kissing me, they were feeling my breasts and all that... we were near some bushes, there were some cars around. I was stumbling along, trying to get away and they were pushing me between them, grabbing at me, trying to feel me up, hitting me in the face, pulling at my hair a lot. And then this guy raped me (Du Chateau & Roger, 1987: p.136).

More men followed. In the gaps between being raped the woman tried to escape but "when I ran away they caught me again and lay me down on the ground and started putting their hands all over me again. Putting their fingers in my vagina and all that..." (Du Chateau & Roger, 1987: p.137). After another sustained period of abuse, she managed to free herself and fled toward the stage on which a band had been playing. She thought that if she was in the brighter light somebody would come and help her. Despite the presence of a number of Maori wardens, none came to her assistance (Du Chateau & Roger, 1987: p.154). One Mobster approached the naked woman. He says he asked her, "What are you doing here?" and that she replied she had been raped and that she had only come to the convention to look for a friend. He

said, "You were stupid to come here at all" (Jones, 1987: p.23). He told her that he felt sorry for her and covered her with a blanket or sleeping bag and took her away from the stage:

He held my hand and led me over to a white van which was parked near the stage. I went with this man because I hoped he would take me home" (Jones, 1987: p.23).

The van was not to be a vehicle to safety. The Mobster had in fact led her to the place where the worst of the abuse would take place. Mobsters crowded around the open back door of the van, from where they would hold her legs open. When those in the van had finished with her, they would leave through the side door and one of those standing at the back door would step in and take his place. In the 45 minutes that one of the gang was there, he said the woman was raped ten times or more (Jones, 1987: p.24). The abuse lasted for hours.

She pleaded for help. "I remember one man leaving...I grabbed him by the back of his jacket...I asked him to help, but he just looked at me and crawled out of the van" (Jones, 1987: p.24). She had a torch and a beer bottle inserted in her vagina, and the mobsters called her a bitch and a slut. More men raped her and forced her to perform oral sex:

One guy put his penis in my mouth and told me to suck it. He was getting really angry and yelling at me to 'suck, suck' (Du Chateau & Roger, 1987: p.137).

She tried to elicit sympathy from the men by telling them she had a son, but the Mobsters just mocked her. All the while the hard floor of the van was rubbing her back raw:

I asked for a mattress because I was getting sore. They got one and stuck it under me. They kept raping me in turn. I was always held by people inside the van while others took their turn. There was always somebody holding my legs up. It was later when the gang members got tired...They stopped holding me for a while and got restless. There was actually no one raping me and I jumped out and tried to run away. I was very sore and I couldn't run very fast. I didn't even know which way I was running. I knew I was running towards some bushes. One of the gang members chased me and grabbed me. Several of them carried me back to the van. They started pouring things on me. I could smell petrol. One poured beer on me, and I looked up, saw this big fat man and he urinated on me. After they did this, they picked me up and threw me back in the van. They started to rape me again (Jones, 1987: p.24).

The sun was coming up over Ambury Park before she finally got away. Naked, she ran past tired Mobsters milling around, some yelled and whistled at her but none bothered with her, the gang had decided their fun was over.

The lurid details of the Ambury Park rape, as they unfolded before the Auckland High Court in June 1987, had a significant effect on public and political attitudes toward the social agenda. Even before the full details were to emerge, the Ambury Park rape added volatile fuel to the debate brewing over gang work schemes. The ARA, in the sights of angry residents for allowing Ambury Park to be used for the convention, were told that “somebody would hang” for allowing the Mongrel Mob to camp at Ambury Park (*NZ Herald* 15.12.1986). The ARA responded rather meekly by saying it would reconsider employing gang work trusts (*NZ Herald* 16.12.1986). This view was almost certainly given impetus several days later by media reports that a vehicle owned by a Mongrel Mob trust – and bought with government funds – was used in the robbery of a Post Office in Albany North of Auckland (*NZ Herald* 8.1.1987). The Mob denied involvement, claiming the vehicle had been sold before the robbery, although the vehicle’s ownership papers had not been changed (*NZ Herald* 15.1.1987). On its own, the story of the robbery would almost certainly have created significant disquiet, but after the events of Ambury Park, the rape was the prime media focus.

As the police began to investigate the rape complaint, Mamfredos publicly declared that the perpetrators of the attack would be ‘depatched’ and brought to justice (*NZ Herald* 16.12.1986), despite the fact that he had no authority

within the Mob to bring this about. The man brought into the gang for his business acumen was acutely aware of the public relations nightmare unfolding, and in a desperate attempt to regain focus on his message, Mamfredos attempted to link the rape to the Mob's lack of access to work training schemes (*Dominion* 16.12.1986). Isaac, too, wanted to regain control of the situation.

As the police swarmed around Ambury Park on the final morning of the convention, the meeting in which Isaac was going to argue for a national president was cancelled, but he was yet to abandon hope that he could show leadership. He too sought to bring those responsible to criminal, and not gang, justice and in doing so he and Mamfredos cooperated with the police (*Evening Post* 20.12.1986) – the ultimate gang sin. At that point, Mamfredos' association with the gang was effectively over and within a month he had resigned from the Nga Kuri Rohe Potae Trust (*NZ Herald* 4.2.1987). At a meeting of all Mongrel Mob presidents called in the wake of Ambury Park, Isaac was fronted and forced to hand over his patch and was lucky, he says, not to “get taken out or at least given the bash” (Isaac, 2007: p.93). A strong and previously well-respected leader, his ambition had clouded his judgment badly. In trying to gain a position at the head of the Mongrel Mob, he had lost his membership, which in his mind was all that he had. Isaac (2007: p.89) said, “I was stupid to think the Mob mentality could change. I was trying to instill a little bit of positivity into something that has been steeped in negativity since its inception”.

On the morning the rape complainant was taken back to Ambury Park by police, the victim was only able to identify two of the perpetrators. Many of the Mobsters had already left the park but twelve more arrests were made in the days and weeks after the convention. Some were arrested after being identified by the woman in police line-ups, and others from photos from the 99 rolls of film used at the convention by the gang and confiscated by police (Du Chateau & Roger, 1987: p.152), some of which contained images of the woman being raped.

The fact that the Mobsters took any photos of the rape suggests either a terrible lack of forethought – exacerbated by drugs and alcohol – or an ambivalence to consequence, both are possible, but equally likely is the possibility that the gang members involved were not expecting a complaint to be laid. Despite, or perhaps in defiance of, Mamfredos' instruction barring females, two Mongrel Mob members have told me that the gang blocked a few women that night. None of the others laid complaints, and I have been told by Mob members that all were willing participants.

Eventually eleven Mob members were brought before the courts in connection with the attack on the woman at Ambury Park, after charges against three were dropped due to insufficient evidence. Eventually, nine pleaded guilty or were found guilty of rape and/or sexual violation, and two were found not guilty. Those found guilty received jail terms of between five and seven-and-a-half years (Du Chateau & Roger, 1987: pp.150 & 156).

The 1986 convention, which was meant to herald a change for the Mongrel Mob, proved to be a public relations disaster. Never before had the gang's negative activities been so publicly and thoroughly exposed. It was, however, an important changing event, as it marked the third pivot point in the history of New Zealand gangs. The rape, occurring at a time when the Mob had promised the public it was changing for the better, meant any remaining positive public sentiment held about gangs and sympathy toward government funded work schemes evaporated. Although it was a Mongrel Mob rape, it became a wider gang issue to a public unable or unwilling to distinguish one gang from another. Already precariously placed within a radically changing political environment, the social policy agenda that had dominated political thinking since 1979 was effectively over. And as the details of the rape were fully exposed during and after the trial, calls for a forceful approach toward gangs only became louder.

The Demise of the Social Agenda

In review, then, in the short period between mid-August 1986 and late January 1987, a 'perfect storm' of controversy emerged surrounding the social policy agenda. Minister of Employment, Kerry Burke, following media revelations in August 1986 of Black Power's perceived profiteering and informed by the police that the Penn investigations were uncovering significant concerns a month later, instructed an audit team to examine the administration of the Contract Work Schemes (*NZPD*, vol.474, 1987: p.6691). Before the audit was completed, the Ambury Park rape occurred on December 14.

Submitted to Burke on December 22, the audit report found that gangs were not doing anything illegal and that many of the police examples of 'rip-offs' cited in the second Penn report had been taken out of context, including the work undertaken at the Nga Hau E Wha national marae (Cave, Glover, & Fisher, 1986). However, it did conclude that the schemes suffered from administrative laxity on the part of labour department officials, or what the Department of Labour later reported as "serious inadequacies" (*AJHR*, G.1, 1987: p.44).

It became clear that in certain instances, some gangs had manipulated the Contract Work Schemes in at least two different ways: one was to employ contractors to undertake the work at a lesser rate than the gang was being paid; another was to use mechanical equipment for jobs quoted on the basis on manual labour (*NZ Herald* 23.1.1987). In these ways, gangs were gaining income without putting in the work; and thereby defeating the purpose of the work schemes.

However, it was not just the gangs who took advantage of the schemes. The Department of Labour's Employment Services Director, Sam Jamieson, said that numerous groups had formed trusts and used the Contract Work Schemes and that only a quarter of all contracts approved were undertaken by gangs (*Evening Post*, 4.2.1987). The Minister of Finance, Roger Douglas, said that the amount of money involved in funding gangs was "peanuts" compared with other abuses of the schemes – particularly those done by

public bodies. He argued that local authorities had been using government-paid workers to do jobs they should have been financing themselves, or should not have been doing at all. "It is my guess that city councils and so on have done far better out of these schemes than gangs ever have" (*NZ Herald* 3.2.1987). Nevertheless, the gangs were the sole focus of negative media and public attention.

In response to the audit report, Burke imposed a moratorium on the Contract Work Schemes to take effect from 12 January 1987 (*NZPD*, vol.474, 1987: p.6690). Less than two weeks later, police reports stemming from the Penn and White investigations, discussed earlier, were made available to the media, further fuelling a new wave of damning publicity.

Despite the schemes being introduced while they had held power, the National Party now attacked the government, calling on Burke to resign (*NZ Herald* 24.1.1987). National MP Bruce Townsend said the government had been "buying peace with the gangs, using hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money" (*NZ Herald* 24.1.1987). Denis O'Reilly pointed out that, in many ways, this was in fact the purpose of the schemes (*NZ Herald* 28.1.1987) but the tide of public and political opinion was now against him and other exponents of the social agenda. Under extreme political pressure, in early February 1987, the Labour government abruptly axed the Contract Work Schemes.

At least two media commentators, Murray McLaughlin, political editor of the *New Zealand Times* (8.2.1987), and David Beatson, editor of the *Listener* (21.2.1987), pointed out that the axing of the Contract Work Schemes was a knee-jerk reaction suggesting the positives of the schemes needed to be exemplified and the obvious administrative problems fixed. It was an interesting, but ultimately overlooked, view as pragmatism made way for politics.

The New Zealand Committee of Inquiry into Violence offered a further sober reflection, and its report (the 'Roper Report', so named after the chair of the committee, Justice Sir Clinton Roper) was submitted in March 1987. It stated that, while having "no desire" to become involved in "the present controversy concerning gang work schemes", it felt "bound to say that on the evidence produced to us, many of those schemes had positive results in reducing offending and anti-social behaviour of those who participated in them" (Committee of Inquiry into Violence, 1987: p.88). Furthermore, the committee gave its assessment of the gang situation, stating that, "There is probably no subject in the field of law and order that can provoke more selective and distorted coverage from the media, or a more emotive, an often ill-informed, rhetoric from those in authority, than gangs" (Committee of Inquiry into Violence, 1987: p.87).

Its most stinging criticism, however, was reserved for the New Zealand Police, whose submission to the committee gave its members "real cause for concern" (Committee of Inquiry into Violence, 1987: p.88). Acknowledging it

was rare to criticise any submission, the committee lambasted the police for their completely negative attitude toward gangs that was not supported by facts and that activities or actions of certain gang members were seen as a reflection of all gangs and their members, something the committee said it “cannot accept”. They recommended that “the Police review their whole attitude to the question of gangs” (Committee of Inquiry into Violence, 1987: pp.88-91). The committee pointed out that, despite the grave concern held by police, in 1981, they said gang membership numbered 2,300 (Committee on Gangs, 1981: p.6) and in 1987 they supplied the Roper committee with figures of 2,200 – including ‘prospects’ and ‘associates’ (Committee of Inquiry into Violence, 1987: p.89), suggesting that gang numbers remained stable. However, given the methodological problems often involved in gaining gang numbers (Covey, 2003: p.25; Maxson & Klein, 1996), these data were perhaps not necessarily an accurate reflection of the gang scene.

The report concluded that, “despite the attention periodically given them, gangs are one of the least of this country’s worries and, indeed, to some extent, they are a result of those more serious concerns” (Committee of Inquiry into Violence, 1987: p.88).

Reflecting the dogged and uncompromising manner that contributed to his downfall as Prime Minister, the major champion of putting gangs to work, Muldoon, now the opposition MP for Tamaki, lamented the government “suddenly and hastily” abandoning the Contract Work Schemes simply “because of public outcry” (*NZPD*, vol.477, 1987: p.6712). He acknowledged

the “shocking rape” at Ambury Park but pointed out that the Mongrel Mob was wanting to change, and work schemes were the only way to enable that to happen. He also dismissed concerns around gangs gaining contracts to do manual labour and instead hiring mechanical equipment to complete them, saying it “showed some initiative” (*NZPD*, vol.477, 1987: p.6712). But Muldoon was a lone voice in defending the schemes and the National Party, with an eye on the August election, was on the offensive. In unison, its MPs played to the gallery of public opinion, and in a supercharged and emotive environment, populist policy came to the fore. Few questioned what the gangs would do now that there was less opportunity for members to work.

Before the Roper Report was submitted, the National Opposition began to publicly reframe the gang issue. In mid-February 1987, National’s leader Jim Bolger, released his party’s law and order policy and said if it were government it would not use “kid gloves” in dealing with gangs (*NZ Herald* 18.2.1987). Laws against criminal consorting, removing gang “fortresses”, enabling greater use of electronic surveillance, and increasing the maximum penalty for rape were key features of their policy (New Zealand National Party, 1987). Although it subsequently lost the 1987 election, National had signalled the changing political attitude toward gangs; no longer were gangs viewed as a wider social problem, but as problem of law and order. As the shocking details of the Ambury Park rape case were widely reported during and after the June 1987 trial, the tough approach undoubtedly reflected public opinion and the Roper Report was quickly forgotten.

One further factor in this changing attitude toward gangs may have come from the fact the membership of such groups was maturing, a point I will expand on in the following chapter. Dover Samuels, the Maori representative on the Labour Party Council, summed up this point of view by saying, “They can no longer be classified as irresponsible teenagers” (*NZ Herald* 16-12-1986).

Following a portfolio reshuffle after the 1987 election, the new Minister of Police, Peter Tapsell, a highly conservative Maori Labour MP, outlined the Labour government’s stance toward gangs. In speaking to *Pacific Islands Monthly* (October 1987) magazine, he said, “We have had a gutful of mindless thuggery of some gang members, and I am determined that it will be stopped in its tracks” and that lawlessness would be “dealt with immediately and severely”.

It was the beginning of a cycle of political rhetoric, as both the National and Labour parties battled to position themselves as the party taking the toughest line on gangs. In 1988, National MP Ross Meurant, the former head of the infamous police ‘Red Squad’ that had battled anti-tour protestors with shields and batons in the civil unrest during the 1981 South African rugby tour, began to posit strong police action, saying, “The only thing these gang members understand is the long end of an aluminium police PR24 baton” (*NZ Herald* 13.10.1988). Meurant, in a style reminiscent of Gideon Tait, said that if he were the Minister of Police he would take a team policing unit, give its leadership to an ex-Red Squad commander, and “tour the country systematically mopping up the element who intimidate and terrify people in

the malls and streets of our small towns and cities” (*NZPD*, 1988, vol.494: p,8233). It heralded the return to ascendancy of those favouring law and order as the primary response to gangs.

In a sign of things to come in the 1990s, the government embarked on legislative measures to combat the gangs. In 1987, Amendments to the Violent Offences Act allowed for greater powers of surveillance, such as electronic ‘bugging’. And at the same time, changes were made to Section 695A of the Local Government Act giving powers to remove gang fortifications. The interception or ‘bugging’ law enabled the police to apply to a High Court Judge for warrants to intercept private communications by an “organised criminal enterprise” (*NZ Herald* 1-5-1987). The Committee on Violence was unconvinced by the need for greater bugging laws, but they did think fortifications were “quite unacceptable and that not only did they pose very real problems” and that they “surely heighten the feelings of isolation of the occupants” (Committee of Inquiry into Violence, 1987: p.91-2). Heightened feelings of isolation were not a concern shared by those inside the palisades. In fact, of all the legislative measures hitherto targeting gangs, attempts to remove their fortifications were the ones most fiercely objected to.

As an indication of their increasing organisation, many outlaw motorcycle clubs participated in the select committee process. The Tribesmen drew up a petition, signed by their neighbours, in support of their fence (*Dominion* 16.1.1988), at least one chapter of the Highway 61 lobbied their local government (*Evening Post* 20.5.1987), while representatives from Galgoffa,

Hell's Angels, Outlaws, Satan's Slaves, and Sinn Fein all made submissions to the select committee examining the proposed law change (*NZ Herald* 4.6.1987). Although the legislation was passed by parliament, it quickly ran into legal difficulties. Any definition of the target problem tended to omit certain gang fortifications or include some common house fences. Subsequently, police applications to remove fortifications simply got bogged down by gang appeals and a Ministerial Report (1989) late in the decade concluded that the law was unworkable.

Despite this failure, more laws were forthcoming. In 1989, changes to the Criminal Justice Act allowed courts to impose non-association orders on convicted persons, while amendments to the Summary Offences Act empowered the police to disperse groups of people threatening the public order. The laws were clearly targeting gangs and their anti-social activities, but it appears neither has been widely used.

Within this new political environment that favoured a suppressive approach, despite a positive review of their operations in September 1986 (Plunkett et al., 1986) and ongoing positive remarks in the Labour Department's annual reports (*AJHR*, G.1, 1987: p.54; *AJHR*, G.1, 1988; p.34), GELS was disestablished in 1989 and the social policy agenda targeting gangs was officially over.

Conclusion

The social policy agenda that dominated thinking around gangs for much of the 1980s was a unique period in New Zealand's gang history. During this period, gangs were seen as a social problem that required social redress. Despite this acceptance, however, the scope of the social policies targeting gangs was extremely limited, and primarily focused on the issue of unemployment. As has been outlined in the earlier theory chapters of this thesis, however, gang researchers have found that the issues around gang formation and maturation are complex and comprise a multitude of different social factors. Despite some rhetorical political flourishes and the conclusions of the Comber Report in 1981 acknowledging the complexity of the issue, it was unemployment that took primacy in New Zealand. In this way, the root causes of gang formation were rarely challenged, and indeed, as outlined in the previous chapter, influenced by people like Denis O'Reilly, Prime Minister Muldoon – who formed a unique relationship with the gangs – made it clear that he was not seeking to disband the gangs but redirect them into positive organisations. With this in mind, the Contract Work Schemes were established so that the gangs could undertake work as collectives, thus providing employment to gangs without seeking to reduce gang numbers.

Given this, the social agenda targeting gangs could not have, and indeed never sought to, rid New Zealand of gangs. Measures of its success, therefore, can only be judged against its goals to mitigate gang violence and to ensure that gang members did not become further alienated from society, primarily by engaging them in work. Without specific measures, a judgement on this cannot be definitively stated, but certainly at the time, as expressed by

numerous commentaries noted above, and including that of the Roper Report, in these areas GELS and the work schemes were seen as successful.

The demise of the social agenda, then, came about not because of a perceived lack of effectiveness but due to a radical changing political environment suspicious of interventionist policies and a 'perfect storm' of controversy, which included several high profile issues, that sapped political and public support from the measures targeting gangs.

Clearly, a negative factor related to the social policy agenda was the administrative deficiencies and serious flaws of the Contract Work Schemes, brought to political – and, in turn, public – attention by the police, which allowed gangs, in certain instances, to profiteer from them. Gangs being seen to afford luxury vehicles at a time when unemployment and hardship were rife, was never going to engender in the public anything but distain. As was noted by some commentators, however, these deficiencies could have been fixed, and the schemes putting gangs to work maintained – the original PEP schemes, for example, did not allow for abuse –, but the backlash from the 'perfect storm' proved politically irresistible to a government with a free market agenda and little appetite interventionist work schemes.

Most critically, however, it was not just work programmes targeting gangs that were destroyed when the Contract work Schemes were axed, gone too was any real acknowledgement that gangs are a consequence of negative social conditions, and with this the demise of GELS. Without a policy drive to put

gangs to work, a vacuum of solutions to the problem of gangs was created and this was filled by political commentary about 'getting tough' on gangs. And here can be found the significance of the Ambury Park rape. The assault at Ambury Park was not atypical of gangs at the time, but its timing, when elements within the Mongrel Mob were publicly espousing that the gang was changing for the better, and, importantly, the graphic nature of the media coverage, meant a tough suppressive response, and not social policy adjustment, was what the public demanded.

As will become clear in the following chapters, within the new milieu of political and public thought, gangs shifted from being a symptom of wider social problems to being seen as a distinct problem that were the cause of social ills. It was a significant change in perception. Gangs no longer required social redress, but strong repressive action. In many ways the gangs had not changed; the society around them had.

Chapter Eight.

An Evolutionary Shift: - c1990s

Introduction

As the final decade of the 20th century dawned, New Zealand's economy was in dire shape and in many areas hardship was rife. Both directly and indirectly, the anaemic economy significantly influenced new developments in the gang scene. One such development was the advent of different forms of gangs, namely white power – predominantly skinhead – groups.

Although not occurring in isolation, the economic situation also affected the patched gang scene in important ways. The most publicly recognisable of these changes was a move into profit driven criminal enterprise – the focus of the chapter to follow – but this move was just part of an important evolutionary shift whereby, with different degrees of advancement, patched gangs became sophisticated 'grey organisations' deeply embedded within certain communities.

This chapter will examine the political changes occurring in the early 1990s and the continuing deterioration of the economy, and linking these structural factors to gang changes and maturation. It will explore the aging nature of

gang membership and the growing sophistication evident within patched gangs. It will also highlight the gang/community balance – forged from an acceptance of gang permanence – that had evolved by the 1990s and a successful template employed by police to quell gang behaviour that breached what communities were prepared to tolerate.

Political and Economic Influences on Gang Formation and Change

As the country went to the polls for the general election in October 1990, widespread disillusionment with the radical policies adopted by the Fourth Labour Government was overwhelming. Led by the conservative Jim Bolger, whose staid personality added credibility to a more moderate approach, the National Party made a pre-election promise of a return to a “decent society” (New Zealand National Party, 1990) The party won the election in an unprecedented landslide, claiming 67 of the 97 seats on offer.

The change of government, however, did not adjust the direction of the country; in fact, it confirmed it. The new Minister of Finance, Ruth Richardson, adopted the same monetarist policies championed by Labour’s Roger Douglas. Despite the new government making significantly fewer economic changes than the last (Belich, 2001: p.410), neo-liberalism or the New Right was confirmed as a bipartisan philosophy.

The National Government continued the previous government’s policy of asset sales and privatisation. Doing business was made easier as compulsory unionism was axed and the Employment Contracts Act (1991) was

introduced. The latter removed penal rates and other employment provisions, reducing the ability of workers to collectively negotiate wages and other employment conditions. The changes cut costs for businesses but came at the expense of workers. Those dependent on social welfare fared worse. In 1991, the government slashed benefit payments, equating to a drop in income for beneficiaries of between 2.9 and 24.7 percent (Dalziel & Lattimore, 1996: p.90). Further affecting many on welfare or low incomes was the decision to charge market rents for state housing. Unsurprisingly, the difference between the rich and poor was widening, and the poor were becoming poorer; between 1987 and 1993, the real spending power of the wealthiest 20 percent of New Zealanders increased by seven percent, while the poorest quintile dropped by nearly three percent (Kelsey, 1995: p.258). A change of government had not brought respite for those most affected by the dramatic reforms of the 1980s; it had, in fact, brought greater hardship. And thus the social conditions readily identified by international researchers as important to gang formation and maturation (for example Hagedorn, 1988; Jankowski, 1991; Short, 1996a; Taylor, 1989; Vigil, 2002) were enhanced.

Despite the promise that the post-1984 reforms would make the economy stronger, the New Zealand economy went into recession during 1991 and 1992. As noted in the last chapter, total unemployment soared and eventually peaked at between 10 and 11 percent, and one in four Maori were unemployed (Department of Statistics, 1993: p.272). New Zealand was experiencing the most significant rise in unemployment since the Great Depression (Massey, 1995: p.161).

With no apparent return to a 'decent society', and with many people feeling betrayed by its continuation of monetarist policies, National's support plummeted in the 1993 election, but they clung to power with 50 of the 99 seats on offer. Widespread dissatisfaction with the country's political situation was reflected in a poll from 1992 that showed just four percent of people trusted politicians (King, 2003: p.493) and this distrust was to have significant implications. In a referendum held alongside the general election of 1993, New Zealanders chose to adopt proportional representation via a Mixed Member Proportional System (MMP), effectively removing unbridled power from the two, traditionally dominate parties. As will be shown in Chapter Nine, these political changes impacted on the gang scene in the run up to the 1996 election, but it was the country's economic situation that was initially more significant.

The failing economy and high levels of unemployment proved important to the patched gangs' evolutionary development within the decade, but they also aided the formation of new types of gangs. One such development that became particularly obvious in the 1990s was the rise of Pakeha street gangs, often with neo-fascist and white power tendencies, the most easily identifiable of which were skinheads.

Skinheads

Following overseas trends (Addison, 1996; Hamm, 1993; Jefferson, 1976) skinhead groups had been in New Zealand since the late 1970s and in

Wellington in the early 1980s, a skinhead band was established called the Knives of West Eleven who were said to be “quite serious about their neo-fascism” (Spoonley, 1987: p.105). Similarly, in Christchurch, the small skinhead music scene thrived in the early 1980s with the advent of bands like Desperate Measures, Unauthorised, Aryan Army, and Johnnies (Addison, 1996: p.93) and three skinhead gangs soon formed; the Christchurch Skins, the United Skinheads (known as the ‘Uniteds’) and the Firm. These were not the only skinhead groups in the city. Other less formal groups were simply known by the suburb from which they came; for instance, Papanui skins or Linwood skins (Addison, 1996: p.101), many of whom were not overtly racist (Chapman 1997 pers. comm.). These few examples of incipient skinhead gangs, however, faded away in rather short measure and it was not until the 1990s that skinhead and white power groups surged to national attention, in large part as a result of the adverse economic conditions and increasing levels of Asian immigration.

When the economy deteriorated in the 1980s, those communities worst affected tended to be lower socioeconomic. Given that these areas were predominately made-up of Maori and Pacific peoples, it is of little surprise that gangs of this ethnic makeup became the most common. However, as the economic conditions worsened in the early 1990s, and spread to impact a wider section of the population, large tracts of urban Pakeha were also severely affected. Unemployment and a bleak social and economic outlook fostered a sense of alienation within many Pakeha youth. Perhaps ignorant of the true genesis of their plight, they lashed out at ethnic minorities who they

felt were saturating the job market or challenging their perceived status as the dominant ethnic group.

Although the anaemic economy provided a foundation for these groups, as was the case with early development of the patched gangs, they were given direction and impetus by other developments. In the early 1990s, there was a surge of white supremacist or reactionary groups around the world and the advent of the internet meant that their literature was easily spread (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.188). In New Zealand, a book – largely a photo essay – on New Zealand gangs by Bill Payne (1997) called *Staunch* featured a section on skinheads, and this gave the movement a “minor shot in the arm” (Addison, 1996: p.103). But perhaps the most significant pop-culture influence came in 1992, when an Australian film depicting the struggles of a group of skinheads called *Romper Stomper* was released. It became a cult classic for many youths who identified with the characters and sought to mimic their beliefs and lifestyle. The film had a major impact in shaping the skinhead scene in New Zealand (Addison, 1996: p.102-3; Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.188). Certainly, the skinhead movement gained greater momentum and wider appeal. Many predominately Pakeha motorcycle gangs, particularly those in the South Island, went through a dramatic visual change as their traditionally shaggy appearance gave way to close cropped or shaved heads. Indeed, many skinhead gangs had close links with the predominantly Pakeha outlaw motorcycle clubs, particularly the South Island clubs (with the exception of Highway 61) and the Satan’s Slaves in the North Island. Perhaps the most significant group to emerge from the white power ranks was Christchurch’s

Harris Gang, at the core of which were four brothers; Daryl, Ricky, Paul and Russell Harris.

Initially the brothers were associates of the Epitaph Riders who aspired to prospect for the gang, but I have been told that they were rejected by the outlaw club for being too dangerous and quick to attract police attention. Striking out on their own they established a clubhouse and a staunch group of followers. Their association with the Epitaph Riders had given them a first class training in the requirements of being a gang, and they quickly gained reputation as a fearsome group, involving themselves in numerous criminal activities (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.188). In October 1990, the Harris Gang were involved in an ongoing war with Highway 61 and twelve members of the group were convicted for shooting – non-fatally – two Highway 61 members at the Brisbane Street periodic detention centre (*NZ Herald* 2.12.1991). Although only one member pulled the gun's trigger, none of the group would say who. The group's leader, Daryl Harris, told me in 2005 that the fact that everyone stuck tight was a source of pride among the gang and proof of their commitment. Those outsiders who did testify against the gang were terrorised and several houses were bombed or set alight. One woman who testified against the group, and another man, were marched out of the woman's house at gunpoint by two masked men who then proceeded to set it on fire (*NZ Herald* 2.12.1991; *The Press* 23.9.1992). Although the groups looked capable of achieving longevity on its own, in 1993, fulfilling their outlaw

club ambitions⁴⁸, the Harris Gang became the Christchurch chapter of the Road Knights.

By this time, the Road Knights in Invercargill and Timaru were being bolstered by a young, staunchly white power orientated skinhead gang called the Bandenkrieg⁴⁹. Also informally known as the Germans of Young Germans, the groups acted as a feeder club to the Road Knights and were at least partially under the outlaw club's control.

Another notable group was the Fourth Reich. The Fourth Reich, which formed in Christchurch's Paparua Prison⁵⁰ in the early 1990s, was a small but hardcore gang who controlled the East Wing of Paparua Prison as well as much of the jail in Invercargill. During the mid-1990s, it was said that any skin who was sent to East Wing would be stood over by the Fourth Reich and told "he must join them, grow his hair back, or 'go West' [to the protection wing]" (Addison, 1996: p.197). Although formidable within the prison, the Fourth Reich struggled to maintain strong numbers outside of jail, but nevertheless did develop a presence in Christchurch, Nelson, Greymouth, Timaru and Dunedin (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.189).

In 1991, two members of the Fourth Reich killed Hemi Huntley a Greymouth Maori, in a racially motivated murder. Ironically, one of the killers. Neihana Foster, was himself part-Maori. This seemingly anomalous situation

⁴⁸ Sometime before this, the group either had, or were seeking to, form an outlaw club called the 'Last Rebels'. Many years later, I saw the back patch that they had designed for this purpose.

⁴⁹ Translated from German means 'gang war'.

⁵⁰ Officially known as Christchurch Men's Prison.

highlighted the often special – though seldom explicitly discussed – status given to Maori in skinhead gangs, as exhibited by their occasional inclusion to such groups. It is unclear, however, why this status did not extend to the Maori victim. Such a paradox highlights the lack of ideological or philosophical rigor evident within most skinhead groups⁵¹. The killing was not the only time the Fourth Reich came to national attention.

In 1997, a member of the gang – who described himself as having the rank of ‘private’ – had his finger cut off. The victim told the Christchurch High Court he was punished for wanting to leave the group (*NZ Herald* 8-5-1998) but it is widely known to those close to the gang that the punishment was for the theft of the gang’s drug supply. Then, in 1998, a conflict between the gang and the Lost Breed of Nelson was exposed when a Lost Breed member was nearly killed in an attack in Papanui Prison. According to a prison officer, the Fourth Reich member said, “something to the effect that this will teach you for crossing us” (*The Press* 3-4-1999).

One response to the growing problem, and in recognition of the damaging publicity to the city at the centre of skinhead activity, the Christchurch City Council helped fund the New Way Trust in 1994. Established by Kyle Chapman, the Trust’s objectives were:

⁵¹ Prominent skinhead leader, Kyle Chapman, using the words of Robert Mathews – the leader of an American white nationalist group called ‘The Order’ – put it to me thus: “If it looks white, acts white, and fights white, then it is white”. For his part, Foster told police that his father was white and his heart was white (*Sunday Star Times* 29.6.2008).

- a) To enable and assist young people alienated from Mainstream [sic] society (particularly those known as Skinheads) to participate in rehabilitation programmes
- b) To assist young people who are unemployed to increase their skills and obtain useful employment (New Way Trust, 1994: p.1).

In 1995, an evaluation of the Trust's work commissioned by the Christchurch City Council and the police Crime Prevention Unit gave a largely positive view of the work being undertaken (see Addison, 1995). Nevertheless, the Trust quickly became controversial when Chapman confessed to numerous historic race-based crimes he had undertaken as a skinhead in Invercargill, including the firebombing of a marae. Chapman said the confession was to "ensure he paid his debt to society" (*NZ Herald* 11-1-1995). Chapman told me in 2007 that the confessions were part of an Alcoholics Anonymous pledge that he had taken after giving up drugs and alcohol and becoming a Christian. Despite the seriousness of the crimes, Chapman escaped a jail sentence, largely due to his positive work at the New Way Trust. The Trust's chairperson and Christchurch City Councillor, David Close, said he admired Chapman's courage in confessing, something he took "as evidence of his commitment to a new way of life" (*NZ Herald* 11-1-1995).

However, in 1997, Chapman again created headlines when he was linked to the distribution of racist literature, a copy of which I have obtained, which called on "Young patriots...for the formation of a fascist youth group". The pamphlets, which were distributed to many Christchurch mailboxes, carried a

picture of a paramilitary figure and implored: “If you love your race and nation and have the courage to fight for your homeland...Join Now!”

Chapman’s desire to help motivate disillusioned Pakeha youth had clearly taken a more radical path. His association with the Trust became untenable and he left to establish a new skinhead gang – the Hammerskins. The Hammerskins became a chapter of an international skinhead movement, which for a short time became quite prominent in different parts of the country⁵². Under Chapman’s leadership the group shunned drugs, encouraged only moderate use of liquor and promoted general wellbeing because “your better fitness may be the deciding factor in battle” (New Zealand Hammerskins, c2003).

Overall, the most obvious skinhead and white power activities were reserved for the South Island where there are smaller populations of Maori and Pacific peoples. One notable exception to this was the rise of a group called Unit 88⁵³ in West Auckland. The group formed under the guidance of long time fascist, Colin Ansell (also known as Colin King-Ansell), who had established the New Zealand Nazi party in the 1960s and was also a founding member of the New Zealand Fascist Union. Unit 88 was overtly racist and established a base in an industrial area in Henderson, Auckland. The group soon received significant attention in the media – simply for their brash appearance in the heart of an area with a significant Maori and Pacific population. A co-founder of Unit 88, Karl Warlock, said that attacks on black families had led the public

⁵² For more on the Hammerskins internationally see www.hammerskins.net

⁵³ The name is derived from the letter H being the 8th letter of the alphabet, and so 88 is HH which in turn is a contraction of Heil Hitler.

to believe Christchurch was the main centre for white power activities, but “[y]ou might be surprised how many skinheads there are in the Auckland district” (*NZ Herald* 17-11-1997). The gang began printing and distributing white supremacist leaflets and the Race Relations Conciliator, Rajen Prasad, said he would look to take legal action against the gang as their material “incites racial disharmony and breaches our anti-discrimination laws” (*NZ Herald* 19-11-1997). The gang also elicited comment in parliament with Opposition MPs calling for race-hate laws. Minister of Justice Doug Graham responded that he was satisfied existing legislation was adequate and that the Race Relations Conciliator would act as necessary (*NZPD*, 1997, vol.565: p.4545). But Rajen Prasad was saved any such action as a more immediate deterrent to the gang came from both the Black Power and the Head Hunters who stated that Unit 88 would not be tolerated and that they would be subjected to “street justice” (*NZ Herald* 20-11-1997). The threats were not hollow and following “visits” from both gangs, Unit 88 vacated their clubhouse (*NZ Herald* 21-11-1997) and quickly petered out.

The sudden rise and fall of Unit 88 is perhaps a reflective microcosm of skinhead gangs generally. While the movement flared significantly in the early and mid-1990s, it began to fade by the end of the decade. Even in the stronghold city of Christchurch, the street prominence of skinheads all but disappeared. The wider skinhead fashion had ebbed, and with it the skinhead gangs. Unlike the patched gangs, they were unable to achieve significant longevity. Many of these groups lacked the organisational structure of the patched gangs, and although some skinheads held onto their ideals, the

improving economy and lower unemployment – particularly among Pakeha – robbed the scene of recruits. A further explanation for the moribund was the markedly different social folkways evident within the 1990s compared to the 1970s and 80s. As earlier chapters have shown, the majority of the established gangs were born in a period in the 1960s and 70s that prided itself on shunning private material possessions and a culture of sharing. However, the skinheads were of a time when individualism and self-attainment were at the fore, and such an ethos was not as conducive to successfully forming the bonds – or achieving a physical base, such as a club house – that had previously gelled the patched gangs together.

Although not a focus of this research, these forms of gang are in need of systematic study, not least to confirm the tentative findings I have presented above, but also to underscore the idea that gang formation is a consequence of social conditions and not ethnicity. While ethnic minorities may face ‘multiple marginality’ (Vigil, 1988) and therefore be more susceptible to gang formation, the establishment of gangs by a dominant ethnic group is achieved when the necessary conditions present themselves.

Changes in the Patched Gang Scene

But while skinhead and white power gangs sparked concern around the country for a short period, the focus of political leaders generally remained on the significantly more prevalent patched gangs. As outlined in the previous chapter, the political rhetoric around ‘cracking down’ on the gangs through punitive measures increased with the demise of the social policy agenda in

the late 1980s. One person to talk tough about the gangs while in opposition was the National Party's police spokesperson, John Banks. A confrontational and deeply conservative man, Banks' own troubled upbringing did not hold him back from a successful career in business and, perhaps because of that, he had little time for those who he saw as apologising for the faults of the poor. Never short of colourful diatribe, Banks variously described gang members as "sewer rats", "useless", "cowards", and "depraved mongrels in every sense of the word" (Newbold, 2000: p.218). He also declared that if in office, he would use the "commandos from the armed forces" to deal with out of control gangs. Despite the fact New Zealand's armed forces do not have 'commandos' as such, Banks was resolute, "That", he said, "is a promise" (*NZPD*, vol. 496, 1989: p.9742). He also said that if National were to gain power in the 1990 election he would introduce legislation to make the country safe for "decent law abiding citizens" and "make [gang members'] lives a misery" (*NZ Herald* 28.10.1989). Following National's 1990 election victory, Banks became the Minister of Police. Seemingly eager to tackle the gang problem, he did not have to wait long before he was put to the test, as will become clear in a section below. But the gangs confronting Banks and others were significantly different to what they had been in the past.

By the 1990s, New Zealand patched gangs had evolved greatly and had become what Hagedorn (2005b) has elsewhere described as 'institutionalised'. Hagedorn says that a gang has institutionalised when it persists despite changes to leadership, it has organisation complex enough to sustain multiple roles for its members, can adapt to changing environments

without dissolving, fulfils some needs of the community, and organises a distinct outlook for its members (Hagedorn, 2005b: p.162).

As highlighted in earlier chapters, many of the facets outlined by Hagedorn – for example an ability to survive leadership turnover and the formation of a distinct outlook for members – were evident in the formation of New Zealand gangs and thus are not necessarily a reflection of them having become ‘institutionalised’. Key elements of gang institutionalisation having occurred in New Zealand, therefore, can be identified as the longevity of membership (and how this influenced gang development), the increasingly sophisticated social roles the gang fulfilled, and an acceptance by the community of a gang presence, or what I term the gang/community balance. And these factors, upon which I will expand, can all be linked – to greater or lesser degrees – to the fractured economy.

The Maturation of Gang Membership

Arguably the most important development within the New Zealand patched gang scene in the 1980s and increasingly obvious in the 1990s was the advancing age of many gang members and subsequently the maturity of the gangs generally. No longer were gangs the fleeting dalliance of youth that they had been prior to the 1980s.

The changing age demographic of New Zealand’s gangs is evident in observations made by the Comber and Roper reports discussed in the previous chapter. The 1981 Comber Report had found that the gangs were

“almost universally made up of adolescent males” (Committee on Gangs, 1981: p.10). Six years later, however, the Roper Report had concluded that, “There now seem to be many older members, with families of their own” (Committee of Inquiry into Violence, 1987: p.88). Indeed, a great many of the gang members observed and interviewed for this research first became involved in the gang scene in the 1970s and 1980s, and many of them remain in gangs today.

Given that this shift occurred during the time of the social policy agenda, it is important to consider whether the relationship was causal. Certain U.S. researchers, most notably Klein (1971: pp.136-139; 1995: p.81), have stated that poorly directed government programmes – like some detached youth work programmes – aid gang cohesion and gang organisational development by giving gangs specific recognition. Critically, however, unlike Klein’s gangs, gangs in New Zealand, as argued previously, had already implemented formal structures and rules, and thus were clearly defined organisations *before* being targeted by social programmes. This was evident in the definitional shift between ‘incipient gang’ and ‘gang’. Nevertheless, the fact that New Zealand’s social policies, primarily via the Contract Work Schemes, sought to transform gangs into positive groups rather than disband them, means that it is likely they contributed, in some cases, to members staying in the gangs for longer as state-funded programmes provided opportunities to earn income.

But the increasing length of gang membership appears to have been universal to all New Zealand gangs and not just those partaking in

government funded work programmes. Therefore, an arguably more important contributing factor to gang maturation was the negative economic environment that New Zealand was experiencing in the 1980s and the 1990s. Whyte's (1943/1981) study in Boston, that began during the midst of the Great Depression, found that during the economic downturn, gangs stayed together due to the fact members were able to achieve more as a group in hard times than they could as individuals. As such, membership was older. Similarly, Moore found that when a negative economic environment affected the barrios of Los Angeles in the 1980s, gang membership grew older as there were fewer opportunities for those who joined gangs to cut loose their adolescent ties (J. W. Moore, 1991: p.23). As noted in previous chapters, the abundance of high paying, semi- or unskilled jobs up until the late 1970s was a critical factor in gang members being able to freely exit the gangs as they grew older and matured out of the scene. From the 1980s onward, significant levels of permanent unemployment effectively closed this exit door. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter Six, the increased camaraderie that occurred during gang warfare created rhetoric that portrayed leaving the gang as 'betrayal' and this caused members to consider gang membership as a long-term proposition, an ideal that was actively instilled into prospective members. In short, then, the influence that the work schemes had on the increasing longevity of gang membership was matched, perhaps superseded, by societal factors – particularly the bleak economic environment – and important internal gang dynamics that existed anyway.

This increased maturity began to modify the gangs in fundamental ways. Although one physical manifestation of this was the abandonment of 'ridgies' for a more conservative look, underlying this sartorial transformation were more important changes. New Zealand gangs no longer resembled what Thrasher (1927) described as 'interstitial play groups' that existed between youth and adulthood. In many ways they were beginning to act like quite sophisticated organisations. For the outlaw motorcycle clubs, these trends were consistent with developments seen around the world (Veno, 2003; Wolf, 1991), and the large patched street gangs in New Zealand began to resemble the 'supergangs' that emerged in the U.S. in the 1960s (see for example Brotherton, 2007; Brotherton & Barrios, 2004; Spergel, 1995).

A key element of this transformation was the move into profit driven crime, at least partially driven by the lack of legitimate work opportunities in the poor economic environment. This component of gang activity will be covered in detail in the following chapter, but it is just one of the important changes occurring within the gang scene that gave the gangs a significant 'pull' to prospective members and further encouraged existing members to remain within the gang realm.

Evolution and Gang Development – 'Grey Organisations'

In Chapters Four and Five, I argued that formal organisational structures and rules adopted as standard by New Zealand patched gangs were a significant factor in such groups achieving a durable existence. As the membership of the groups matured, the organisational structure leant itself to the adoption of

a greater number of rules, which developed and sustained intra-gang uniformity and discipline. Furthermore, as the groups became increasingly sophisticated in the 1990s, the functions that the gangs provided to their members began to expand and become more obvious. Moreover, though not widely acknowledged, the gangs began to provide certain community benefits too.

The fact that New Zealand's patched gangs became, and remain, so highly regulated is perhaps, on first appearance, counter-intuitive. As 'anti-social' groups, typically made up of rebellious men, one might expect gangs to be anarchistic. In fact, the reverse is true; because of the non-conformist nature of gang members, the ever present threat of police action, and risks posed by opposition groups, gangs are particularly reliant on stringent rules to function effectively. As with most community organisations or businesses, the gangs' foremost priority is their immediate and long-term survival and viability.

Certain rules appear universal to all patched gangs, although the specific details may vary somewhat. All gangs appear to have formal rules concerning the wearing of the gang's patch or insignia, the requirements for gaining membership, the responsibilities of different hierarchical positions within the gang (i.e. prospect, member, office holder), and concerning how members interact with the police.

As well as formal rules, patched gangs create and maintain numerous informal codes of conduct. In many instances these were no less important

than formal rules and therefore a perceived breach of them would invoke punishment, which might include such things as censures, fines, beatings, and suspensions or expulsions from the gang. Informal codes often outlined specific rules, but ones that are best not formalised or written down – concerning illegal behaviour, for example. But largely the informal codes of conduct tend to be broad prescriptions of acceptable behaviour, and typically they focus on maintaining group cohesion and integrity.

These informal codes, I have discovered, are often based around universally admired qualities, such as honesty, dependability and loyalty, similar to those qualities exhibited in criminal subcultures, as first uncovered by Irwin and Cressey (1962) in the 1960s and explored in a New Zealand context by Newbold (1989a) in the late 1980s. Importantly, these informal codes are primarily judged within the gang sphere. For example, while gangs will generally be nonplussed if one of the members steals a stranger's car, a member would face severe sanction – almost certainly expulsion – if he stole even a small amount from the clubhouse bar. Similarly, a member can miss an important family event, but if he fails to show up for his night on duty at the clubhouse⁵⁴, he will be punished. And, again, a member can constantly cheat on his wife or partner without raising the concern of the gang, but if he is caught cheating with another member's wife or girlfriend, then gang reaction is assured. In these ways, then, the gangs are not instilling universally held principles of morality, but principles of pragmatism, which seek to uphold the integrity of the organisation by curtailing activities that threaten it.

⁵⁴ Gangs schedule duty nights to ensure the clubhouse is always manned. This is to dissuade, or deal with, attacks by opposition groups and also to ensure the bar is available to the group's associates.

Generally, while gang members are highly regulated within the gang realm they are able to do as they please in their own time. However, there are certain limits to this freedom. Most gangs do place some caveats on the outside behaviour of members to ensure that individuals do not act in a way that could undermine or reflect poorly on the gang. Two of numerous such rules include the banning of rape and the use of particular drugs.

From my research, I have found that the banning of rape, discussed in the previous chapter, was based on a number of factors. For many gangs there was undoubtedly a moral component in their decision to implement a ban; as members aged they naturally matured and changed their attitudes, perhaps influenced in many cases by finding a wife or partner and having children, particularly daughters. Equally important, were pragmatic considerations as the crime of rape was beginning to threaten the gangs in several ways. Increasingly longer prison sentences for the crime of rape may have been a successful example of deterrence (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.185) and the threat of several members doing a long stretch in jail could threaten the survival of smaller gangs or gang chapters. Also, rape increasingly caused significant abhorrence in the community and so upset the gang/community balance, a concept I will discuss in detail below.

New Zealand's patched gangs made a similarly pragmatic decision concerning banning the use of certain 'hard' drugs; particularly the use of heroin, a drug that gained prominence in New Zealand in the 1970s

(Newbold, 2004). Within the outlaw club scene, it is widely known that heroin led to the destruction and eventual fall of a previously powerful outlaw motorcycle club in Auckland called the Grim Reapers in the late 1970s. And by the mid-1980s, New Zealand's patched gangs had universally banned the drug, seeing addiction as a threat to the gang and the brotherhood that upholds it.

Almost certainly, the first New Zealand gang to ban the drug was the Hell's Angels who inherited the world-wide Hell's Angels ban when they re-established their international links in the late 1970s. The club informed the media of the ban in the mid-1980s as evidence for their claims they were not a lawless organisation during an immigration dispute that stopped many international members entering the country to celebrate the local chapter's 25th anniversary (*NZ Herald* 7.7.1986). Another drug to be banned by many gangs was the prescription sedative Rohypnol, pills of which were commonly called 'Rollies'. I have been told by a number of members of the Mongrel Mob that certain chapters of that gang put a ban on Rollies, saying 'we don't want no pill-grims'. Heavy use of the drug was creating out-of-control gang members, and even within the mercurial Mongrel Mob the outcomes were seen as dangerous. Reflecting their greater degree of organisation, Black Power were able to put a national ban on the drug. Rei Harris publicly bemoaned the fact that it was too easy for gang members to get prescription drugs. He said that using pills while drinking was "endemic" among many younger gang members: "We are trying to educate them out of it – it is one of the biggest issues the gang faces" (*NZ Herald* 10.9.1988). The drug rules and

the consequences for their breach were simple, and Tribesmen member Vincent George put it succinctly: “No hard drugs, no needles, no pills or else you’re out” (*Dominion* 16.1.1988). As will become clear, however, methamphetamine was or became an exception to most gangs’ anti-hard drug rules.

Internationally, certain gangs, for example the Chicano gangs studied by Moore (1978, 1991), did not prohibit the use of heroin up until the early 1990s, at least. One possible explanation for this is the lack of organisational sophistication evident with barrio gangs in Los Angeles (Jankowski, 1991; J. W. Moore, 1978, 1991; Vigil, 1988). In New Zealand, regular gang meetings and formal voting processes ensure that any perceived organisational threats are easily raised and discussed. Furthermore, a majority vote binds all members meaning that compliance is assured. The overall sophistication of New Zealand gangs, therefore, means they were adept at not only identifying risks, but also at eradicating them.

The creation and enforcement of numerous rules and informal codes of behaviour not only served to protect the gangs, but also ensured that the gangs became powerful socialising agents. The ‘street socialisation’ described by Vigil (1988, 2002) may be perceived as negative in that it supersedes community rules and laws, but for particularly maladjusted individuals, with few or any ties to mainstream social mores, gang membership may in fact positively modify certain anti-social tendencies.

One important function of gang rules and informal codes of behaviour is the protection of camaraderie and the fictive kin relationships that have always been, and remain, at the heart of gang membership. That gangs continued to survive over time is evidence in itself that such groups provided positive function to their membership; and primarily these are the social/psychological factors described by Carlie (2002) and others in Chapter One, the primary expression of which is universally described by New Zealand gang members as 'brotherhood'.

In Whyte's (1943/1981) early study of gangs in Boston, he identified what he referred to as a strong *esprit de corps*. In more recent times, however, Short (1996a) has concluded that although many "members often speak of gangs in family terms...for many, the gang proves to be an undependable form of human association". In New Zealand, I have found that gangs are most often highly dependable and that the rules created by the groups are often set up to protect the integrity of familial-type relations that members actively seek to protect; if members stick to the rules, the gang will stick by them.

The internal bonds within the gangs were made clear to the Roper committee (1987: p.91) in the mid-1980s, which was told by an undercover police officer that he felt the gangs were "not completely negative" and that he "was impressed with their loyalty". In 2008, a former undercover policeman who infiltrated gangs, told me that he was surprised by the level of brotherhood the gangs uphold, something that ran contrary to the one-sided and negative public perceptions formed around gang life:

I am just a person who just grew up in society. We are constantly bombarded with negative information by the media about gangs, you know, like umm... I guess one of those myths I had bought into throughout my growing up and had been hammered into me in the police, I guess a lot of those myths were broken away... so I found... that aspect [brotherhood] of gang life to be quite sort of appealing – or agreeable, yeah.

The fact that brotherhood is noted by outsiders is not surprising, given its centrality to gang existence. The current president of the Auckland Hell's Angels', Doug Jay, speaks of brotherhood thus:

Firstly, brotherhood isn't an idea it's a real thing. It's a feeling of trust and respect and it's really a fine feeling when you know that you can go to virtually any country in the world now and ah walk into a certain address and everyone there will call you their brother – and they will mean it too, because it is true... You know, it instils a lot of confidence in each other – that knowledge – in certain situations whatever they might be. You know you can count on that person to do the right thing under those circumstances – whatever the situation is. You know, it's just having respect and learning to live with the fact that you may not all get on, you know, and that's impossible really. You may not even like some of them – or one or two of them – but you still respect them as a brother and a Hell's Angel and that's important (2006 pers. comm.).

Of international outlaw motorcycle club members, Veno said that, "When members call each other 'brother' they actually mean it. For many, the club becomes their family, particularly if they've come from dysfunctional homes" (Veno, 2003: p.112). In 2007, Vic Faulkner, the past president of the Lost Legion, an outlaw club based in Blenheim, told me that his club existed on a "brotherhood feeling" because in "most cases the members and associates on the fringe did not have families, so to speak, so the club was the only family they had. Myself included". Indeed, I believe one of the reasons that intra-gang bonds are so strong is that many members are attempting to create common family attachments that they never experienced, have lost or found unsatisfactory.

This, and the depth and importance of brotherhood among gang members, is particularly well evinced by the actions of Black Power member Eugene Ryder. Ryder first joined the gang in the early 1980s after a long spell in prison in his late teens and an unhappy adolescence, throughout which he shifted around between different foster families. Ryder considers Black Power his family. In the late 1990s, Ryder was doing youth work for Mokai Kainga, a community organisation based in Wellington, when his funding was cut by the government once MPs became aware he was a gang member. The Associate Minister of Social Welfare, Nick Smith said, "this is part of a wider Government policy of zero tolerance for gangs...The aim is to try to ensure funds appropriated for community organisations cannot be siphoned off in any way to support gang culture" (*NZ Herald* 24.7.1998). Clearly it is a

fundamental turnaround from political attitudes of the 1980s, but it reflected the new and politically bi-partisan approach of the 1990s.

Ryder told me that he was approached by the Minister with an offer that the funding being reinstated if he would publicly renounce his membership of the gang:

It wasn't until they found out that I was still a member of the Black Power and they realised, 'oh my God, we're funding a gang member'. And the day I found out was the day I lost all funding. Basically the media caught up on it and they wanted to do a story. It was funny because when they were doing the story I got a note from the Minister of the time that if I go on camera denouncing the Black Power and handing my patch in they'll give the funding back. Which was \$180,000, what he was willing to pay for my patch type of thing. I was looking at it and thinking, ohhh yeah, I'll do that if you go on TV and denounce your brother and your mother and everyone you hold dearly to you - I'll do that if you do that. He just thought I was an idiot for saying that, and I thought he was an idiot for asking.

For Ryder, Black Power stood by him when he needed them – they were not something that one could simply leave. As far as Ryder was concerned, the Minister had asked him to leave his family, and few people, he argued, would be asked to do that. Ryder never left the gang, and his commitment provides

an example of just how strong and meaningful the fictive kin ties with gangs can be.

The social/psychological benefits that gangs provide to members, encapsulated by the idea of brotherhood, remain the core pull for gang membership, but as the gangs matured into more sophisticated entities they began to provide a greater array of social and physical benefits for their members. Although I will draw on a number of examples to highlight these developments, it is important to note that the gangs evolved in very different ways. I will make a number of generalisations about this shift – and there are many common components – but it is important to note that significant differences between the gangs were evident, not only between the patched street gangs and the outlaw motorcycle clubs, but also within these groups as well. It is with this important caution in mind that I proceed.

Generally, and throughout the country, gang clubhouses and bars became large and well run. Many gangs in the late 1980s and into the 1990s had abandoned public drinking establishments and retreated into their own clubhouses to avoid undue police attention, something, it seems, that was initially encouraged by some in the police, as they said it would help avoid public disruption caused by gang violence (*NZ Herald* 17.1.1977). With facilities that usually included a pool table, a dartboard, gym equipment, and, when it came about in 1987, pay-for-view 'Sky' television gang clubhouses became centres for gang members to pass free time. In these ways they were similar to university fraternities or sports clubs, providing access to resources

that members could not provide for themselves. These physical amenities increased the attractiveness of gang membership, but importantly also provided benefits to others in the community.

Aided by liquor licensing laws that required public bars to shut at 10pm and on Sundays (legal provisions not relaxed until 1989), gang bars, as illegal operations that were open all hours, became frequented by increasing numbers of outsiders, and thus provided a community function. Consequently, bar sales proved very profitable for the gangs. In the mid-1980s, the Black Power Sindis' bar was hosting two or three hundred people "most nights" (Claydon, 1985: p.51) and accounts seized by police showed that over one four-week period, the bar turned over around \$10,000 per week in liquor sales (*NZ Herald* 15.11.1986). Although gangs tend to be seen as marginalised groups, significant numbers of people, or 'associates', frequented gang facilities. In this way, the clubhouse and the gang became the centre of many people's social lives. The clubhouse bars competed with other community facilities – largely, local drinking establishments – but had the competitive advantage of not abiding by licensing hours and other legal considerations; drugs that were approved of by the gang could be openly consumed, for example. At a time when many people were faced with a difficult social environment, due largely to the struggling economy, the gangs were offering a significant benefit to members – and others as well.

However, regularly attracting people meant certain adjustments needed to be made to the gang lifestyle. This was reflected in meeting minutes that I have

seen from the early 1980s of the Galgoffa, an outlaw motorcycle club based in Wanganui, which read, “To get more people we need more women. To get more women, members will have to stop acting like dogs”. It is early evidence of the more mature approach to gang life that defined the 1990s. Not unlike other member based community clubs, to gain entry to gang functions, or indeed, the clubhouse at any time, male visitors – the rule appears to have been more relaxed for women – must be known to a member or a close friend and that person is responsible for the guest. Importantly, only members or prospects are able to let anybody in or out of a gang’s gates.

While the clubhouse played a central role in providing for many of the social needs of gang members and some members of the community, the gangs, in particular the outlaw motorcycle clubs, began to organise other community events. In 1982, the Magogs hosted their first bi-annual motorcycle show, which became and remains a significant social event in New Plymouth. Similarly, the Mothers’ ‘Race Day’ (Palmerston North) and the Devil’s Henchmen’s ‘Devil’s Day’ (Christchurch), for example, became popular motor sport events participated in by other outlaw clubs – provided the groups had friendly associations – and members of the wider motorcycling community.

Something that became universal to the outlaw motorcycle scene, were ‘poker runs’, events that combine riding to various pubs and the card game of poker. The Auckland Hell’s Angels held their first poker run in 1992, but it soon became so big that they could no longer start it from their clubhouse. In the two years that I attended the poker run, 2007 and 2008, it attracted around

250 motorcyclists each year, only a fraction of whom were outlaw club members, and thousands of dollars worth of prizes from companies sponsoring the event.

These types of events – with the endorsement and support of businesses via sponsorship – gave credibility to the idea that outlaw motorcycle clubs were legitimate community organisations and were also used as a point of difference between the outlaw clubs and the patched street gangs:

We consider ourselves legitimate motorcycle clubs. A lot of our clubs are registered, incorporated societies. The Mongrel Mob, Black Power, whatever you want to call them, are generally ethnic street gangs. They are not recognised motorcycle clubs. We do not associate with them (Neil Lockward, Magog, in *NZ Herald* 4-6-1987)

But it was not just the outlaw clubs who were expanding their activities beyond the clubhouse doors. Beginning in the 1980s, many chapters of the patched street gangs formed rugby league teams in order to play other chapters of their gang, but often within local competitions as well (Payne & Quinn, 1997). In Hawkes Bay, the Taradale Black Power chapter formed the backbone of the Taradale Eagles, which went on to “the longest ever championship holding team in HB Rugby League history” (O'Reilly, 2010). It is one way in which the gangs were providing increasing opportunities for their members. Another notable – and ambitious – initiative arose in Dunedin. Under the guidance of long-time member and former GELS officer, Harry

Tam, the Mongrel Mob had devised a '\$100 housing scheme'. The scheme started with loans from Maori Affairs, the Housing Corporation and the Labour Department. This funding was then used to buy and renovate an old house that was subsequently on-sold to purchase a block of land. The chapter's trust then negotiated a deal with a kitset home company, Colonial Homes, whereby members could construct the housing themselves and pay the trust \$100 per week to cover the mortgage, rates and insurance (Winter, 1998: p.254). Another chapter on the east coast of the North Island had a fishing quota and boat that provided employment for its members (Winter, 1998: p.255). It was these types of initiatives that Tam wanted to see occurring nationwide. In 1992, the gang established the Mob Advisory Panel which divided the country into six regions: Northern, King Country, Hawkes Bay, Bay of Plenty, Lower North Island, and South Island. These regions were overseen by six elected representatives of the gang who were trained, supported and given direction by Tam as National Coordinator (Mob Advisory Panel, c1996: p.4)⁵⁵.

But perhaps the boldest and most significant gang initiative was undertaken in 1994 by the Magog, an outlaw motorcycle based in New Plymouth. Already running a motorcycle show, noted above, that was growing in popularity, the Magog – under the leadership of Russell 'Shagger' Gilmer – decided to celebrate their 20th anniversary in style. An imposing but intelligent and considered man, Gilmer told me in 2004, "We wanted to present an event that would be totally enjoyable for the public and totally memorable for the club".

⁵⁵ Having constructed one house, the \$100 housing scheme fell away as Harry Tam moved to Wellington. MAP too did not survive long. Following a MAP leader, Edge Te Whaiti being convicted for dealing LSD in 1996, Tam – controversially – got a job at the Ministry of Youth Affairs as a policy analyst.

Their first idea was to get the Rolling Stones to perform but in the end, they successfully negotiated with another British rock band, Jethro Tull, to come to New Zealand. So successful was the club's promotion of the concert, they ended up putting on two sold-out shows.

The concerts were a boon to the Magog. Not only did they provide a significant financial windfall, they also dramatically raised the club's profile. The bikers appeared on numerous television news programmes – replete with cell phones that were rare at that time – and spoke articulately about their venture. Rex Moore, the public relations and marketing manager of the New Plymouth District Council said, “The Magog and President Russell ‘Shagger’ Gilmer should be congratulated on their creativity and initiative in staging the event” (*Daily News* 1.3.1994). The editorial of the local newspaper was equally effusive: “The Magog entrepreneurial skills should be applauded. To have a dream and translate that vision into reality is a tribute to Shagger and his team” (*Daily News* 1.3.1994).

As noted, many of these gang events were enjoyed by a wide range of people, but some groups received direct benefit from them. A number of outlaw clubs donated the proceeds of these types of events to charitable organisations. In the 1970s and 1980s, such undertakings almost certainly would have been applauded as efforts at gangs conforming, but in the 1990s – under a banner of zero tolerance – they were seen by many officials as simply an exercise in public relations.

Labour MP Mark Peck reflected this view in 1997 when he spoke about the efforts by some groups to raise funds for charity: "I am not fooled when gang members talk about their little bike trips to raise money for child cancer. What a load of gratuitous claptrap! They do that to curry favour with a certain group of the electorate, but they have absolutely no desire to give away their lawlessness" (*NZPD*, vol.565, 1997: p.5552). Similarly, in 2007, one senior police officer told me: "It's like a motorcycle [gang] can do – can get publicity because they do a teddy bear run or something for children or a hospital or whatever. The media love it, they get great publicity and people think, oh, these are good old boys. The public is quite gullible in that sense".

The political rhetoric that became all encompassing following the demise of the social policy agenda seemingly argued that all positive activities undertaken by the gang were simply a cover for sinister endeavours. Such black-and-white thinking, however, masks a truer, more complex, picture and creates a misleading duality between 'good' and 'bad'.

While one cannot dismiss an element of public relations, I believe a better explanation is this: a charitable agenda is a way of attracting greater public participation to an event to ensure its success, thereby making it more enjoyable for members while also ensuring the club gains a sense of status by signalling a display of *class*. These actions may, therefore, still be motivated by self interest but it is not simply an issue of public relations. The Hell's Angels in Auckland, for example, take a low key approach to giving annual donations from their poker run to the Auckland Spinal Rehabilitation Unit,

something incongruent with public relations. Moreover, they also show a genuine commitment to their donor organisation, and a degree of altruism cannot be denied. In 2007, the spinal unit's operations manager, Marianne Cox, told me:

We have very little to do with them, they just come once a year [and donate]. They know when the subscription [for Sky television] is up and they just renew it. Sometimes they have more funds and ask what else they can do... They've an opportunity, to do it with a fit of a flourish, but they don't. We have some donors who bring the press with them and we do that [to help them promote their donation] but they [the Hell's Angels] are very quiet and unassuming. They don't ask for plaques or anything like that. One year they built us outdoor tables – very practical and hands on - which gave a bit of their time and effort. It's easy to give a bit of money but they went further and built us something...It's very genuine when they go that extra effort to make the money go further.

Long-time member of the club, Phil Shubert, told me that the Hell's Angels association with the spinal unit began in the 1970s when one of their numbers was involved in a motorcycle accident and broke his back: "We never forgot what they did, and also you never know when we might be providing their next patient".

While members of the public – and on occasion charities – benefited from gang activities, some businesses were also finding a relationship with the

gangs beneficial in the 1990s. As noted above, a number of businesses sponsored gang events, but others found more direct benefits could be derived from gangs, and certain individuals and businesses began to employ gangs or gang members to collect outstanding debts (Local Government New Zealand, 1997; New Zealand Police, 1996).

Similarly, members of the Hell's Angels had provided security to a number of travelling rock bands and drag races (*NZ Herald* 27-7-1999) during the 1980s and early 1990s, and in 1995 the Nomads and Black Power were used by protest organisers as security during the 79-day Maori land occupation at Moutoa Gardens in Wanganui (*NZ Herald* 10.3.1995; 11.5.1995).

In a variety of different ways, then, the gangs were not just providing social and economic functions for members, but were fulfilling certain community needs as well. Either *in toto* by some people, or selectively by others, the gangs were being used as 'ordinary' community organisations. On the other hand, they were not widely viewed as legitimate because they remained 'lawless', to use Mark Peck's jargon. Nonetheless, the gangs were not lawless as such; they simply created and adhered to their own rules – a situation that I believe made them 'grey organisations' that can neither be viewed as fully illegitimate nor fully legitimate, and this I contend acknowledges the gang situation as being much more nuanced than political leaders during the 1990s were prepared to appreciate; or at least publically espouse. At this discussion's heart, perhaps, is what I describe as the gang/community balance.

The Gang/Community Balance

Despite the political shift that occurred in the late 1980s, resulting in calls for a tough law and order approach, in the communities where gangs had existed for many years and had become institutionalised a gang/community balance had been achieved. For a number of reasons, not least of which was a tacit acceptance that gangs were permanent entities, the communities within which gangs existed learned to live with these groups. This balance between gang and community, however, was not fixed and required maintenance from both sides and, when this failed, intervention by the police.

As they relate to gangs, I believe the community can be divided into three general categories or Weberian (1904/1949: p.90) 'ideal types'. The first of these categories incorporates those people who freely and directly involve themselves with the gang; the 'associates' mentioned earlier. These people tend to range from those who have extremely close associations with a particular gang to others who may on occasion – or at specific gang events – enjoy the alternative social and moral environments provided by the gang. Associates are positively disposed toward gang and its activities.

The second category, which I will call 'incidental associates', is comprised of those who live within the immediate geographic environs of the gang and have some unintentional contact with the gang because of where they live or work. Because by the 1990s, most gangs had become, or had the appearance of, permanent community organisations, this category of people

had accepted the gangs as an inevitable part of their neighbourhoods. Moreover, for many of these incidental associates, their minor contacts with gangs reveal to them that gang members are, more often than not, rather 'ordinary' people, something that came as a surprise to me, and both of the undercover police officers I have interviewed, during my research. Indeed, many of these people are aware of the disconnect between the common perception of gang members and the reality; something I will further explore below and in the following chapter.

Generally, however, it appears that the reasons for this acceptance – particularly in areas with a large gang presence – are embedded in the communities within which gangs rise and exist. By the 1990s, in streets where gangs had clubhouses, and in surrounding areas, the presence of the gang became normalised. In some communities with large Black Power or Mongrel Mob chapters, the degrees of separation between the gang and the community are small. As one resident in the Poriura suburb of Cannon's Creek told me, "Everybody knows the Mob somehow, you know, a relative or a neighbour. It's just the way it is". Contacts such as these were made evident in 1988 when the son of prominent Maori leader, Sir Graham Latimer, joined Black Power (*NZ Herald* 6.5.1988). The fact that, in many instances, gangs were so intricately woven within the fabric of communities lends them a sense of inevitability, as many people cannot reject that gang without rejecting people close to them.

Moreover, if we accept the broad premise put forth by Miller's (1958/1969) working class thesis - that being that gangs embody values of lower class culture, as discussed in Chapter One - then gang behaviour and activities are oftentimes not abnormal to those within the communities where the gangs exist. This is undoubtedly why, for example, the Mongrel Mob in Porirua maintains its clubhouse in the lower socioeconomic area of Cannon's Creek and not the nearby middle class area of Whitby. But while those within the gang's immediate environment may, to varying degrees, have accepted the presence of a gang, this acceptance can be upset and it requires mutual understanding and, oftentimes, maintenance.

In New York, Jankowski (1991) observed that gangs required a certain level of community acceptance in order to function. This acceptance is not immutable and a gang incident that upsets the community will result in a period of unrest whereby people in the area may be more liable to complain to authorities or media and cause disruption or threat to the gang by way of police or political interference. In New Zealand, one example of a gang's management of this balance occurred in 1988 when out-of-town members of the Black Power attending a Labour weekend party at the gang's Wellington headquarters robbed dairy owner Dinesh Bulsara. Wellington and National Black Power president, Rei Harris, invited Dinesh and his family to the pad where he apologised and presented them with a koha: "If you can't trust your neighbour" he said, "who can you trust?" (*Auckland Star* 14.11.1988). It is maintenance on the gang/community balance that aids community acceptance. As one undercover police officer, who wishes to remain

anonymous, told me in 2005, “If you speak to most residents around gang pads [they] will only have positive things to say about these guys”.

Conversely, this balance also requires the community – via the incidental associates – to accept certain behaviours of the gang. A complaint or intrusion by neighbours into acceptable gang behaviour (i.e. behaviour that the majority within the immediate environment are prepared to tolerate) runs the risk that gang action being taken against them. For example, an outlaw motorcycle club experienced trouble in the early 1990s with a nearby neighbour – new to the street – making “unreasonable” complaints about noise; something that others in the street had learned to accept. One of the club’s members said that the complainant and his family had “terrible luck” when they returned from one weekend away to find “they had left plugs in their bath and kitchen sinks and the taps turned on”. The family moved out and the gang/community balance was restored. Importantly, the gang’s intervention was enough to solve the problem without escalating community concern. If the gang had physically attacked the people, they would almost certainly have invoked a backlash. Such a backlash would in all likelihood mean significant police and media attention and cause more trouble for the gang. Although gangs have significant strength within their realms and within the underworld, they are aware that the community – via state agencies like the police – is much more powerful. Indeed, because attacks against outsiders are so risky, such moves are very rare and gangs largely rely on reputation – and the perception of threat – to uphold their interests when dealing with outsiders; an issue I will canvas in the chapter to follow.

Indeed, when the gang undertakes activities that arouse significant concern, it often alerts the third category of community, what is easily termed the 'wider public'. This third category involves the vast majority of people who have no dealings with gangs and do not have gangs in their immediate communities; a category of people which only hear about gangs when they are in the media – and from these portrayals form their views. Because the media coverage is most often negative,⁵⁶ I have found the wider public tend to have the most negative feelings toward gangs; despite the fact – perhaps because of the fact – they are the most removed from the gangs themselves. When this category of the community becomes significantly concerned by gang behaviour, a police and political reaction becomes inevitable, not least because this group is the largest – and so the most politically important – and also because it includes those who are wealthy and influential. This level of concern has previously been evident in the examples of the Moerewa riot (Chapter Six) and following the Ambury Park rape (Chapter Seven), and, although not reaching so significantly into national significance as those cases, I will highlight two notable occasions in the 1990s where the wider community/gang balance was upset. Such imbalances occurred in Timaru in early 1990s and in Foxton in mid-1990s and these examples illustrate different ways in which the gang/community balance can be disturbed while highlighting police tactics that proved successful in restoring its equilibrium.

⁵⁶ Numerous international studies have looked out how media portrayals lead to a distorted public perception of gangs, for example Covey (2003: p.29), and it will be recalled from Chapter Seven that the Roper Report concluded that, "There is probably no subject in the field of law and order that can provoke more selective and distorted coverage from the media... than gangs" (Committee of Inquiry into Violence, 1987: p.87).

Examples of Imbalance

In 1989, the Devil's Henchmen incorporated, or 'patched-over', the Damned of Invercargill. In doing so, they inherited the war between the Damned and the Road Knights. Following the patch-over, hostilities reignited between the traditional rivals in Timaru, where both clubs had been since the late 1970s, though they had not been in significant conflict since the mid-1980s. I have been told that the trouble in Timaru began in November 1990 when a Henchmen prospect stabbed to death a White Power gang leader associated with the Road Knights at the city's periodic detention centre (*Timaru Herald* 23.11.1990). The Road Knights then went on the offensive with a series of raids against the Devil's Henchmen and their supporters. It was the beginning of a new war. Patches were banned at the Timaru courthouse in an attempt order to defuse tensions there, but tit-for-tat skirmishes became increasingly common.

In August 1991, a group of Henchmen went to look at a visiting Australian warship at the port in Timaru. While away from their vehicle, five sticks of Powergel (an explosive often used on farms) were strapped to the car's exhaust. When the Henchmen returned to the vehicle, they drove around for some time before the explosives were noticed and safely defused (*Timaru Herald* 31.8.1991). In 2007, Senior Sergeant Bill Gregory explained it to me:

They drove up the loop road and right down the main street – 3 o'clock on Friday afternoon – right down the main street...and then the guy got

out of his car...and he noticed his exhaust pipe was hanging down a bit low and he had a look underneath, and 'oh shit, Powergel'. According to our bomb guy, if that had have detonated in the main street, it would have turned the car into a 360 degree fragmentation bomb. The people in it wouldn't have existed anymore and...the shop windows would have blown in sending a shower of glass going through each of the shops within 50 or 60 metres of the blast.

In late October 1991, a Henchmen member was rammed while in his car (*The Press* 9.11.1991), and I have been told by Henchmen members that at that point they made the Knights aware that if attacks on them continued, then significant reprisals would occur. Undeterred, the Road Knights planned and executed an audacious and violent attack. On the 7th of November at 5:00am, the time of the police changeover of shifts – meaning no officers were likely to be on the street – the Road Knights attacked a number of the Henchmen's homes with firearms. One of the Henchmen, Peter 'Wingnut' Hellford, awoke to discover his car had been firebombed. He rushed outside to douse the flames and was shot twice – in the back and the arm – with a .22 calibre rifle. In 2006, he told me:

I felt a whack! whack! and thought, 'Fuck me, I've been shot'. I managed to get inside and went to the kitchen because I didn't want to get blood on the carpet. It sounds a bit crazy now, but at the time that's what was worrying me.

Following the attack there were some ominous statements made by a member of the Henchmen, Craig Gilcrest, who said, "They [the Road Knights] can't sit back and relax now" (*TV One News* 9.11.1991)... "Some close friends of Peter (Hellford, the man who was shot) are very angry" (*The Press* 10.11.1991). As the war had progressed, the leaders of the groups had remained in communication. When hostilities reached a crescendo, however, the Henchmen turned to the media to speak to their enemy. Similar tactics were identified by Jankowski (1991: p.306) in his research, whereby certain New York gangs used the media to communicate foreboding messages to rivals.

The reaction from the Henchmen was swift. Less than 24 hours after the Henchmen member was shot, the Hilton Haulage truck yard in Timaru burst into flames and four trucks were destroyed at an estimated cost of \$280,000. The truck yard was targeted because one member of the Road Knights owned a long haul truck and worked for Hilton Haulage. Following the fire, his contract was terminated (*Timaru Herald* 9.11.1991).

Police from Christchurch were immediately called in to bolster Timaru's police numbers. Indeed, the heavy police presence meant the next few days were quiet, but the police were nevertheless conscious that the situation remained unstable. Senior Sergeant Bill Gregory said, "We believe the return to some sort of normality over the weekend was significant; that's certainly what we hope but we have no idea what is going to happen next" (*Timaru Herald* 12.11.1991).

The Road Knights' attacks had escalated the conflict, not so much because of the increased level of violence, but because they had targeted the homes of members. As Moore (1978: p.40) found in her study of Barrio gangs in Los Angeles, there are tacit understandings among gangs that seek to place boundaries around hostile engagements. In New Zealand, one such code, commonly described to me, is that family homes are off limits during disputes so as not to endanger families. Given this breach of code, the Road Knights would have known that the firebombing of Hilton Haulage was merely a stopgap reprisal and that more significant retribution was to come.

The escalation of the war, however, had not only breached gang rules, it had also upset the gang/community balance. In December 1991, a month after the shootings and subsequent arson attack involving the Road Knights and the Devil's Henchmen, around 1,000 people attended a public meeting at the local community hall at Caroline Bay. Angry at the gang warfare and lack of subsequent arrests, it was the police who came under fire as the people of Timaru demanded that stronger action be taken against the gangs. Timaru Mayor Archie Houston appealed for 20 new police officers to be appointed to the town (*Timaru Herald* 11.12.1991). Police were stung by the community criticism, and were acutely aware of the need to restore public confidence. Some within the police, however, including Senior Sergeant Bill Gregory, felt the criticism was not without merit. He told me:

I think some of the criticisms were justified, to be honest with you. In hindsight, I think the police reaction to the gang situation in Timaru – they didn't come to grips with the situation... I may sound a bit overly critical of my colleagues in Timaru, but I think there was some bad decisions made in the several years leading up to [the conflict] (2007 pers.comm.).

While Gregory began to formulate a plan to tackle the problem, the war continued. In February 1992, a bomb containing a kilo and a half of explosives and surrounded by 18 kilos of nuts and bolts was found at a motorcycle show put on by the Road Knights in Dunedin. The bomb's centimetre-per-second fuse had burnt itself out within a metre of the bomb's core (*Sunday News* 23.2.1992). Following the bomb's failure, the Henchmen decided on a more direct approach. On the 28th of March 1992, a stolen red Holden was parked near the Excelsior Hotel, the bar favoured by the Road Knights. As a group of Road Knights left the bar, the car pulled up and from one of its windows came a spray of shotgun pellets, which fanned out and hit three members of the gang. All three survived but none made complaints to the police (*Timaru Herald* 29.3.1992). Of particular concern to police was the fact that on one side of the bar there was a busy movie theatre and on the other a popular restaurant – the risk to innocent people was significant (Bill Gregory pers. comm.). It appears clear that inter-gang attacks may spark a certain – occasionally high – degree of community concern, but actions that potentially endanger members of the wider public are almost certain to intensify such anxieties.

After proclaiming from the National Opposition benches that he would end the gangs' 'reign of terror', John Banks, Minister of Police since the 1990 election, was compelled to travel to Timaru to assess the problem himself. Zita Tumai, of the Aoraki Whanau Awhina Support Against Violence Group, organised a march to coincide with Banks' visit, she said "All we hear from people like Banks, Mr Bolger [then Prime Minister] and other MPs are a lot of empty words when we've asked them to do something about Timaru's gang problems" (*Timaru Herald* 1.4.1992). Similarly, Terry Kennedy of the Timaru Business Association told the *Holmes* (1.4.1992) current affairs show that night:

The Minister of Police, when he was in opposition, made several statements about what he would do if the National government was put in office. The National government has been put in office, the minister has made several speeches but so far there has been no action.

Banks was also coming under pressure in Parliament, as the Labour Party reminded him of his promise to bring in the army – 'commandoes' as he called them – to control gangs. A now more circumspect Banks replied that, "At this point police have absolute control in dealing with the gangs. There is no need at this stage for any military support whatsoever in dealing with gangs" (*NZPD*, vol.524, 1992: p.8344). As had been the case with Norman Kirk two decades previously, populist rhetoric in opposition is often not followed through when the realities of governing prevail. Although Timaru police were

not bolstered by the military, Banks did ensure that they temporarily gained five uniformed officers and one detective, who were transferred from Christchurch, to launch 'Operation Shovel'.

Devised by Gregory, Operation Shovel, which he told me he had formed from various ideas of police officers around the country, was a systematic targeting of gang members and their associates. In Timaru, the police drew a line in the sand:

The people have had enough. In the past we have said this is not solely a police problem. It's a community problem that's been here for some time. We're going to stand up and accept this as our problem on behalf of the community (*Timaru Herald* 6.4.1992).

Operation Shovel worked by using constant police pressure. Police officers in Timaru followed up every lead, reinvestigated past complaints, and brought charges when they found any infraction of the law. At a basic level, the stifling nature of the police presence meant that the warring groups were unable to execute attacks on one another due to the overwhelming police attention. More generally, the pressure created by the police had a real and constant impact on the lives of all of the gang members, and they were unable to enjoy many of the activities and liberties they ordinarily took for granted – both legal and illegal. Life for both Timaru's gangs became difficult. Even simple activities like traveling through the town or enjoying a group motorcycle run were seldom undertaken without police interruption. It was a situation that

prevented ongoing hostilities through the punitive effects of criminal sanctions, and the removal of everyday freedoms that members normally enjoyed.

Since starting in May 1992, Operation Shovel boasted significant results. By December of that year, police reportedly made 444 arrests, executed 261 search warrants and laid 647 charges. The charges, laid were: possession of cannabis (70), theft (46), burglary (45), receiving (33), Excess Breath Alcohol (drink driving) (27), possession of drug instruments (21), cultivation of cannabis (19), possession of cannabis seed (18), disqualified driving (18), intentional damage (17), social welfare fraud (16), possession of offensive weapons (16), breach of bail (16), assault (15), unlawful possession of firearm (15), disorderly behavior (15), possession of cannabis for supply (11), unlawful taking of a motor vehicle (11), supply and importation of LSD (11), fighting (7), intimidation (5), unlawful possession of a pistol (5), and threatening to kill (4) (*Timaru Herald* 23.12.1992). Although the operation targeted the two outlaw clubs, it was not exclusive to them and many of the charges were not directly related to gangs, and were a latent outcome of increased police numbers. Given this degree of intense policing, one would expect increases in crime data, but police reported, as a consequence of Operation Shovel, an overall reduction in Timaru's crime statistics of 14.2 percent in 1992 (New Zealand Police, 1993: p.1).

Notably, among the list of charges, there are none for operating an unlicensed premises – even though both gangs were running illegal bars at their clubhouses. Both Senior Sergeant Bill Gregory and District Commander Mark

Lammas deny to me that this was part of a deliberate policy to keep the gangs in their clubhouses and away from public drinking establishments. Indeed, both men say that the gang-operated bars helped build a power base for the gangs and were a place where gangs could influence members of the community – though both agreed that turning a blind eye to the clubhouse bars might have been informal police policy in the past.

Although the police pressure was uncomfortable for the gangs, Gregory told me that he felt the war was becoming so dangerous that their intervention was partially welcomed:

It got to the stage where it was Wild West stuff. They were shooting at each other like bloody cowboys. They were going around to houses – you'd see around windows bloody burn marks where the Molotovs had missed the window. People had mesh over their windows, you know, it got out of hand. More than out of hand, it was like bloody warfare...It got to the end of 1991 and the gangs were completely out of control, and I think, on their part, they were getting concerned about the level of violence too. A number of unwritten rules had been broken, they were attacking homes – that's an unwritten rule in gang warfare, you don't touch the missus and the kids, you know, you leave the home alone...it got out of hand. The problem with the gangs is that it's very difficult for one of them to back down against the other, but if the police come down the middle and hammer both, then there's no dishonour in backing down then.

It is, I believe, a valid argument. Numerous gang members have told me that war is an uncomfortable time that takes a toll on members' nerves, and as outlined in Chapter Six, weaker members may leave the scene during such times. Although the remaining members are those that are the most committed to upholding the group's status, few I believe are unhappy when a war concludes in a way that maintains the honor of the gang.

The discomfort experienced during such conflicts was highlighted by an outlaw club member during a long war between the Damned and the Road Knights in Invercargill in the mid-1980s. The Damned president, Mike Fincher, told reporter Michael Brown in an interview on *Midweek* in 1986⁵⁷ that, "I wouldn't mind getting on my bike and riding around like it used to be, [but you can't now because] you're thinking about it [the war and being attacked] all the time, you know...Who knows where it will lead?" For Fincher, the war ended abruptly in 1990 when he was killed by a single stab wound to the chest.

Operation Shovel lasted eighteen months, but before its official end, the extra police given by Banks for the project were withdrawn. Long before that time police had managed to quell the gang conflict through a process of suffocation. Although the operation required significant police resources and was unsustainable in the long term, it showed both gangs what the level of response would be should trouble arise again. Before exploring the role of

⁵⁷ The footage I have obtained, from a gang source, cannot be more accurately referenced.

police in rectifying the gang/communality balance another, slightly different, example offers further insight.

As order in Timaru was restored, another small town was gaining the unwanted label of a 'gang town'. National attention became focused on the North Island community of Foxton, where the local chapter of the Nomads was becoming increasingly lawless. Within gang circles, the Nomads, who – it will be recalled from Chapter Five were an offshoot of Black Power - had chapters in the Wellington, Horowhenua and Wairarapa regions, as well as a brief presence in Auckland, were both feared and respected. Much of their reputation was inspired by the gang's boss Dennis 'Mossie' Hines, under whose leadership the gang actively strived to gain the reputation as being one of the toughest in the country. On *60 Minutes* in March 1996⁵⁸, onetime Nomad deputy Rex Rimene said, "Our aim was to make the Nomads the most fearsome gang, the toughest gang out". In the same programme, Nomads leader 'Skull' Williams said the Nomads were "the ultimate", while the journalist called them "outlaw kings". However, 'outlaw kings' was a rather prosaic description of a gang, renowned for its brutal violence. I have been told by a senior member of the gang that in Wellington they used to deliberately set off shop alarms so they could attack the responding police. Rimene also told a story of Hines badly beating up an "old man" in a pub because he had said something negative about the gang. Another much-told story – the veracity of which is unknown to me – is of Hines' girlfriend being

⁵⁸ The footage I have obtained, from a gang source, cannot be more accurately referenced.

fatally injured in a car crash and Hines kicking the dying woman as punishment for wrecking his car.

Once again, however, it was an incident involving persons outside of the gang realm, this time a home invasion, robbery and a rape attributed to the gang, which upset the gang/community balance; a situation the Nomads desperately attempted to address. In October 1993, the home of elderly Foxton doctor, Howard Teppett, was raided. Dr Teppett was beaten to death with an iron bar and his 78-year-old sister brutally raped (*NZ Herald* 3.3.1994). The crime shocked New Zealanders and hit the small community hard. Because at least one of the perpetrators of the crimes was linked to the Nomads, the people of Foxton had a target for their wrath. Unabashedly hardened villains as the Nomads were, the crime had no 'class' and they vehemently denied involvement. The normally private Hines and several members of the gang took the unprecedented move of going on television⁵⁹ to publicly distance themselves from the crime. Hines – a man more articulate with his fists than his voice – said, "Look, I'm not saying we're any angels, I don't believe I'm going to Heaven" but he denied the gang had any involvement in the crime. Another Nomad said, "We aren't no granny molesterers".

With the knowledge that such community outrage would lead to significant police pressure, it was in the gang's interests to distance itself from the crimes, but Hine's unprecedented use of the media may simply reflect the possibility that the crimes were not gang related in any meaningful way. I

⁵⁹ The footage I have obtained, from a gang source, cannot be more accurately referenced.

have found that it is common for the media to label incidents 'gang crimes' when links to gangs are tenuous. In this case, the perpetrators of the crimes were not patched members of the gang but associates, and no evidence was presented to suggest that the robbery, let alone the murder or rape, were undertaken at the bequest of the gang. Indeed, I would argue that in this instance it is near inconceivable that the murder and rape were commissioned by the gang. Nevertheless, in the minds of the general public, the gang and the crime were linked. This important issue of gang crimes versus individual crimes will be discussed further in the next chapter.

But if doubt can be cast over the gang's direct involvement in the burglary turned rape/murder, no doubt exists over their involvement in a brutal attack, just three months later, in January 1994, at the Mountain Rock Music Festival, where Hines cut the throat of the Tyrants' president, Tony Nightingale. The incident occurred after two members of the Tyrants, an outlaw motorcycle club with chapters in Levin and Pahiatua, had attacked an associate of the Nomads. The beaten man asked the Nomads for back-up and consequently they went looking for members of the motorcycle club. Attending the concert with the Tyrants were two associate outlaw clubs, the Mothers of Palmerston North and the Templars of Christchurch, but a Tyrants member has told me that the associated biker clubs had already left the concert when the marauding Nomads found Nightingale. The group quickly set upon the Tyrants' president and beat him. During the melee, Nightingale became entangled in a fence, whereby Hines drew a knife and slashed the man across the face and then across the throat before cleaning his knife by

repeatedly jabbing it into the ground (*NZ Herald* 15.2.1996; *NZ Herald* 16.2.1996; *NZ Herald* 31.10.1996).

Despite the brazen nature of the attack, witnesses were initially unwilling to come forward. One person who did make a statement to the police was Nightingale, who survived the attack. This breach of the gang code – in making a statement to police – shocked the Tyrants who, I am told, expelled Nightingale from the club. Hines too would have been surprised by the statement made by his rival, and certainly it made him vulnerable to conviction. The Nomad leader looked to bolster his increasingly tenuous position by garnering false alibis from associates, a fact that was ascertained by police via electronic surveillance (*NZ Herald* 16.2.1996), and led to at least one conviction (*R v Harris* [1998] 1 NZLR: p.405). But the pressure being felt by Hines was soon to be felt by the whole gang. The Nomads' acute period of lawlessness had unsettled the gang/community balance and they became the target of a police crackdown.

As previously mentioned, District Commander for Timaru, Mark Lammas, oversaw much of Operation Shovel before he was transferred to the North Island as District Commander for Palmerston North. Seeing the Nomads' increasingly lawless behaviour, he launched Operation Damon (Nomad spelt backwards), based on tactics he had found successful in Timaru. He told me that,

Damon had many similarities to Shovel, but the nature of the beast, so to speak, that was being policed – Damon was one gang - the Nomads - it wasn't inter-gang issues [like in Timaru]. It was one gang who, to a large extent, had the community cowered down...[so it was] a different situation, but addressed in a very similar way. You had the same goals...to ensure that overt offending ceased and the public regained confidence (2007, pers. comm.).

Operation Damon was launched during 1994 and led to arrests for 'taxing' (a gang practice described in the following chapter) and numerous other crimes. During one trial in April 1996, nine Nomad gang members and associates were facing 43 different charges including robbery, drugs and threatening to kill (*NZ Herald* 4.4.1996). All nine were convicted for up to five years and in one fell swoop, a large portion of the Foxton Nomads were behind bars, including Hines who received two years (*NZ Herald* 27.4.1996). As in Timaru, police pressure was exerted at even basic levels. On one day, police arrested one patched member and two of the gang's prospects for driving offences (*NZ Herald* 17.6.1994) and during one trial a gang member left court to find his car had been wheel-clamped and was about to be towed for unpaid fines (*NZ Herald* 4.4.1996).

Despite a senior Nomads member, Skull Williams, suggesting that the crackdown on the gang just increased their publicity and mana (*NZ Herald* 16.6.1994), the resulting convictions largely wiped out the street presence of the gang, as its membership went to ground. Hines had to issue a statement

from prison denying reports that his Wairarapa chapter had closed down (*NZ Herald* 17.1.1996) after 26 arrests were made in that area (*NZ Herald* 18.10.1995). Operation Damon, like Shovel before it, had shown that strong, targeted and deliberate police action can severely dent a gang's strength and curtail its activities by incarcerating and stifling the lives of its members. And again, the operation highlighted to the gang the likely consequences if their activities went beyond what the community was prepared to tolerate.

On face value, the techniques employed during Operations Shovel and Damon may not appear new, and some similarities can be seen with the controversial Police Task Force techniques of the 1970s, noted in Chapter Six. It would be inaccurate, however, to say they are comparable. Unlike the Task Force techniques, this new approach was shorter in duration, more sophisticated and relied less on physical confrontation, it was specifically targeted toward individual groups, and, perhaps most critically, there was a specific reason for the police operations – rather than an arbitrary crack down – so the gangs knew why they were being targeted. In Foxton, Lammas met with the Nomads leaders and told them why the operation was occurring and what they could expect. Again, this was based on what occurred in Timaru. Bill Gregory explains:

Both gangs thought we were bastards, but we were open and up front with them and we were professional in what we did, and that was the key to that operation. I went to each gang and addressed them – had a meeting with them and I told them what was going to happen, and

why it was happening and what they could do to go back to, you know, normal (2007, pers. comm.).

In short, the operations were not seen to be without cause, and one gang was not being targeted because of the actions of another. This meant that the gangs – albeit begrudgingly – accepted that they were the cause of the situation by undertaking activities that dramatically exceeded what the community was prepared to tolerate, and thus did not feel unfairly or arbitrarily attacked by police, something that only tends to engender a siege mentality, bitterness and increased gang cohesion, as outlined in Chapter Five.

Although most gang members that I have been involved with during the course of this research have harbored ill feeling toward police and seen them as an enemy – often due to specific negative experiences – most gang members are prepared to accept police action if it is deemed fair and reasonable; even in instances where the execution is unlawful. Prominent gang leader Daryl Harris of the Harris Gang and then Christchurch Road Knights put it succinctly to me when he said, “We have our job to do and they [the police] have their job to do. It’s a game and within that everybody accepts sometimes you might lose. Fair enough”. Furthermore, he said, “Look, if you hit a cop you can expect to be given a hiding [by the police] at the station. It’s seen as fair ‘cause that’s expected”. Similarly, the Roper Report found that the gangs had respect for police who were “tough but fair” (Committee of Inquiry into Violence, 1987: p.91). Likewise a former police officer and undercover operative, described it to me thus:

That's the way I've found gang members or villains in general, you know, even as a uniform or a detective, you treat them with a bit of courtesy, you treat them with a bit of professionalism and they don't really actually begrudge what you're doing because they realise it's just a job. It's part of the game we all play. They do bad things, we catch them for it – occupational hazard, you know.

Although Lammas was adamant that pressure needed to be maintained on the gangs after both operations, he was realistic as to the timeframe of the operations themselves. He told me: "To be effective they need to be long-term – idealistically [sic], but it is unachievable, [we] say the operation should have no end, but of course that's almost impossible...Police resources are finite, both operations took a lot of resource and a lot of energy". Bill Gregory agreed:

One of the problems you have...is you rob Peter to pay Paul. You take resources from your front line reactive staff and put them toward a special operation, which then leaves your front line unable to cope with things that happen and the level of 24hr policing goes down – it's actually a false economy, that (2007, pers. comm.).

But the finite nature of police resources is perhaps not the only reason why such an approach could not be used on gangs indefinitely in an effort to eradicate them entirely. The consensus among numerous international gang

researchers is that a suppressive approach is not only costly but that gains are merely short term (Sherman in Howell, 1998a). On its own, in fact, suppression has proven perhaps the least successful of all forms of gang interventions (Decker, 2002; Klein, 1996; Spergel & Curry, 1990). And as has been highlighted in previous chapters, suppression can even have a negative impact as members convert stigmatisation into a symbol of status (Klein, 1995: p.186). Gangs under constant pressure would still operate in the long term; they would simply adjust to the situation that confronted them.

Such operations, therefore, are necessarily short-term but in New Zealand they have proved to be successful, and Operations Shovel and Damon can be seen as something of a template for targeting and addressing acute gang problems that flare up and upset the gang/community balance. Neither operation destroyed or eliminated the gangs they were targeting, however, even the police acknowledged to me that this was never their purpose; suggesting a tacit understanding by the police that the gangs were permanent fixtures in those communities and that achieving and maintaining gang/community equilibrium is the only realistic goal – despite political rhetoric to the contrary.

In Timaru during 1991, John Banks said, “if we can’t put an end to this nonsense which has gone on far too long then we may as well fold our tents. But I think I know who will be folding their tents first” (*Timaru Herald* 4.4.1992). In 1999, Banks retired from parliament and his government was ousted from power. At the north end of Timaru, the Devil’s Henchmen still

existed behind their heavily fortified walls, and at the south end of the town the Road Knights maintained their power base. Indeed, little had changed, but the community/gang balance had been restored.

Conclusion

During the 1990s, it became clear that the gang scene in New Zealand had changed in important ways. Although new developments such as skinhead gangs flared for a period, it was within the traditional realm of patched gangs that a slow but dramatic maturation had occurred. There is no doubt these changes can be largely understood by looking at the context in which they occurred – a bleak economic environment that impacted hard on lower socioeconomic sectors. It is no coincidence that as unemployment was peaking at double digit levels in the early 1990s, skinhead gangs – typically comprised of poor urban Pakeha – became so prominent. Similarly, for the traditional gangs, the rising unemployment rate, in combination with other factors, meant that the door that had previously been open for those wanting to leave these gangs was – if not closed – at least squeezing shut.

With lengthier – and consequently an aging – membership, New Zealand's patched gangs matured, with differing degrees of exactness, into increasingly sophisticated organisations. And with this, their activities began to expand to provide for the wider needs of their members in ways that extended beyond the ubiquitous fictive kin relationships.

Given what is known, the patched gangs can be seen as being neither fully legitimate nor fully illegitimate and thus they became what I have called 'grey organisations'; generally viewed by most as negative, while also providing benefits or functions to members, as well as others in the community too. Also, the longevity of gang membership led to an increasing feeling of gang permanence. And the fact that such groups were deeply embedded within many communities meant that a gang/community balance was achieved. The gang/community balance, although enduring, requires maintenance and, in extreme cases, police intervention. While this chapter has highlighted two examples of the gang/community balance being disrupted by the traditional problems of gang violence, it was new developments evident within the 1990s that came to define the entire patched gang scene; and these are the focus of the chapter to follow.

Chapter Nine.

Profit Driven Crime: – c1990s

Introduction

The previous chapter explained how by the 1990s gangs had evolved significantly. Although this evolutionary shift was broad and multifaceted, it was changes relating to criminal undertakings that became the primary focus of mainstream attention and concern. Indeed, during this period, gangs became synonymous with organised criminal activities; primarily through an involvement in the drug trade, but also in relation to 'taxing', and perverting the course of justice.

This chapter will evaluate these activities, and examine the extent to which gangs were engaged in them as well as discussing the important, though often overlooked, differentiation between gang crime and crime committed by individual gang members. Furthermore, it will contextualise these issues and offer explanations as to how and why gangs or gang members became involved in such activities. It will also outline how gangs gained a form of legitimate authority within the criminal underworld and why this power did not fully translate when dealing with those outside the criminal sphere; and the outcomes when attempts to do so were made.

Gangs and the Drug Trade

Following overseas trends, the rise of recreational drug use, and therefore a black economy relating to drugs, was evident in New Zealand long before gangs became synonymous with the trade in the 1990s (see, for example, Booth, 1980; Hall, 1981; McFerran, 1973; New Zealand Board of Health Committee, 1970; Newbold, 2000, 2004; Yska, 1990). In fact, the most successful known drug enterprise in New Zealand history was the 1970s 'Mr Asia' syndicate, which had nothing whatsoever to do with patched gangs (Hall, 1981). Where there is financial opportunity, be it legal or illegal, there is likely to be entrepreneurial persons who will be keen to exploit it. But while such an entrepreneurial ambition is undoubtedly a significant factor to gang involvement in the drug scene, once again the economic environment is important context to explore – particularly as it relates the patched street gangs largely made up of Maori and Pacific Peoples; those ethnic groups most negatively affected by the post 1984 reforms.

In the previous chapter I outlined how the floundering economy was a component in longevity of membership and the flow-on effects that had on gang evolution. But a further, more demonstrable, impact of unemployment was gang involvement in the drug economy. Structural economic changes that negatively impacted on semi- and un-skilled labour forces in U.S. cities have been identified as directly influencing gang involvement in drug dealing (Hagedorn, 2002; J. W. Moore, 1991; Taylor, 1989) because when the “formal

economy falters, the informal steps in” (Hagedorn, 2005b: p.160). In this way, the drug trade offered the gangs economic opportunities that were nonexistent in more traditional, or legal, trades.

As outlined in chapters Seven and Eight, the post-1984 economic reforms in New Zealand, via such things as the radical reorganisation of the state sector (Sinclair, 1991: p.323), tax changes (Belich, 2001: p.409), and benefit cuts (Dalziel & Lattimore, 1996: p.90), negatively impacted on the poor (Kelsey, 1995: p.258) and led to the beginnings of structural unemployment (Spoonley, 1993: p.5). To make the link between unemployment and gang entry into the drug trade, then, we would expect to see the gangs’ growing prominence in the underground economy correlating with the post 1984 reforms; or, more importantly, when the effects of the economic restructuring were greatest felt and unemployment became structural. And, indeed, we do.

Despite some early entrepreneurialism by the likes of certain Hell’s Angels (as outlined in Chapter Seven) and undoubtedly others as well, gang involvement in the drug dealing became noticeable in the latter half of the 1980s before becoming much more widespread in the 1990s.

In 1987, gang connections to profit driven crime were enough for one Auckland newspaper, which listed several examples, to proclaim in a headline, “NZ gangs take on mantle of Mafia” (*The Auckland Star* 11.1.1987). Leaving aside the fact that even an elementary comparison between the Mafia and, for example, the Mongrel Mob would quickly ascertain that the

headline was more media sensationalism than accurate journalism, few others were reaching such a conclusion. A report of South Island gang activity written by police in July 1986 – the first Penn report, outlined in Chapter Seven – was more focused on the problems of inter gang conflict, anti-social behaviour, and violence than profit driven activity – and the major concern in the area of gang finance, as will be recalled, was government funded work schemes. In fact, moves into the drug trade were almost certainly slowed by these schemes as they provided the gangs with employment opportunities within the gang sphere – and it was only with the schemes' demise that the gangs looked toward the underground drug economy for employment in earnest.

That gang involvement in the drug trade was not widespread in the late 1980s is evinced in the passing of the Proceeds of Crime Act (1991). Introduced by the fourth Labour government in September 1990, just prior to their ousting in the general election of that year, the Proceeds of Crime Act was eventually passed by the National government in November 1991. The Act provided – following a conviction – for forfeiture to the Crown of assets that had been used in the commission of a crime, obtained from crime, or purchased from the proceeds of crime. The legislation was proposed to comply with United Nations conventions and to counter the perceived threat drug dealers and the nefarious activities of white collar criminals.

It is particularly telling that New Zealand's traditional gangs played the smallest part possible in the debates surrounding the passing of the

legislation; particularly as politicians had generally shown little restraint in attacking the gangs in the past. Indeed, when first introduced to parliament by Labour, the then Minister of Police, Richard Prebble, noted that “bikie gangs” overseas had entered the drug trade and said, “That could happen here” (*NZPD*, vol. 510, 1990: p.4306). Although opposition MP, John Carter, interjected saying “It’s already started” (*ibid*), the fact that the discussion was equivocal – and that it was the only mention of gangs in all three readings of the Bill – highlights the fact that gang problems before the 1990s were still those of violence and disorder, and not of profit driven crime. But by the late 1990s, as will become clear, the Act was proving an important fillip to drug crime related to patched gangs, which by that time had become much more pronounced.

Researchers in the U.S. have largely examined gang involvement in drugs as it is situated in urban ghettos, but in New Zealand it is important also to consider rural areas. Some 80,000 workers lost their jobs in the state sector in the wake of the post 1984 reforms (Belich, 2001: p.410) and many of these were in the areas controlled by the Ministries of Forestry and Railways, which greatly affected the workforce in rural communities. In the early 1990s, the Gisborne and Bay of Plenty regions, reflecting national trends, had unemployment levels of around 10 percent, but the smaller communities in those areas had unemployment levels much higher. For example, the small town of Ruatoria, had an unemployment rate around 80 percent and was said to be ravaged by gang problems (*NZ Herald* 15.12.1990).

As early as 1988, the police expressed concern at the growing number of gang members in country towns, which they suggested were beyond the control of small community police forces (*AJHR*, G.6, 1988: p.5). Both Black Power and the Mongrel Mob began to take advantage of the large black market economy that was thriving in smaller communities experiencing significant hardship. Primarily this took the form of cultivating marijuana plantations, a practice that by the latter half of the 1990s the police were directly linking to gangs (*AJHR*, G.6, 1997: p.4). Although the police belief that gangs dominate the practice of cannabis cultivation is overstated (Wilkins & Casswell, 2003), certainly the large street gangs either grew plants themselves or purchased the drug and then used their networks within the cities to distribute it.

For New Zealand gangs, selling marijuana came to be seen as both legitimate and pragmatic. Then National Black Power present, Rei Harris, told me in 1999: "Black Power's not into [dealing] A class [drugs], we're into something that's grown naturally...". Another Black Power leader, Mane Adams, told me in 2003 that drug dealing was about a need: "With so many of our members unemployed, it's a natural way to turn". A senior Mongrel Mob member, 'Sundown', told me in 2003 that, "If we had jobs then crime would just be part time, you know". Sundown's assessment is prescient; perhaps regardless of the economy or the end of government funded work schemes, gangs would have entered the drug economy to some extent because their rebellious nature did not condemn such activities. However, given that the rise of profit driven crime within the gang scene positively correlates with the economic

downturn of the latter half of the 1980s and the early 1990s, there can be little doubt that the significant economic problems of this period added primacy and motivation to such endeavours; particularly as many gang members were locked out of the legitimate economy as part of what Hagedorn (1988), Short (1990) and others have call the “underclass” and what Silver (1994) and others have termed the “socially excluded”.

A snapshot of Mongrel Mob members in 1993 highlights just how excluded many gang members had become from the formal economy. A survey of the Mob’s ‘Northern Region’ members, affiliates and partners found that: 95 percent were unemployed; 93 percent of whom were long-term unemployed (out of work for six months or longer); 87 percent had been unemployed for six years or longer; and ten percent had been unemployed for over ten years. Almost 90 percent of those surveyed had no educational qualifications and/or vocational skills and 82 percent of the men and 66 percent of the women had left school at age 15 or under (Winter, 1998: p.255). Statistics such as these for Maori gang members, as well as issues relating to health, literacy, housing and poverty, led the New Zealand Maori Council (1996: p.1) to conclude in 1996 that mainstream institutions “may no longer be able to deal with these...people”. Unskilled, uneducated, and unwanted by a transformed economy, for many gang members and their families, the black economy was not just an attractive choice; for all intents and purposes, it was their only choice.

But just because many members sought profit from the drug trade or other criminal endeavours, does not automatically mean that they were good at it. Many gang members were as ill suited to underworld occupations as they were legitimate ones; and the many bumbling efforts at criminal undertakings by gang members is testimony to this. Notwithstanding that, however, many leaders and certain individuals showed considerable abilities, and these were often promoted within the gangs' organisational model.

Indeed, a further influence that aided New Zealand gangs' entry into, and success in, the drug economy was the formal organisation structure that they had adopted early in their development. A greater degree of organisation and formal hierarchical leadership is said to be conducive and adaptive to efficient drug dealing (Jankowski, 1991; Taylor, 1989). This hierarchical structure allowed gangs to formulate plans and delegate responsibilities; to function, as it were, like a business.

Moreover, with either multiple chapters across the country, or alliances like those that existed between different groups of outlaw motorcycle clubs, such as the Biker Federation⁶⁰ discussed in Chapter Six, the gangs had ready-made distribution networks through which to supply drugs. For many, then, the drug trade became an easy and natural evolutionary progression. Not all gangs were involved in drug dealing as collectives and certainly not all gang members became drug dealers. But with significant networks to both source

⁶⁰ Other than the Biker Federation, later renamed the A Team, another unmade alliance had been formed by the end of the 1990s between the Mothers, the Templars (who later became another chapter of the Devil's Henchmen), the Devil's Henchmen, and the Tyrants. A further, and again unnamed, coalition of groups consisted of the Hell's Angels, the Road Knights, the Head Hunters, and the Filthy Few.

and supply drugs, and the fact that gangs offer protection against rip-offs, a conducive platform is formed for those who seek the opportunities drug dealing can provide. This offers some explanation as to why international research has shown that gang members are more prevalent than non-gang members in dealing drugs (Esbensen et al., 2002). Although in a chicken-and-egg scenario, it is unclear whether gangs facilitate members to trade in drugs, or that drug dealers are drawn toward gang membership (*ibid*).

Notwithstanding this, it is important to examine the nature of gang involvement in the drug trade in New Zealand. An important distinction needs to be made between 'gang crime' and crime undertaken by individual members. As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, I have defined a 'criminal gang' as a structured group that maintains both an exclusive membership marked by common identifiers, formal rules that supersede the rules of the state, and an *organisational focus on profit through crime*. This definition is devised to capture those groups whose members operate as a collective in profit driven criminal enterprise. Evidence of these patched 'criminal gangs', I argue, is scant in recent times, something I will address later in this thesis, but from my research, particularly in talking with current and ex-gang members and reviewing police intelligence on drug busts in the 1990s, I believe that it was much more common then – although by no means universal.

Certain gangs simply viewed such profit crime as not being the business of the gang as a collective. Other gangs – or gang chapters – chose not to engage in criminal activity as a group due to the risks associated with doing

so. In smaller gangs or chapters, a bust that implicated numerous, or all, members was too great a threat to the organisation's survival. While a small gang might be able to survive one or two members being incarcerated, if the majority of the gang were convicted and jailed at one time, the gang could not expect to survive.

A further reason why certain gangs did not become criminal gangs is that the members wishing to pursue criminal activity did not wish to share their profits with the whole group when others were unwilling – through laziness or prudence – to do their share of the work. In all these cases, any profit driven criminal enterprises that were linked to such gangs were the business of individual members, rather than of the gang collective.

Moreover, certain gangs move in and out of collective criminal enterprise. Driven by a need to raise funds quickly for an event or a common asset purchase, a gang may agree to engage in some illegal money-making venture, often the drug trade, but once the goal is obtained, the criminal activity stops. Indeed, it is important to my definition of 'criminal gang' that this designated status is not fixed. Although in many instances it is a significant and total evolutionary transition from gang to criminal gang, a criminal gang can return to 'gang' status; and this, I suggest many have done since the 1990s. One reason for this switch is the Proceeds of Crime Act, something I will address in further detail shortly.

Perhaps the most remarkable development in the supply of drugs – primarily marijuana – in the 1990s was the advent of ‘tinnie houses’; a concept reported by one newspaper to have been devised in Auckland by the predominantly Polynesian outlaw club, the Tribesmen (*NZ Herald* 19.4.2005). It was an innovation quickly embraced by many of the larger gangs. Tinnie houses, sometimes called ‘drug supermarkets’, were so labelled because they distributed ‘tinnies’, also known as ‘bullets’ or ‘foils’ – small amounts of marijuana (perhaps two or three cannabis cigarettes worth) – wrapped in tinfoil. Tinnie houses were usually established in suburban homes, although occasionally, as will be shown, similar drug operations were run from gang clubhouses as well. In many instances, the trade occurred through an open window, while others were slightly more sophisticated. A tinnie house in Hutt Valley run by a chapter of Highway 61 in the early 1990s had a small hole cut in the fence through which money and drugs were be exchanged. A buzzer was set up on the fence so the dealer could be alerted to a sale (*NZ Herald* 2.2.1994). With remarkable business diligence, tinnie houses often operated around the clock.

Successful tinnie houses were extremely well patronised, and a steady stream of people coming and going from a property was often a telltale sign of a drug supermarket. The success of this form of drug dealing meant that tinnie houses soon spread throughout the country and, as will become clear, proved highly profitable for many gangs and often opened up employment opportunities for their membership.

The police said that during 1995, Highway 61 in Christchurch was selling tinnies to up to 72 people per day from their Vagues Road headquarters (*The Press* 8.4.1997). In 2007, a former member of that chapter told me that the number was often as high as 200 tinnies per day⁶¹. Also in Christchurch at around the same time, the local Black Power chapter was said by police to be selling similar amounts (*The Press* 5.9.97). In Auckland, some tinnie house were seeing 100 customers per day and police estimated that a core of about a dozen tinnie houses had a collective turnover of \$2m a year (*NZ Herald* 28.1.1998).

Not all gangs ran tinnie houses, but for those that did, it appears there was no set template as to how they operated. Some arrangements were quite formal. One Black Power leader told me in 2005 that in the earlier days drugs were all sold to profit the gang, but over time, the individuals actually selling the drugs were paid one tinnie (in cash or kind) for every four they sold. Three people were usually charged with running the tinnie house and they worked in rotating shifts. I was told by the same source that in one tinnie house a gym was set up for entertainment and food was provided by the gang. In contrast, other operations were much less structured. One tinnie house operated by a Mongrel Mob chapter in the lower North Island, for example, was informally organised. If any of the membership wanted to sell (or organise others to sell on their behalf), then they simply turned up and staffed it themselves. In 2006, one member of the chapter told me: "It's first up, best dressed".

⁶¹ The discrepancy is likely due to certain customers buying more than one tinnie at a time.

Because of their public nature, tinnie houses were easily identified by police, but they were often equally difficult to close down. Because gangs engaged a significant number of people – members, prospects and associates – to run such ventures, following a police raid there were often others prepared to step up and quickly restart the operations. Black Power's Wellington headquarters was a renowned tinnie house in the early 1990s. A police surveillance operation undertaken during 1993 found buyers saying 'shop' to the sentry before a transaction was made. During the trial stemming from the operation, police said that despite the arrests, the 'shop' was still operating (*NZ Herald* 12.11.1993). The following January, the clubhouse was raided again. One day later it was up and running again – and subsequently raided once more (*NZ Herald* 29.1.1994). This irrepressible nature was not unique. On Auckland's North Shore, police said many 'bullet houses' closed by police had reopened in new premises within an hour (*NZ Herald* 2.11.1995). Clearly there was no shortage of people wanting work – and equally there was significant demand.

For much of the 1990s, Black Power occupied a number of properties clustered together in Rotorua. In early 1997, as the gang members partied in one house, police quietly searched an adjacent property. During the search, plainclothes officers were "swamped" with people calling in to buy drugs. Detective Sergeant Dennis Murphy said, "It was like a supermarket checkout, with people practically queued up outside" (*NZ Herald* 22.3.1997). Police arrested all those who turned up to buy drugs – approximately one customer every three minutes – but had to stop after half an hour because they ran out of handcuffs and room to hold those being arrested. It was a rare case when

buyers of the drug rather than the suppliers were apprehended at a tinnie house, despite the fact that it was demand for the drug that drove the trade.

And demand was considerable. In 1998, a survey of drug use in New Zealand showed that just over half of people aged 15-45 years had tried marijuana, a nine percent increase since 1990 (Field & Casswell, 1999a: p.20). Moreover, the survey found that 'current users' of the drug had risen from 13 percent to 17 percent in the same period. Of the current users just three percent grew all or most of their own supply of marijuana (Field & Casswell, 1999b: p.29), meaning the vast majority were reliant on drug dealers, guaranteeing a market for the tinnie house operators, and ensuring their ongoing success. It was a situation not unlike that which occurred around the distribution of liquor – via speakeasies – during the prohibition era in the U.S.

The public nature of tinnie houses did not just make them vulnerable to police raids, but also to attacks by drug trade competitors or other underworld figures. Given this, any sole traders operating tinnie houses took a considerable risk. Non-affiliated operations that emerged within the territory of a gang were likely to be stood over for a fee or face being forcibly closed down by constantly being robbed, something I have often been told by numerous gang members and once witnessed.

With the numbers to run them, and the reputation of strength to maintain them, the patched street gangs – and larger outlaw clubs like the Highway 61 and the Tribesmen – were ideally suited to operating tinnie houses. Such

enterprises were the most obvious example of gang involvement in organised drug dealing – particularly when, as clearly occurred on occasion, clubhouses were used as the distribution point. In fact, it was the brashness of those operating from behind gang walls that led police to believe that gang palisades instilled in gang members a feeling of protection where they felt they were insulated from the law (Justice and Law Reform Committee, 1997). As will be highlighted, these beliefs, along with concerns about the imposing nature of gang house fortifications, led to renewed calls for their removal.

Following the development and growth of tinnie houses, the second significant development that occurred in the drug trade during the 1990s was the rise in the popularity of methamphetamine. Though evident in the outlaw motorcycle club scene on a minor scale since the early 1980s, the drug did not become significant enough to rate a mention in police reports until 1991 (Newbold, 2004: p.61).

Known as ‘speed’ and, at that time, most commonly ingested via nasal insufflation, methamphetamine drew something of a line between the patched street gangs and the outlaw motorcycle clubs. While both types of gang were involved in the cannabis trade, in the 1990s methamphetamine was much more common within motorcycle clubs, some of whom, it will be shown, became variously involved in the drug’s manufacture, importation and supply.

In March 1994, customs staff intercepted New Zealand’s then largest haul of speed. The operation centred on members and associates of the Satan’s

Slaves, an outlaw club based in Wellington, and netted 4kg of cannabis, 1000 capsules ('caps') of cannabis oil, and 110 caps of a "white powder". Forty arrests were made (*NZ Herald* 24.5.1994). Police estimated the street value of the imported speed to be between \$180,000 and \$250,000. At the subsequent trial, Justice Heron formed the opinion, based on this case as well as others, that the activities of the Satan's Slaves Motorcycle Club were illegal drug trafficking and motorbikes – in that order (*NZ Herald* 25.11.1995).

In 1998, police launched Operation Asphalt, a two-month covert operation targeting Highway 61. Asphalt was part of an investigation that uncovered what was claimed to be the "biggest drug-making operation in New Zealand history" (*NZ Herald* 18.11.1998). William Wallace, an industrial chemist, his wife, and two others were caught with more than \$270,000 in cash, up to \$900,000 worth of methamphetamine, and the chemicals to make millions of dollars worth of the drug. In the 20 months prior to the bust, the chemist had just over one million dollars of unexplained income (*NZ Herald* 11.11.1998). Highway 61 was the national distributor of the drug; at the conclusion of Operation Asphalt, police swooped during the gang's fortieth anniversary celebration and arrested 20 members and associates of the gang, uncovering methamphetamine manufacturing laboratories as well as hydroponics cannabis plots and a three kilogram bag of cannabis heads (*NZ Herald* 23.11.1998).

A further bust involving a member of an outlaw club occurred in 1999, when Terry Jones, a member of the Auckland-based Forty Five, was jailed after

being caught with methamphetamine and drug manufacturing equipment as well as 112 cannabis plants, a list of drug sales worth \$45,000, and a bag containing \$20,000 cash that he had thrown from his car while being pursued by police (*NZ Herald* 18.4.2005).

The apparent escalation of methamphetamine dealing was not unnoticed. At the sentencing of William Wallace, Crown Solicitor Ross Burns said that methamphetamine use and manufacture had “only recently begun to take off in this country” and was a new social evil (*NZ Herald* 18.11.1998). It was an insightful observation. A comprehensive drug survey published in 1999 showed that in 1998, four percent of the population were using stimulant drugs such as speed, up from just one percent in 1990 (Field & Casswell, 1999a). As will become clear in Chapter Eleven, however, the manufacture and use of methamphetamine was only beginning to gain momentum and in the new millennium, the drug became seen as an endemic problem in New Zealand by the public, and by many within the gang scene as well.

As previously noted, in the early 1980s there was evidence that a member of the Hell’s Angels was manufacturing methamphetamine, and since that time police, as often told to me, have been convinced the outlaw club was a major player in the drug scene. Nearly 20 years later they believed they had discovered the proof they needed. During 1997, police began Operation Shovel (not to be confused with the operation of the same name that had targeted the Road Knights and Devil’s Henchmen in Timaru), a surveillance operation targeting renowned Auckland villain and leader of a criminal group

popularly labelled the 'hole-in-the-wall' gang, Simon Allan Kerr. Police failed to find enough evidence to charge Kerr with any crime, but what they uncovered during their surveillance gave them cause to focus on the Hell's Angels, and specifically Angels' member Andrew Sisson.

Known as 'Ses', the senior member of the Hell's Angels enjoyed a hard-man reputation befitting his then rank of Sergeant-at-Arms. Considered and articulate, Sisson is also an intelligent man, and police at that time believed he was the best methamphetamine cook in the country (*NZ Herald* 6.12.1999). Sisson was first implicated in the drug trade in 1993, when he was convicted of importing 448 grams of methamphetamine and sentenced to six years six months imprisonment (*R v Sisson*, Unreported, Court of Appeal, Auckland, Anderson J, July 1999). Upon his release police believed he began manufacturing and supplying the drug, and after bugging his house in 1997, police swooped; arresting him, his wife, three other members of the Hell's Angels, and six associates of the outlaw club. On his farm, police found \$92,000 in cash and a recipe for methamphetamine, while \$18,000 turned up in his wife's rented house along with 49 grams of speed (*NZ Herald* 18.4.2005).

Those arrested faced numerous charges including manufacturing methamphetamine, and supplying and conspiracy to supply the drug. During the second trial at the High Court in Auckland in early 1999, the case took a dramatic twist when the judge, just days before the three week trial was due to end, sequestered the jury for fear that outside influences may exert

pressure on them. The judge did not make clear what information had become known, except to say that he was satisfied the risk was real (*NZ Herald* 26.2.1999). The then head of the Organised Crime Unit, Detective Sergeant Daryl Brazier, would not comment on the details of the information received by police, but told me 2007:

What I can tell you, information was received – and very reliable information was received – that led us to have a hearing with the judge and express our concerns about the jury. As a result of what we told him, he then made the decision to sequester the jury for the rest of the trial.

Brazier was, however, prepared to speak hypothetically about the problems that could arise in such cases; pointing to the fact that any defence team has a right to lists of the jurists including their names, addresses and occupations:

As far as gangs are concerned, I mean what the hell have they got to lose by intimidating one or two members of the jury, I mean it's easy – they know where they live. Someone...knocks on the door and says, 'we know where you live, you've got to do the right thing'. I mean, how difficult is it? We'd be kidding ourselves if we thought that hadn't gone on in the past (Daryl Brazier 2007 pers. comm.).

Attempts at perverting the course of justice in relation to gangs will be discussed in a following section, but in this instance, members of the Hell's

Angels categorically denied to me any involvement in trying to influence the jury. Indeed, they say the police raised fears of jury intimidation to bolster what they saw as a flimsy case against some of those accused. Brazier dismissed that accusation. Whatever the case, ultimately all of the accused were acquitted, except for Sisson and his wife, who were convicted of conspiracy to supply methamphetamine and money laundering and sentenced to eight and three years imprisonment respectively; sentences they unsuccessfully appealed (*R v Sisson*, Unreported, Court of Appeal, Auckland, Anderson J, July 1999). No charges were ever laid in relation to jury intimidation. Despite the lack of a conviction for manufacturing, for the police it was long awaited confirmation of the involvement of the Hell's Angels in drug production:

Absolutely [it was confirmation], this is a man who was a very, very high profile and high powered gang member. I mean he was the world secretary of the Hell's Angels. You know, that's the most powerful gang in the world (Daryl Brazier 2007 pers. comm.).

According the Angels, Sisson has never been the world secretary of the club, but he has certainly travelled to Hell's Angels' meetings and events around the world. Although his supposed international rank – commonly talked about within police circles, and published at least once in the media (*New Zealand Herald* 18.4.2005) – is untrue, there is little doubt that he was a significant catch for police, although it was not enough to prove the outlaw club was a criminal gang by my definition.

Proceeds of Crime

Although sentenced to a lengthy prison sentence, imprisonment was not Sisson's only concern. Incarcerated in Mount Eden Prison, Sisson's lodgings were a long way from the comforts of home. Aside from his three hectare lifestyle block north of Auckland, Sisson and his wife owned two Harley Davidson Motorcycles, a Holden Executive Club Sport car, an Isuzu Bighorn SUV, a truck, and two jet skis (*NZ Herald* 18.4.2005). Threatened with the Proceeds of Crime Act, Sisson struck a deal with the Crown and gave up one of the motorcycles, the Bighorn, and \$108,000 in cash (*NZ Herald* 18.4.2005). He was not alone in facing forfeiture under the Act. In July 1999, William Wallace, the Highway 61 methamphetamine cook mentioned earlier, had \$1.5m in property and assets taken from him, the largest confiscation under the Act at that time (*NZ Herald* 5.7.1999).

The Proceeds of Crime Act not only affected the individual drug dealers within gangs, it also affected those gangs undertaking criminal activity as a collective. In Christchurch, Highway 61 had their Vagues Road clubhouse confiscated because it had been used as a tinnie house. It was one of three Christchurch properties taken under the Act during 1997 and 1998 (Newbold, 2000: p.220). This threat was enough for many of the gangs that were doing so, to stop dealing drugs as a collective, and certainly meant – with a couple of rare exceptions noted later in this thesis – the practice of using clubhouses as drug supermarkets ended. Tinnie house operations did not stop, however, but those who ran them were careful to use rental properties to front their operations, thereby protecting their assets. Detective Inspector Cam Ronald

said, “Gangs especially and people selling drugs in city areas are using rented properties as they can’t be forfeited [under the act]” (*NZ Herald* 5.7.1999).

Although property seizures under the Act were initially slow, they increased throughout the 1990s as police became more familiar with the powers. From January 1994 to May 1998, police successfully seized \$3.4 million worth of criminals’ property, and \$2 million of that occurred after 1996. According to police, 1998 was set to be a “vintage year” and the head of the police unit dealing with the proceeds of crime, Detective Sergeant Greg Heath, told the Police Association magazine that, “This year [1998] is shaping up to be another successful year. We’re quicker at the procedures now than a few years ago so we can churn through the work” (*Ten-One*, 15.5.1998). By July 1999, police had seized \$11.6 million worth of cash and assets under the Proceeds of Crime Act (*NZ Herald* 5.7.1999). Just how much of this came specifically from gang activity is unclear, as the data do not distinguish between gang and non-gang forfeitures, but it is believed “the law had been used almost exclusively against gang members and drug dealers” (Newbold, 2000: p.220).

Buoyed by these successes, police sought greater legislative power to seize assets. This possibility was raised just before the general election of 1999 when the National Government’s Minister of Justice, Tony Ryall, told a Police Association conference that the government would review the legislation and put the burden of proof onto “criminals” to show how they had gained their assets (*NZ Herald* 14.10.1999). However, as will be shown, it was almost ten

years before the idea was given serious consideration. By that time, many of the gangs that could have been identified as 'criminal gangs' in the 1990s had pulled back from collective illegal endeavours. As noted in Chapter Eight, with their organisational structure and relative sophistication, New Zealand gangs are adept at identifying and mitigating risk to their organisational survival. The Proceeds of Crime Act, though not specifically formed to target patched gangs, had proven itself a useful tool against gang related drug crime, and it had a significant effect on gang behaviour. It did not reduce the number of gangs, or even the level of drug offending, but it did deter collective criminal enterprise and thus reduced the number of gangs who could be defined as 'criminal' and thereby ensuring they did not form a powerful financial base.

The Criminal Underworld – Gangs and 'Taxing'

A further development in the 1990s that emerged within the gang realm was 'taxing'. Taxing is a form of extortion, whereby people are stood-over for payments regarding real or perceived debts owed to the gang. Often acts of taxing are little more than crude robberies, but at other times they exemplify the unique culture and rules that intersect gang and criminal life. Examples of taxing include, taking a criminal's illegal earnings or taking money or goods from people who have somehow disrespected or displeased gangs or gang members. Like drug dealing, the degree to which gangs are involved in taxing varies greatly. It is clear, however, that certain groups did become heavily involved in the practice in the 1990s.

Within criminal fraternities, redress of disputes is not readily available via the process of law. Either due to an allegiance to criminal codes of behaviour (see Newbold, 1989a) that forbids them from complaining to police, or through fear that a complaint to police will draw attention to one's own criminal undertakings, criminals are unlikely to seek the traditional law and order avenues available to most members of society. Generally speaking, those involved in criminal activity exist in a world where the strong can govern the weak. In communities where a gang has dominant strength, the gang will often regulate or exploit crime undertaken in the area through taking the earnings of local criminals, or seeking a percentage of their earnings.

Within the criminal world, then, the gangs have gained a form of underworld authority whereby their strength allows them to create rules. Within strong gang communities, criminals – primarily drug dealers – would often have to negotiate with this authority in order to trade; not entirely dissimilar from the way legitimate businesses need to deal with regulatory hurdles of different city councils or government agencies. Without seeking approval, and most often paying a fee, to undertake certain activities, criminals open themselves up to be taxed. Because such activities are, by their very nature, secretive, most forms of taxing occur with little public knowledge and therefore most often only come to light when the police become involved.

Indeed, the act of taxing largely dissolves once the authorities are involved. The lack of corruption in the New Zealand Police⁶² is a key element in ensuring that taxing is generally confined to the criminal underworld, which is resistant to police intervention. Those who are able and likely to seek protection from the law, the vast majority of the general population, will not be targeted as the significant risk of prosecution outweighs the potential benefits of the 'earn'.

During the early 1990s, the Nomads were one gang that gained a reputation for taxing, particularly in the town of Foxton where they told one victim that they “owned the town and everything in it” (*NZ Herald* 4.4.1996). During the trial of several Nomad members, a jury was told that the gang took property from people who owed them debts, sold stolen goods back to their owners, and took a cut of people’s welfare benefit money (*NZ Herald* 16.1.1996). It was due, in part, to these activities that police launched Operation Damon, discussed in the previous chapter.

After uncovering an early taxing operation in Foxton during 1994, police said that the activity was “quite blasé” and no attempts were made to conceal the offenders’ identities and gang patches were worn (*NZ Herald* 7.5.1994). In fact, unlike many crimes, taxing was reliant on people knowing the offender – intimidation being an important component of successful taxing. Reflecting the

⁶² Although no specific research has been done in this area, it is widely acknowledge among the criminal fraternity that the New Zealand police are remarkably incorruptible. They may well break the law in order to secure conviction, but they are very unlikely to break the law to the benefit of criminals. Support for this view is reflected in Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, which consistently rates New Zealand as one of the least corrupt countries in the world (see www.transparency.org).

nature of much taxing, the police explained, “A lot of people on the fringe of criminal activity themselves are getting taxed and are too scared to complain” (*NZ Herald* 7.5.1994).

In 1995, a number of Nomads members, including the gang’s boss, Dennis “Mossie” Hines, awoke a woman in Foxton and demanded her boyfriend’s marijuana stash. After the drugs were retrieved, Hines threatened to kill the woman in an effort to scare her into silence. However, the threat did not work and the victim went to police. At the depositions hearing in the case against Hines, the court was introduced to this hitherto publically unfamiliar term of taxing – which was explained to them as a form of stealing property (*NZ Herald* 5.4.1995). That same year, police seized four cars that had been taxed by the gang over a six-month period (*NZ Herald* 30.9.1995). In April 1996, nine Nomads members were convicted of various charges stemming from the taxing of drug dealers and others in the community using what Justice Heron described as “mafia tactics” (*NZ Herald* 27.4.1996).

Another case of taxing in 1996 involved Mongrel Mob members raiding a tinnie house in Palmerston North, and taking drugs and cash. Although the occupants were “terrified”, they complained to the police and those involved were prosecuted (*NZ Herald* 6.3.1996). In 1997, another group of Mongrel Mob members stole a car from an Auckland man before contacting him and demanding \$2,000 for the car’s return. It was reported that threats were made against his family to keep him quiet. Indeed, the man did remain quiet and ended up paying the gang \$1,500 (*Sunday Star Times* 13.5.1997). What

relationship the man had with the gang is unclear, but it is unlikely, given the nature of taxing, that he had no connections at all.

Another gang that gained a reputation for taxing was the Head Hunters (*NZ Herald* 12.7.1999). Few members of the Head Hunters had qualms about claiming cash or property from people who had slighted the gang in some way. Most often the victims accepted their fate – either knowing they had breached a gang law, or unwilling to stand up to the gang. Without complaints being made, police were powerless to stop the practice. Then leader of Auckland's Outlaw Motorcycle Gang Unit, Detective Sergeant Cam Stokes told me in 2003:

Certainly a lot of people have been ordered to get up to the Head Hunters' clubhouse with their motorbikes and ownership papers and hand them over because of a comment they have made about one of the members...This is unreported crime...[and] very common.

Prominent Head Hunter leader, Wayne Doyle, who along with several of his members, was convicted of murdering King Cobra member, Anthony Evalu, in April 1985, is rather open about the practice. When asked about his gang's reputation for taxing in the 1990s he told me in 2009: "That's a fair assessment for everybody... Like everybody else there was a fair bit of that going on... We couldn't deny that; everybody was doing it". In speaking about taxing generally, Doyle told me that it usually involves those within the underworld or as he put it, "hood on hood", whereby those with strength take

from those who show weakness, suggesting it is an easy way for a “lazy man to make an earn”. It is, he said, “The law of the jungle”.

In 2003, Cam Stokes described to me one incident involving the Head Hunters:

The central police did an electronic job on [a car thief] and during the course of the operation they found out that he was scoring his drugs from a gang member. So they did a spin-off operation and the drugs squad picked up and ran [an operation] on the gang member dealing drugs and caught him, and he got some jail for it. The gang member said to this car thief, ‘The cops caught me ‘cause of you, if it wasn’t for you I’d never have been caught’ – even though he was the one being loose on the phone, it was someone else’s fault. So [gang member] said you owe me for my lawyer’s bills and some time in jail – and he was given a bill [believed to be \$50,000].

However, not all taxing operations go smoothly – even when confined to underworld figures. On one occasion, in August 2000, ex-Hell’s Angels president Petar Vitali was targeted to be taxed for his aluminium runabout boat and his restored Mustang car. It is believed that Vitali’s crime, in the eyes of the Head Hunters, was a supposed boast he made about stabbing a Head Hunters’ member many years previously when the Hell’s Angels were doing security work at a music concert. Certainly, the stabbing incident occurred, but the boast, the Head Hunters decided, was disrespectful and required that a

tax be paid. In many ways, Vitali was a typical tax victim. He was a 'principled' villain and thus unlikely to violate gang code and lay a complaint with police, and he was also, by that stage, a lone operator and as such, the Head Hunters would have presumed that he was unlikely to be able repel or avenge the tax. However, although Vitali was no longer a member of the Hell's Angels, he had a significant reputation as a hard man.

Six Head Hunters – the large number perhaps suggesting that they knew Vitali would not be an easy mark – were taking Vitali's car and boat when he arrived home. Seeing what was occurring, Vitali drove his car into the Head Hunters' vehicle. He then drew a pistol and fired at the gang – although the official record has him picking up a gun that was dropped by one of the Head Hunters as the cars collided. One member of the gang was shot in the stomach and I have been told that it was only the gun misfiring that saved another from a similar fate.

A member of the Henderson Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB) who investigated the incident told me:

He got [Head Hunter] 'Choc' Te Awa in the gut, a couple of rounds went into his [Vitali's] car and at least one went through his [Vitali's] garage wall and we found it on the neighbour's lawn behind it. We spoke to neighbours around the area and they reported seeing the other Heads leaping fences...I think from memory one neighbour was actually filming with a video camera and he caught them on tape. So

they ran helter skelter and one even dived into the mangrove swamp and hid there.... We all thought Vitali was just the bees knees for that... he wouldn't have had to pay for a drink all night if he'd come to the Henderson Police Bar.

Although some in the police may have found humour in one of New Zealand's toughest gangs having the tide turned on them, the Head Hunters had a man in hospital fighting for his life and a reputation that was equally damaged. If Vitali deserved to be taxed over a boast, it stands to reason that his latest escapade had him marked for far worse. Certainly, police expected the situation to escalate. Initially, Stokes had trouble locating Vitali. He told me:

We couldn't find him and we were obviously keen to get it sorted out. And I found a telephone number and spoke to him on the phone and tried to get him to come in and get it sorted out, and he obviously didn't want to do that – be a sitting target. He said the only person who could sort it out for him would be one of the Head Hunters [leader Wayne Doyle] so we arranged for a conversation to take place between them.

Exactly what was said between Vitali and Doyle, who at that time was in Waikeria Prison, is unclear, but the two decided it would be sorted out between them and, unsurprisingly, would not involve police:

I think what's happened is that they've decided that um whatever happened there'd be no complaints made to the cops about it, so they

were going to sort it out in their own way. Because after Vitali spoke with Doyle, Doyle wanted to speak with Te Awa [the shot man] in hospital, and we made that phone call happen as well, and there was no complaints coming out of them at all (Cam Stokes 2003 pers. comm.).

In the end, the only conviction to come from the incident was against Vitali for recklessly discharging a firearm. It appears to have been his only sanction, as the Head Hunters did not go after him. Exactly what deal – if any – was struck, is unknown. Stokes believes that the Head Hunters became ambivalent to retribution:

We heard a little bit back that the Heads management wasn't that happy with what had gone on and they didn't think it was a cool sort of taxing to do. So, if they weren't comfortable with it there's a chance that it could have been, 'well he was only doing the right thing looking after himself' and so [there was] no great come back from there (Cam Stokes 2003 pers. comm.).

If this is so, potentially Vitali's actions may have influenced the decision by the Head Hunters to take no further action. A source I spoke to in the Henderson CIB told me in 2006 that the fact that Vitali was willing to take the Head Hunters on may have influenced the gang's thinking:

In the aftermath, Vitali was ringing the Heads pad and other people saying fuck them, they want to tax me, I'll tax them! He was threatening to come after them and take the whole lot on. He's not your average bad guy, he's got the rep as being not only a hard man but a crazy man. He wasn't afraid of them, didn't give a toss about their reputation, had access to firearms and had shown them he was more than prepared to pull them out in broad daylight and blaze away. The Heads might be prepared to kill but I doubt they're prepared to kill so nonchalantly as Vitali so obviously was, and that had to factor in their decision not to look for some payback. I think Vitali raised the game to a point where the Heads didn't want to play. They're bad, he's a psychopath and I'd say at the end of the day this incident was a good example of how the truly bad will fear the truly mad.

It is possible that a face-saving deal was struck that satisfied both sides, but whatever was actually decided, no overt retribution against Vitali appears to have occurred. Vitali himself would not talk about the incident with me. Doyle told me that he intervened in the dispute from prison, but says that he cannot recall the details of what was worked out; saying the issue was put on the "backburner" and that there remains significant ill feeling within his gang: "He [Vitali] is not the most popular person around here".

But if Petar Vitali became unpopular with the Head Hunters, one person who was not was multi-millionaire property developer Mark Lyons. In the early 2000s, the maverick businessman became involved with the Head Hunters

socially and, I have been told by numerous sources, with some aspects of their business. The exact nature of the problems that Lyons had with the Head Hunters is unclear, but he was taxed heavily by the gang for goods estimated to be worth between \$250,000 and \$800,000 (*NZ Herald* 10.1.2003). Although it is impossible to assess the accuracy of these figures, it seems likely that Lyons may have the dubious honour of being the most taxed individual in New Zealand gang history.

Taxing does not just occur to those outside the gang. Members who fall foul of their own gang are likely to find themselves taxed, in particular, members who leave the gang in so-called 'bad standing' are often forced to hand over cash or possessions. Taxing is used to regain any property or money owed to the gang, often with significant injuries added, and may also be used to enforce a sanction against the former member. An outlaw motorcycle club member who is kicked out of the club is liable to be taxed of his motorcycle. The larger street gangs are equally disposed to seek redress from errant members in the form of taxing. Patched street gang members have offered numerous examples of this to me. In one incident, told to me by senior Mongrel Mob member, Ngavii Pekapo, in 2004, a member of his gang who had assaulted a female related to key Mob members was stripped of his patch and all of his possessions, and told to leave the Hawkes Bay area within 24 hours or face worse repercussions.

Indeed how quickly, and often viciously, gangs turn against their own members when protocols are broken is quite remarkable, and something I

have witnessed numerous times. The high value placed on brotherhood means that any breach of trust is viewed, and treated, severely.

While violence had been synonymous with patched gangs for many years, taxing became a profitable means by which to wield the power that a reputation for violence offered. But violence was not just used to benefit gangs through profit; it has also been used as a defensive mechanism to protect gang members from the law.

Intimidation, Violence, and Justice

For many gang members, intimidation of others is an important aspect of gang life. Not only does a gang's imposing nature and reputation give members a feeling of power and status, as discussed in previous chapters, it can also be used as a tool to protect gang or gang member interests. As with taxing, most people who are purposely stood-over by gang members exist within the gang or criminal realms. However, during the latter half of the 1990s, a spate of incidents that targeted people who were not by choice involved with gangs captured public attention, and some high profile instances of gang members avoiding justice resulted in a significant law change.

Concerns that gang members were intimidating witnesses of gang crimes in order to escape justice were raised as early as 1975 during the war between the Devil's Henchmen and the Epitaph Riders, detailed in Chapter Six (New Zealand Police, 1975: pp.91-98). But it was not until the 1990s that such concerns became significant enough to prompt serious reaction. Police

figures provided to the New Zealand Law Commission show that reported offences of obstruction or attempts to pervert justice increased from 112 in 1993 to 169 in 1997 (New Zealand Law Commission, 1997a: p.3). Although cases specifically relating to gangs were not defined, as will become clear, a number of examples involving gangs brought the issue to public attention and, in turn, generated a political response.

A window into the world of victim intimidation was opened in 1993. After making a complaint to police of multiple rapes by several Mongrel Mob members at the gang's Rotorua clubhouse, the female complainant was forced by a member of the gang, Gillies Jacobs, to recant her initial police statement. Jacobs beat the complainant with a baseball bat and forced her to pose as his girlfriend while a witness watched her sign an affidavit clearing those who had been charged with the offence. Once this intimidation became known, Jacobs was convicted of attempting to pervert the course of justice (*NZ Herald* 22.7.1993). Nine members of the gang were convicted on charges of rape and/or sexual violation and sentenced to between three years and nine months, and 12 years and six months imprisonment (*NZ Herald* 24.7.1993).

In 1995, the Mongrel Mob appear to have had more success in escaping justice after a 16 year-old hitchhiker was allegedly raped by two members of the gang's Hastings chapter. Although the victim had already testified once, a jury complication meant that trial was aborted. Immediately before the second trial, police said the woman was approached in the courthouse corridor and

told not to give evidence against the gang members. Seemingly as a consequence, the woman refused to testify when put on the stand. Even after being placed in custody over the lunch break and told by the judge that she could be detained for seven days, the young woman still refused to take the stand and say anything more than, "I have nothing to say" (*NZ Herald* 27.6.1995). Justice Ellis finally abandoned the trial, discharged the two accused gang members and told the jury, "You have witnessed, I suppose, a disaster" (*NZ Herald* 27.6.1995).

In extreme circumstances, those giving testimony against a gang have been invited to enter the witness protection programme. These programmes usually required witnesses to be relocated and to assume another identity. Police refuse to comment on the programme publicly for fear that even general disclosures may put people at risk. But in 1997, the then Police Minister, John Luxton, told Parliament that 89 witnesses received formal protection between 1993 and 1997 (*NZPD*, vol. 562, 1997: p.210). Nonetheless, the proportion that was specifically gang related remains unclear. It is clear, however, that these figures could easily have been much higher. For many people, adherence to the criminal code of silence, or the thought of living in fear of a gang may have outweighed their desire to testify. In other words, it is quite understandable that on considering the potential consequences, to reputation or self, many people chose not testify in a gang trial.

One man who did choose to testify against a gang was Christopher Crean. In March 1996, a group of Black Power members had attacked a member of the

Mongrel Mob outside Crean's house in the Taranaki. The incident was brutal. The Mob member's face was slashed, and several of his fingers were severed with a tomahawk (*NZ Herald* 17.10.1997). Crean witnessed the attack and chose to testify against the attackers. Black Power threatened Crean and suggested that testifying would not be in his interests. Police offered witness protection, but Crean refused it. His refusal, while brave, ultimately proved fatal, as Black Power set about planning his murder.

Since 1988, Black Power members from the Taranaki region had twice beaten murder charges. Crown prosecutor, Tim Brewer, felt that these cases had helped convince the gang that they were invincible (*NZ Herald* 17.10.1997). It is perhaps this feeling of invincibility that emboldened the gang. Crean, a street-preaching Christian, told his family that God would protect him. His family was less certain. His mother said, "I told him he was dealing with the real world, not the spiritual world. But he didn't have any fear" (*NZ Herald* 17.10.1997).

Twice, on the last two Sundays of September 1996, the planned hit on Crean was abandoned – on the second of those nights, Crean was carrying his child and the would-be hit man felt compassion for the youngster (*R v Manihera*, Unreported, Court of Appeal, Richardson P, March 1998). On October 6, it was deemed that the hit would proceed regardless of circumstance. That night, a gunman carrying a 30-30 Winchester lever-action rifle approached Crean's house and knocked on the door. As Crean went to answer, a shot was fired. The glass panel in the door offered little resistance and the bullet

flew through it, entering Crean's stomach and exiting out of his back. He died in hospital the next day (*NZ Herald* 17.10.1997). The use of a stomach shot was pre-planned as it was considered that a head shot through the door might miss (*R v Manihera*, Unreported, Court of Appeal, Richardson P, March 1998).

A Taranaki Black Power member said that the killing had sent a clear message to potential prosecution witnesses, "Oh, well they know now. Who...wants to get in the stand now?" (*NZ Herald* 23.7.1997). The implications that this killing had on the justice process are quite clear; if the gang escaped penalty, future testimony against gangs would certainly have been difficult to obtain. Given this, the police moved quickly to bring closure to the case. Despite the seeming confidence that the killing would deter further witnesses, it was from within the gang that crucial evidence was to come. The New Plymouth chapter's president and the gang prospect who drove the getaway car both gave evidence against their own gang (*R v Manihera*, Unreported, Court of Appeal, Richardson P, March 1998). Four Black Power members were convicted of murdering Crean and given mandatory life sentences⁶³.

The fact that the Taranaki Black Power went after, what in the gang scene is often referred to as, a 'baldhead' or 'citizen' (meaning a person without gang or criminal associations), is highly unusual. In 2009, Crown Prosecutor Brewer told me,

⁶³ One of the men convicted, Dennis Luke, became the first person in New Zealand to be twice convicted of murder, the first coming in 1975 when he had been found guilty of kicking a man to death in Wellington.

At the time I was unaware of a precedent, and I'm not aware of one [other example] now. This guy [Crean] wasn't in the gang milieu, he wasn't in a gang, he was a bona fide member of the public – and it was a very big line for them to cross...they didn't see themselves as the enemy of everybody – they saw themselves as the enemy of the police and the enemy of other gangs. This was stepping outside their ethos.

Indeed, most gang members limit their violence to other gangs or gang associated people. Despite rhetoric about the pressing danger of gangs, throughout my fieldwork I have discovered that ordinary people, or 'citizens', have very little to fear from gang members. Indeed, this finding is supported – though not often publicly conveyed – by people who have had dealings with the gangs⁶⁴. A former Detective Sergeant in charge of the police unit investigating outlaw motorcycle clubs in Auckland, Cam Stokes, told me 2003 that, "Indirectly they cause harm to many people [via the drug trade and associated problems], but in terms of direct things, no, not a great deal of risk, unless you are involved somehow with them". Similarly, an undercover police officer who infiltrated gangs during two operations in the North Island, told me in 2006, "The only people who I think have got anything to fear from gangs are people who are intimately connected to them in some manner. They don't give a toss about the other bal' heads and squares... I mean, you know, who are they to the gang? Nobody". Another undercover police officer, who wants

⁶⁴ One caution to this general rule relates to white power or racist skinhead gangs. Because they foster an ideology of contempt and hate that stretches beyond gang realms, outsiders are often targeted for violence. An example of this is the three murders committed by Forth Reich members on the South Island's West Coast; two, in 1991 and 2003, were racially motivated, and one, in 1999, occurred because the victim was homosexual.

to remain nameless, when asked by me in 2005 if gangs were a threat to the wider public, said:

No, no I don't think so. But if you have a debt with them or you have done something to one of their family members or you are exceptionally wealthy [and in their circles] and you flaunt that and they see you as an easy target, then yes you do. But your 'average Joe' blue collar worker who goes to work in a factory and goes home at night, no.

This is in contrast to the fears that many people have of gangs and is, undoubtedly, a construct of media representations. This is not to say people have nothing to fear, but rather that the high levels of fear are unwarranted.

Moreover, as noted earlier, through my research I have found that most gang members are willing to take a 'fair rap', as they see it as part of life. And although I have heard of, and on three occasions been privy to, attempts to pervert the course of justice, none have involved people without some connection to the gangs. The fact that Black Power's New Plymouth president testified in the trial against the killers of Christopher Crean is some evidence that he, at least, thought the actions of his fellow gang members had crossed a line.

As suggested by Huff (1990) it is often catalytic events that spur political action against gangs; and this was the case following the Crean murder. Then

Police Minister Jack Elder believed the verdict saved the judiciary from destruction, “I can’t stress enough the importance of this decision. If there weren’t convictions for this, I think the long-term future of the justice system was under some considerable threat” (*NZ Herald* 18.10.1997).

Despite the subsequent convictions for those guilty of the murder of Crean, the fact remained that he had been killed for agreeing to testify in a gang trial, and the high publicity given to the killing meant others in a similar position were certainly feeling nervous. Aware of the fear and reluctance felt by many witnesses in the wake of the killing, police decided to counter the problem by keeping the identity of witnesses in gang trials secret. The test case for witness anonymity was the trial of Dennis Hines stemming from the attack at the Mountain Rock Music Festival, discussed in the previous chapter. While Hines was initially convicted, on August 15 1997 the Court of Appeal ruled that secret witnesses were unlawful and Hines’ conviction was quashed and a retrial ordered (*R v Hines* [1997] 3 NZLR 529). The ruling proved to have serious ramifications for other prosecutions in which police had established cases reliant on secret witnesses.

In Christchurch during the mid-1990s, it was well known that the Road Knights, with the Harris brothers at its core, had been intimidating numerous people in an effort to make the club’s members immune to successful prosecution. Just four days after the Court of Appeal ruling in relation to Hines, the Crown was forced to withdraw its case against seven members of the Road Knights because “nearly all” of the 27 witnesses were too scared to

testify after they learned that their identities could not remain secret (*The Press* 20.8.1997). Two months previously, three members of the same gang had been released after witnesses made it “patently clear” to police that they did not want to testify in court (*The Press* 13.7.1997). Christchurch-based opposition Labour MP Mike Moore, who became a leading anti-gang lobbyist in the latter half of the 1990s and whose sensationalist approach to the gang situation will be examined in the next chapter, said, “It’s anarchy, it’s organised crime and the bad guys are winning” (*NZ Herald* 20.8.1997).

In the same city in September 1997, Max Shannon, a Black Power member, laughed as he walked from District Court after charges stemming from a clash with Highway 61 were withdrawn as witnesses to the incident refused to testify without anonymity (*The Press* 4.9.1997). Following this, Labour MP Phil Goff informed parliament that since the Court of Appeal ruling overturning the Hines conviction, 15 gang members had charges against them withdrawn and that the police said more withdrawals were likely (*NZPD*, vol.563, 1997: p.4340). Again, Mike Moore went public, saying, “I believe hundreds of cases do not get to court or are lost in court because of the terror and intimidation exerted by gangs” (*NZ Herald* 8.10.1997). As we shall see, however, Highway 61 exacted their own justice on Shannon.

Although the ruling on the use of anonymous witnesses against Hines appeared to be a failure for police, ultimately the reverse was true. Immediately after the Court of Appeal gave judgment in *R v Hines*, the Government said it would seek to change the law to overturn the decision

(New Zealand Law Commission, 1997b: p.9). The Evidence (Witness Anonymity) Amendment Act (1997) was quickly drafted to allow, in serious criminal cases, secret witnesses to be used; meaning a person could give evidence in court without disclosing their identity, even to the party against whom the evidence is given. The police, by forcing the issue in court had failed to get a conviction, but they had gained the prospect of a significant and powerful new legal weapon. If police had never brought charges against Hines using secret witnesses, the case – or lack thereof – would have received little publicity. But by pressing the issue, police had drawn a sharp public and political response. Unsurprisingly, the rhetoric surrounding the issue focused on the Hines case and other high profile cases previously outlined (*NZPD*, vol.564, 1997: pp.4957-4977).

The issues behind the proposed law change were not insignificant (for a discussion on this see New Zealand Law Commission, 1997a: p.2). The right to know your accuser has been a foundation principle of justice systems throughout the western world; an openness that allows the accused to prepare a proper defense. To be accused of a crime and not know your accuser is what one newspaper reporter described as “the stuff of Kafkaesque nightmares” (*Sunday Star Times* 26.10.1997). However, to allow criminals to escape justice due to intimidation robs people of their right to the protections offered by the law. One may have expected a charged debate around the clash of these fundamental legal principles, but instead the law was fast-tracked through parliament, despite the concerns expressed by numerous academics and members of the legal fraternity (*Sunday Star Times*

26.19.1997). The new law went from its conception, following the Court of Appeal case ruling in favour of Hines in August 1997, to its successful final reading on 9 December 1997, in less than four months. It appears that robust debate, and the ordinary parliamentary process, was superseded by the political desire to take swift action.

On its own, the new law would have been the single most significant legislative change inspired by gangs in this country, but its passage coincided with a raft of measures already in motion through parliament. Consequently, and as will become clear, the secret witness legislation was to become just one of many anti-gang laws that were passed in the late 1990s.

Conclusion

There can be little doubt that the economic woes of the late 1980s and much of the 1990s, primarily through systemic unemployment, had a significant impact on gangs entering the drug trade and other profit seeking criminal activities. One cannot, however, be too economically deterministic, and it is likely that many gangs or gang members would have taken this path due to their permissive approach to such endeavours.

But notwithstanding the causes, by the 1990s it was clear that the gangs were significant players in the drug trade and had taken advantage of their strength in the underworld to exploit others within this sphere; and in doing so brought the term of 'taxing' into the criminal sub-cultural lexicon. During this period, then, certain gangs had evolved to be what I have termed 'criminal gangs'. This evolutionary development may have become more entrenched but was

mitigated by the Proceeds of Crime Act, which enabled the state to take assets gained through criminal activity.

As has been previously outlined, many specifically targeted laws had proven of little use in reigning in the activities of gangs, so it is with a certain irony that this law was not initially devised with patched gangs in mind. Although the Proceeds of Crime Act did temper organised criminal activity undertaken by some gangs or gang chapters, its overall effect on, for example, the drug trade is less clear. Of those gangs that ceased acting as a collective in response to the threat posed by the law, certain individual members simply stepped up to take over.

As gangs or gang members became more involved in profit driven crime, in the public mind gangs became synonymous with these activities, which in turn became seen as the gangs' primary function, ignoring the fact that these groups had existed long before profit driven enterprise was connected to them. As has been made clear throughout this thesis, profit driven crime was never a basis for gang formation or the motivation for joining a gang. And in the 1990s, and is still the case today, profit driven crime cannot be seen as the *raison d'être* of patched gangs.

Nevertheless, the reputation for violence and strength that gangs had actively fostered for years allowed them certain advantages. But while this reputation enabled gangs a certain authority within the gang sphere and criminal community, when this power extended beyond these realms, by means of

perverting justice, it brought a sharp political response. Within the criminal sub-culture, gang strength was accepted as inevitable, but when this began to encroach on, or affect, the lives of outsiders, it quickly drew the concern of media and politicians; and this was the case in the rather isolated, but dramatic, slaying of Christopher Crean.

Overall, profit driven activities established the emergence of new evolutionary traits within the gang scene; and in doing so established the context for the significant political response that became evident in the latter half of the 1990s, upon which the following chapter will focus.

Chapter Ten.

Legislating Against the ‘Gang Menace’: 1996-

Introduction

By the 1990s, the territorial gang battles, which occurred between New Zealand gangs in the 1970s and 80s, were much less prevalent. During 1996, however, two unrelated gang wars in the South Island erupted – wars that were to provide the springboard for the most aggressive legislative thrust against gangs in New Zealand history. While the inter-gang violence of 1996 were no more serious than past conflicts had been, they were seized upon by police and politicians and used to create widespread concern, generating what can be seen as a case of ‘moral panic’.

This chapter will examine how public concern surrounding these disputes, promulgated by police and opposition MPs, merged with fears surrounding gangs as organised criminal groups and the issue became caught up in a wave of rhetoric that elevated the problem of gangs to one of pressing and dire concern.

Ostensibly, the outcome of this moral panic was a raft of legislative measures, but the more important result was the complete reframing of the gang issue.

The perceptions created at this time have proven so important and enduring that the events leading up to the passing of the legislation can be considered the fourth pivot point in New Zealand gang history.

Rising Concern

Nineteen-ninety-six was described by one national newspaper as a year of “unprecedented” gang warfare (*Sunday Star Times* 21.12.1996). While it was true that the year was punctuated by significant inter-gang violence, it was by no means without precedent. Moreover, it was the actions of the police and legislators that were to define the year, which could more accurately be described as one characterised by an unprecedented drive for gang legislation. It was no coincidence that this legislative drive occurred in 1996, a politically unique year in which the country was to elect its first Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) government that October. Under the new electoral system, a greater number of parties had a realistic chance of entering parliament. Both the National and Labour parties, which had dominated the New Zealand political landscape since the late 1930s, were aware that they needed to make a significant impression on the electorate in order to transfuse as few votes as possible to minor parties. Law and order issues are often seen as valuable election tools and they had played an important role in a number of New Zealand elections since 1949 (Havemann & Havemann, 1995: p.229). In election year 1996, gangs provided an important electioneering plank for Labour, and the National government was forced to respond.

The genesis for this country's most substantial anti-gang legislative effort were events in the South Island cities of Christchurch and Invercargill, where two gang wars, both involving the Road Knights, resulted in significant concern and media attention. In Christchurch, a new chapter of the Road Knights was at war with the Epitaph Riders and, in Invercargill, the Knights were attempting to stop the establishment of a Black Power chapter in that city.

It is not surprising that these two conflicts occurred when new gang chapters attempted to form in areas already established as another gang's territory. By the 1990s, the gang geography of New Zealand was well defined. As one gang member put it to me, the country was in 'checkmate' – there was little room left on the board to move. In the cities and towns where gangs existed, one gang had either claimed sufficient dominance in an area to make the establishment of a rival gang extremely difficult, or, where gangs did share space, these groups had generally – though often begrudgingly – accepted the presence of one another, making conflicts between them more often incidental than deliberate. When a new gang or new gang chapter attempted to set up in an area with an existing gang presence, violence was a likely outcome. Partially because of this geographic balance, large-scale territorial battles – and overt gang violence generally – were not as prevalent as they had been in the past. Therefore, when outbreaks of inter-gang warfare did occur, they caused significant alarm across the wider community, which had seemingly forgotten, or was unaware of, their past prevalence – hence the “unprecedented” newspaper headline cited above.

Tensions between the Epitaph Riders and the Road Knights – at one time both members of the Biker Federation, which the latter had joined in the 1980s – began in earnest when the Road Knights established a chapter in Christchurch in 1993. In an undated letter that I have obtained, the Road Knights said they were prompted to move into Christchurch because of “strong business ties”, their having a significant prison population in Christchurch jails, and the fact that the club had members “living and working” in the city. The Road Knights said the move was “not out of malice or disrespect for the Riders but merely a step in the right direction for us”. However, establishing a chapter in a fellow Federation club’s area was in breach of Biker Federation covenants, and meant their membership of the alliance ceased. It also made conflict with the Epitaph Riders inevitable.

Although their reputation had diminished somewhat by the 1990s, the Epitaph Riders remained a strong club in Christchurch, while the new Road Knight chapter – with the Harris brothers, mentioned previously in Chapter Eight, at its core – became widely recognised within the gang scene as one of the country’s most formidable and dangerous outlaw motorcycle chapters.

In March 1996, members of the Road Knights fired at a car driven by an Epitaph Rider near the Riders’ headquarters in the Christchurch suburb of Addington, shattering its rear window (*NZ Herald* 20.3.1996). Less than two weeks later, the gangs were involved in another public shooting, this time in Riccarton (*NZ Herald* 27.3.1996). Although nobody was hurt, shots being fired

in residential suburbs raised considerable public and police concern, and upset the gang/community balance, discussed in the previous chapter. Christchurch's district police commander, Superintendent Paul Fitzharris said, "We are very concerned if such incidents spill out into the public arena" (*NZ Herald* 28.3.1996). Police acted quickly after both shootings and arrested seven members of the Road Knights (*NZ Herald* 28.3.1996). Although not seen as the aggressors in the war, the police also placed pressure on the Riders, serving a search warrant on the gang's headquarters by crashing through the front wall with a front-end loader, although only one arrest – for possession of cannabis – resulted (*NZ Herald* 3.4.1996).

The war continued and sporadic – often public – encounters were frequent, largely because the Road Knights regularly travelled past the Epitaph Riders' Addington headquarters to get into the central city from their base in Halswell. However, the gang code of silence, which prevents gang members from laying complaints to police, meant that the majority of incidents went unreported. In March 1996, for example, a member of the Road Knights went to hospital to seek treatment for gunshot wounds to the face, but discharged himself before police arrived to question him (New Zealand Police, 1996: p.9).

In April 1996, one of three occupants of a car owned by the Road Knights fired at a group of Epitaph Riders on their motorcycles at an intersection in Lincoln Road, Addington. The bullets missed their intended targets and instead hit a nearby car driven by a couple and their child – the man was injured by glass fragments while the woman was hit by a bullet that passed

through her arm and lodged in her chest (*NZ Herald* 29.4.1996). The public nature of the attacks and the serious injury of an innocent bystander disrupted the gang/community balance further by sparking even wider public concern; and thereby guaranteeing significant police and political reaction. It was, to use Huff's (1990: p.312) phrase, a 'catalytic event' that helped gain political attention, not least because Ron Mark – an unsuccessful Labour party candidate in the 1993 election, who six months after the shooting was elected to parliament as a New Zealand First MP – had a family member unwittingly close to the danger: "But for 0.5 of a second either way, my daughter or her boyfriend could easily have been the person shot" (*NZPD*, vol.564, 1997: p.4969). Although, as discussed in Chapter Eight, a political reaction is expected when the gang/community balance is disturbed, the close involvement, albeit indirectly, of an MP meant that political concern was heightened as the problem felt closer to those in power.

Intense policing in the wake of the shooting took a heavy toll on both outlaw clubs. Indeed, 23 members and associates of the Road Knights were sent to prison in the aftermath of the shootings (Dennehy & Newbold, 2001: p.186). Utilising the strategy undertaken by Operation Shovel, described in Chapter Eight, the gangs were pursued on even relatively minor matters, and a total of \$13,000 traffic fines were issued to members and associates of the Road Knights during the police crackdown (Newbold, 2000: p.209). The greater targeting of the Road Knights is perhaps an indication that the police knew

that it was the Knights' move to Christchurch that had sparked the war⁶⁵. As could be expected, the constant police attention and significant incarceration rate quelled the war which went 'cold' by the middle of 1996, though it was not officially declared over by both sides until 2005 (I was with an associate of one of the gangs when a mobile phone text message was sent out informing the membership of the final truce). The political reaction that was sparked by the short sharp burst of violence in early 1996 was given further impetus by a gang war in Invercargill, which was equally fierce and, importantly, just as public.

The gang composition of Invercargill was originally established by the break-up of the a recreational group called the British Motorcycle Club, which in 1983 splintered into two outlaw factions – the Damned and another chapter of the Road Knights. The Damned were initially the stronger of the two groups, but the Road Knights killed at least two Damned members in separate incidents and began to take charge. Even the Damned patching over to become a chapter of the Devil's Henchmen in 1989 failed to stop their total collapse just a year later. Thus the Road Knights fought for and won Invercargill, giving them feelings of ownership and a right to exclusivity. This situation was maintained until the mid-1990s when Black Power attempted to establish a chapter in the city. For the Road Knights, an all-white club, the establishment of another gang was unacceptable, but a Maori/Polynesian gang was perhaps even more so. By 1996, the battle for gang control of

⁶⁵ The Harris Gang – the forerunner to the Christchurch Road Knight chapter – was also implicated in the 1991 bombing of the Sydenham Police Station, which may also have ensured police were eager to target the group at any opportunity.

Invercargill had commenced once again, but this time with significant political consequences.

The Road Knights tried to end the war quickly by bombing Black Power's headquarters in early 1996. However, while the bomb failed to explode, a series of shotgun blasts destroyed a car window at the address (*NZ Herald* 7.3.1996). Further shootings occurred, causing local police to take up arms. Southland police district commander, Neville Cook, said, "If my staff are going to meet them we will do it on equal footing" (*NZ Herald* 6.3.1996). The numbers of both gangs swelled in the immediate aftermath of the initial conflict as out-of-town chapters came to lend support (*NZ Herald* 7.3.1996). The Road Knights and their supporters – most significantly a skinhead group called the Bandenkrieg – were making their presence felt with nightly appearances on the main streets (*Midweek* c1996⁶⁶). Black Power cars were rammed and members and associates of the gang were attacked on sight. The police delivered notices to gang leaders informing them that they would be charged with disorderly assembly if they gathered in groups causing people to fear violence (*NZ Herald* 6.3.1996).

An editorial in *The Southland Times* (13.3.1996) pointed the finger at police, saying they should have stopped Black Power from establishing themselves in the area. Police, however, disputed that. In a letter to the editor the following day, the Southland district commander, Superintendent Neville Cook said, there was no law against gang membership and that, "police can do

⁶⁶ The footage I have obtained, from a gang source, cannot be more accurately referenced.

nothing if gangs behave, which the Black Power members have been careful to do up until now. Remember too who started this present round of violence...the Road Knights and their supporters, all of whom come from within this community" (*Southland Times* 14.3.1996).

In choosing to write a Letter to the Editor, one can sense Superintendent Cook's frustration at the *Times'* argument; and his aggravation was not unwarranted. In all reality, police had little ability to stop the formation of the Black Power chapter, particularly when the gang members were not committing any obvious crimes. Leaving aside the fact that gang formation is a complex social phenomena, which the police alone are ill-equipped to solve, there would have undoubtedly been complaints of harassment if police had moved on these individuals without cause; a sensitivity made acute by the fact that Black Power were made up predominately of Maori members in an overwhelmingly Pakeha city. Moreover, as the police pointed out, in the majority of attacks, the Road Knights were the perpetrators.

For their part, the Road Knights claimed that Black Power had no right to establish a chapter in Invercargill and, therefore, their attacks were defensive. If there was no Black Power, they reasoned, there would be no trouble. As the conflict escalated, the Road Knights' president in Invercargill, Grant Percy, agreed to a rare (and very brief) interview for a television's *60 Minutes* programme, in which he said, "Nobody's got anything to fear. As long as Black Power packs up and goes home, everything will be sweet as. So it's up to them, they're the ones looking for trouble". However, Black Power was

intent on staying, and with neither side willing to cede, the attacks continued. In April 1996, a member of Black Power was injured when he was shot in the head while driving near the Road Knights' headquarters (*NZ Herald* 18.4.1996). With public shootings occurring in both Invercargill and Christchurch in the early months of 1996, there was some cause for community concern, but it was the input of political figures, sensing there was political capital to be gained in the run-up to the election, that made gangs a national issue and, more importantly, opened the gate for a legislative drive.

The Political Pivot Point

As had proven the case in earlier gang violence of the 1990s, described in Chapter Eight, the problems in Christchurch and Invercargill were able to be successfully quelled by intensive policing using existing laws. As the crackdown was under way, the police in Invercargill said that they had adequate means to control the situation – something that proved to be true – but the city's Mayor, David Harrington, was unconvinced. He declared that, "More power needs to be given to police to prevent more clashes occurring" and he started a petition calling for that to occur, which he presented to Parliament in April 1996 (*NZ Herald* 18.4.1996). This action was the beginning of a wave of political activity that became the fourth pivot point in New Zealand gang history, leading to wide-ranging legislative measures that were not based on research but rather on political hyperbole and rhetoric. Consequentially, they failed to have any meaningful effect.

This was certainly not the first time that gangs had become a highly politicised issue. As will be recalled from Chapter Six, gangs were first brought into the populist realm in 1973 when Norman Kirk promised to take the 'bikes off the bikies'. But as the 1996 election loomed, never before had gangs been upheld as such an urgent and dire threat.

Although it was violence that sparked public concern, the debate quickly widened to include, and then be dominated by, gangs as organised criminals; claims that the last chapter demonstrated were not without foundation, but, as will become clear, were greatly exaggerated. New Zealand Police Association president Greg O'Connor said the street violence was just the "tip of the iceberg" and that, "Gangs control crime in every major centre in New Zealand" and, as such, new powers were needed to combat them (*NZ Herald* 30.4.1996). O'Connor became a leading voice calling for greater police powers – and police resources – to control gangs. Although many of his claims were not supported by evidence, he became extremely influential and gained high level support. A former Detective Inspector in the New Zealand Police, Dave Haslett, has suggested that "individual police...and police organizations readily highlight social issues in the mass media, which often precipitates forms of moral panic nationally or regionally" (Haslett, 2007: p.129). What happened in the lead up to the 1996 election gives support to that belief.

Seizing the political opportunity, and reflecting the now common theme that it is from the safety of Opposition benches that the most radical suggestions

derive, Labour MP Mike Moore reinforced O'Connor's views and quickly became the country's most vocal anti-gang spokesperson. He proffered rhetoric and solutions that were akin to those previously associated with John Banks (when he was in opposition) nearly a decade before. In May 1996, Moore called for legal measures "at a level of intensity and vigour so that it's just not worth being associated with these kinds of people" (*NZ Herald* 1.5.1996).

In contrast, the government's initial response to the gang violence in Christchurch and Invercargill was circumspect. Responding to Moore's calls for action, John Luxton, who had taken over from John Banks as the Minister of Police following the 1993 election, appealed for calm saying that police had the resources to combat gang violence. However, O'Connor lambasted those opinions: "For the Minister to claim that police have the problem under control when innocent bystanders are being shot, gang fortresses stand in most major population centres and teachers and police are intimidated by gang members shows a minister with poor information or judgment" (*NZ Herald* 2.5.1996).

The rebuke appears to have been effective. Just three days later, the government announced that the Justice and Law Reform Select Committee would begin an investigation into the issue of gangs beginning in June 1996 (*NZ Herald* 9.5.1996). But if the political investigation was intended to enable National to take greater control of the issue, it failed. Labour put forward Moore as one of their members of the committee and the forum provided a

prime platform from which to continue his campaign. Although Moore said he would take full advantage of his position to investigate the issue, his ideas appear to have been predetermined. With a certainty that masked a lack of objective data, he said people had to realise that gangs dominated the drug trade and organised crime and that, “Alas, many New Zealanders and most MPs don’t understand the depth of the problem” (*NZ Herald* 6.6.1996). Moore was explicitly stating that he had privileged knowledge that few others did.

Following discussions I had with Mike Moore in 2004, I was left with little doubt he had a genuine concern regarding gang activities and that he was responding to concerns from his constituents, but anybody who has ever worked with a politician is aware that any action undertaken – particularly in the build up to an election – is judged primarily for its vote gaining potential. And there is little doubt Moore was a skilled political operator. But these political skills belied the fact that Moore’s understandings of the gangs were shallow.

Parliamentary debates prior to 1996 do not suggest that Moore had much interest in gangs and he had no obvious background experience, for example, within the police or as a lawyer. Despite this, he became New Zealand’s most public and prolific anti-gang commentator and activist; and in doing so, by default and by the strength of his convictions, he became for all intents and purposes New Zealand’s leading gang expert.

In 1971, academic and Maori activist, Ranginui Walker said of the gang issue that there was a need for “competent research by social scientists”. He warned that without it those lacking sufficient training or knowledge to understand the issue sufficiently, such as the police and politicians, would inform and define the gang issue (Walker, 1971: p.43). Walker’s comments proved to be prophetic, and the commentaries provided by Moore, which he told me came largely from police sources, which I will later question as to their accuracy, were carried in the media without question.

With the wars in Christchurch and Invercargill having died down by June, from the beginning it was the Select Committee’s investigation that created more headlines than the gangs themselves. In Christchurch, the Committee sent a legal summons to Road Knights members Daryl and Ricky Harris and Darrin Baylis to appear before it (*NZ Herald* 8.6.1996). When they failed to do so, Moore was incensed, demanding that the men be charged with contempt. He was equally incensed when the committee decided not to pursue the matter. On a televised debate on *Ralston Live* in June 1996⁶⁷ with the committee’s chair, National’s Alec Neil, Moore said “the gangs are laughing at us...it’s a shameful day for parliament”. Neil responded by saying, “I’m not prepared for my select committee to be turned into a circus...The only thing I’m interested in is getting tough laws introduced into this parliament so that the people of New Zealand can be confident that police have the powers to deal strongly to gangs”. It is clear that in just a few weeks, the comments made by Police Minister Luxton that the situation was under control, were now superseded by

⁶⁷ The footage I have obtained, from a gang source, cannot be more accurately referenced.

an urgency to enact new laws. The political rhetoric of Moore and O'Connor had proven powerful, and the government was pushed to respond.

In Invercargill, Black Power representatives did appear before the Select Committee and suggested that racism was at the root of the problem and the reason for Black Power's rise. Local Black Power president Harry Katene said, "This town is racist, full stop. It's activity that we're sick of sitting around to take. We can't even walk along the street by ourselves. Even young kids can't walk the streets...because they're getting harassed all the time or beaten up" (*NZ Herald* 6.6.1996). But members of the committee were unconvinced. Labour's Phil Goff "fired a barrage of questions" at Katene claiming that racism was not the problem and that the problem was the gangs themselves (*NZ Herald* 6.6.1996). Mike Moore said that, "Claims of racism by Black Power are as outrageous as claims by members of the white Road Knights gang that they are genetically superior" (M. Moore, 1996: p.78). As noted in Chapter Eight, around this time skinhead gangs were prominent in the South Island, and Invercargill was a city where these groups had a significant presence. Moreover, groups like the Bandenkrieg had direct links⁶⁸ to the Road Knights, and it would be difficult to deny that an element of racism existed within the outlaw club⁶⁹. Remembering that at least two U.S. studies have found that the most common reason for joining a gang is for protection (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996: p.73; Esbensen & Lynskey, 2001: p.104), it is possible that this surge in white power activity led some young Maori and Pacific youths to seek support within the ranks of Black Power.

⁶⁸ The Bandenkrieg acted as a feeder gang to the Road Knights throughout the South Island.

⁶⁹ These racist views became much less pronounced as they developed an association with the multicultural Hell's Angels and Head Hunters.

But it was clear that Moore and Goff, at least, had little interest in the wider factors that give rise to gang formation and were instead focused solely on the gangs', real and assumed, criminal activities, and on giving police greater powers to combat them. It was a significant shift from the broad ranging approach of the 1970s and much of the 1980s when causation and intervention were of primary concern and there was a general acceptance that the police alone were unable to tackle an issue with such complex social foundations.

Unsurprisingly, given it was in their cities that the wars that sparked concern occurred, both the Christchurch (1996) and Invercargill (1996) city councils made submissions to the Select Committee demanding that greater action be taken against the gangs. But the most sensational submission came from the new the Police Commissioner, Peter Doone, who was appointed in June 1996. He said that New Zealand had just five years to destroy gangs or they would grow so large and powerful that they would be completely beyond control, comments that Moore described as a "powerful wake-up call" (*NZ Herald* 10.6.1996).

Mike Moore took advantage of, and propelled, the wave of attention the committee brought to the gang issue. He was a constant media presence – and began writing large articles for publication in major daily newspapers. Moore claimed, again without any obvious supporting evidence and almost certainly reliant on police information, that gang leaders in Christchurch were

“infuriated” by the publicity generated by gang conflicts and wanted to negotiate peace, similar to the relatively quiet times in Auckland, so they could continue their organised criminal activities (*NZ Herald* 10.6.1996). Outside the Fort Street Police Station in Auckland in June 1996, Moore, with fellow Labour MP Phil Goff, told reporters that he wanted the Select Committee to travel further than just the South Island cities where violence had gained centre stage. The specific regional problems were being broadened, to make the issue one of national importance. Despite the city experiencing no serious overt gang problems at that time, Auckland, he said, was where the most serious problems existed: “What we have learned about Auckland is it’s more disciplined, it’s better organised” (*NZ Herald* 14.6.1996). It was a part of Moore’s belief that the gangs “are no longer groups of hoons who smash the occasional pub. They have graduated into serious organised crime” (*NZ Herald* 11.5.1996). This was a significant change of tact, and it led to a shift in the wider public’s perception of the gangs as dominating profit driven crime in New Zealand.

During the committee’s investigation, Moore brought media attention to the construction of a new clubhouse being built by the Devil’s Henchmen in Timaru. During 1996, Moore went on *Ralston Live*⁷⁰, a current affairs programme, and questioned how the gang could afford to build it, intimating that the club must have been funding it through criminal activities. In fact, the club’s 20-odd members each contributed \$500 and then raised a loan with South Canterbury Finance – because, as one member told me, “The banks

⁷⁰ The footage I have obtained, from a gang source, cannot be more accurately referenced.

wouldn't touch us" – to purchase an investment property on Wai-iti Road. They then rented out the property for four or five years while renovating it, eventually making a \$50,000 profit. That lump sum, as well as proceeds from the club's firewood business and club membership fees, paid for materials to build the headquarters, while the club members, one of whom was a qualified builder, provided free labour. These facts were never made public, and suspicion over how the club managed to fund the building remained in the minds of the public.

Furthermore, in June 1996, Moore tabled before parliament a leaked confidential police intelligence report titled, *The 'Fat Mexicans' Are Coming*⁷¹, which linked Highway 61 with the Bandidos, which formed in Texas in 1966, and since then had become a large outlaw club with numerous chapters, and thousands of members, around the world (Veno, 2003: p.64; Winterhalder, 2007). During the 1990s, Highway 61 had grown to be the largest outlaw club in New Zealand with chapters in Whangarei, Auckland, Rotorua, Hastings, Wellington, and Christchurch. The club also became the only New Zealand gang to successfully migrate overseas, establishing two chapters in Australia; in Sydney and Brisbane⁷². In Australia, the club's chapters had established friendly relations with the Bandidos, and in 1995 members of that gang travelled to New Zealand for a Highway 61 motorcycle show in Christchurch.

⁷¹ 'Fat Mexicans' is a reference to the sombrero wearing cartoon figure on the Bandidos back patch.

⁷² I am told that Black Power unsuccessfully attempted to establish a Sydney chapter in the 1980s. Certainly the Mongrel Mob briefly had a presence in Perth in 1989, but the city's outlaw clubs, the Gypsy Jokers, Club Dero, the Coffin Cheaters and God's Garbage, created an informal alliance to resist the gang (*NZ Herald* 28-11-1989). Following an explosion in a workshop employing a Mob member and the non-fatal groin shooting of one of its leaders, the chapter folded. Other alliances have been formed. In the 1990s the Devil's Henchmen had close links to the Australian Outlaws (at that time unconnected to the international club of the same name), which was formal enough for both groups to don side patches highlighting their connection. And in more recent years the Tribesmen have been associating with the Rebels MC of Australia.

It was this trip to Christchurch by “office bearers and senior [Bandidos] members” as well as other “noted activity, rumours and...overseas trends”, which formed the view of at least one police intelligence officer that, “Highway 61 MC New Zealand were being wooed as prospective members of the Bandidos MC international organisation” (New Zealand Police, 1995: p.3). The report rated the probability of a patch-over at 95%. Supporting this rating was “restricted A1 information from a highly confidential and totally reliable source in Queensland from within the Bandidos MC Australia”, which corroborated the assessment already made in New Zealand. The report concluded by saying, “*negotiations were now almost complete on the “buying in” to the Bandidos World group through the Australian franchise, by the Highway 61 MC New Zealand*” (italics in original) (New Zealand Police, 1995: p.3). Furthermore, the report said that there would be dire consequences of such a move in the form of gang warfare in New Zealand due to the international antagonism between the Bandidos and the Hell’s Angels.

Several Highway 61 members have told me that no serious consideration was given to such a move and that the links between the groups were simply social – similar to the way different clubs had coalitions, without thoughts of merging, in New Zealand. In fact, even a cursory glance at the report suggests the evidence by which the assessment of a takeover was thin. Moreover, the report’s author does not appear to have consulted colleagues in the police best placed to assess the credibility of the information – New Zealand gang liaison officers. One leading gang liaison officer, who wishes to remain nameless, told me in 2006 that, “[the author of the report] was a bit of

a conspiracy theorist – I think he just got carried away. Certainly, me or anyone I knew [in the gang intelligence community] didn't give him that information, so Christ knows where it came from". Another senior police officer told me, "He [the report's author] made two and two make six. It was hugely embarrassing. The information [he used] just didn't stand up in the light of day". Nevertheless, the report provided significant political capital.

In tabling the report, Mike Moore successfully called for an urgent parliamentary debate, tying the discussion of the report to the pressing need for gang laws (*NZPD*, vol. 556, 1996: p.13350). Although Moore was most likely unaware of many of the report's deficiencies, he was certainly aware that it was more than a year old and that during the Select Committee's investigation the police had not raised any of the concerns mentioned within it, something that Alec Neil was quick to point out to parliament (*NZPD*, vol. 556, 1996: p.13359). The Bandidos never merged with Highway 61, but nevertheless, the report and its content gained significant media attention. The campaign was not one of truth seeking, but of political point scoring; and in that regard, Moore was excelling.

Moore also made a number of statements that were not supported by the report or any other evidence, including that the New Zealand Hell's Angels wear 'Filthy Few'⁷³ badges to denote members who kill for the gang, and also that gang "villains" had better technology than the "good guys", meaning the police (*NZPD*, vol. 556, 1996: pp.13352 & 13353). In my experience, the latter

⁷³ Not to be confused with the outlaw club called the Filthy Few based in the Bay of Plenty.

claim simply beggars belief, while the former has been denied to me by the Hell's Angels; although Lavigne (2004: p. 54) believes it to be true its veracity has been questioned by Veno (2003: p.148). While there is no firm evidence that 'Filthy Few' badges denote a killer, there is actually evidence to the contrary. Richard Dalhousie, for example, who was one of those convicted in the 1975 killing of Bradley Haora, outlined in Chapter Six, is still a member of the club and does not wear a Filthy Few badge.

Not to be outdone by his Labour Party colleague, Phil Goff made similarly sweeping statements, saying that, "We know that the gangs control machine guns, that they have military-style semi-automatics weapons" (*NZPD*, vol. 556, 1996: p.13358), though he provided no evidence to support this claim. Throughout my research, I have not found any examples of machine guns or military style weapons being used to commit gang crimes at this time. That is not to say such weapons did not exist, but they were certainly not prevalent. Nevertheless, these types of claims and statements being made by Moore and Goff were building an exaggerated picture of gangs that went largely unchallenged. There was little reason for the wider public not to accept them as fact.

One reason for the acceptance of these stories was the lack of response from the gangs. Apart from the appearance by Black Power at a Select Committee hearing in Invercargill (where they were roundly attacked), both patched gangs and the outlaw clubs failed to speak out publicly about these issues. Although journalists were undoubtedly excited by the sensationalist political

claims that made for great copy, even if they had sought to balance their reports, their ability to do so was somewhat limited. The gangs were generally ill equipped to deal with journalists enquiries and most had adopted strong rules banning talking with the media because of bad experiences with the press. Moreover, I believe the gangs had become somewhat immune to political attack and in the past had watched it flair up, die down and ultimately leave their gang life continue on as normal. Ever since the failure of Muldoon's vehicle confiscation laws in the mid-1970s, little political change had had any real troubling effect. But this time, the political fire was much larger than it had ever been in the past and without a counterbalance it was able to proceed unhindered.

Mike Moore's use of the media was powerful and deliberate, and intended to gain public attention and support his calls for political action. In a remarkably frank admission, he told me that,

Politicians respond to public opinion, respond to stories...I had a huge file on it, I was pumping it all the time, and the public was getting outraged ...You've got to build it up and then get the Government to respond to it.

The 'outrage' that Moore was deliberately invoking produced what Cohen (1972) famously called a 'moral panic'. As outlined in Chapter One, Cohen believed that exaggeration and sensational media reports lead to an issue being inflated to such a degree that all sense of perspective becomes lost.

The media, as well as political figures, create 'folk devils' around which a mythology is produced. Cohen(1972: p.44) suggested that one element of a moral panic was that the threat, once suitably bolstered by sensational commentaries and media articles, is framed as a threat to the moral fabric of a society. As if scripted to conform to this theory, Moore told parliament that, "Gangs are a time bomb lodged against the heart of the nation...They are a threat to our democracy" (*NZPD*, vol. 556, 1996: p.13351). This claim he repeated in a long opinion piece in the *New Zealand Herald* (10.6.1996) to which he added, "We are engaged in a fundamental battle to preserve peace and civil order in New Zealand". The rhetoric had reached a crescendo.

During the parliamentary debate in which Moore first made these claims, the Justice Minister Doug Graham, a lawyer turned politician who enjoyed a level-headed reputation, attempted to calm matters. Almost certainly aware that the issue was being blown out of proportion, he said that the subject was not new and that care needed to be taken in enacting new laws: "I am always reluctant to keep incrementally adding to the police powers. One never gets them back. So each year we give more, and we have to be very, very careful about that. I would need to be satisfied – and I am certain we all do – that what they [the police] seek is justified, that it will do some good...and that it is the proper thing to do as a Parliament" (*NZPD*, vol. 556, 1996: p.13367). He was supported by fellow National MP, and former police officer Ross Meurant, who said, "Overreaction just before election time results in silly legislation" (*NZPD*, vol. 556, 1996: p.13363).

But the drive for new legislation, and the creation of the gangs as a ‘folk devil’, had become politically irresistible for the government, and on 9 July 1996, with the general election just three months away, Doug Graham outlined the broad principles of proposed new measures that would be introduced in an effort to combat gangs. Then, on 20 August 1996, less than two months before the election, those measures were fleshed out in the form of the Harassment and Criminal Associations Bill, which was introduced to Parliament for its first reading. Not wanting to be usurped by opposition proposals (most notably a Private Member’s Bill drafted by Mike Moore), the changes outlined in the Bill would become the country’s most wide ranging deterrent and suppressive thrust aimed at gangs; and importantly they ensured the National Party did not look soft on the issue of gangs as the election loomed.

As expected, the first MMP election in November 1996 failed to provide a clear majority for either of the two main parties, and the third placed New Zealand First, with Winston Peters at its helm, held enough seats to create either a centre-Right or centre-Left government. After protracted negotiations, New Zealand First joined forces with the National party, enabling them to remain in power.

Police feared that the more representative parliament might slow the progress of the proposed laws, “and that the impetus achieved prior to the election may be lost” (*NZ Herald* 16.1.1997). The *New Zealand Herald* reported that, in a briefing paper to the new government, police “express concern about the now

well-established links between home-grown and internal gangs and their control over illegal activities and commodities” and that “to facilitate their criminal activities many gangs are attempting to lower their public profile” (*NZ Herald* 16.1.1997). The intent of the report was quite clear: to press home to the politicians that the new laws remained necessary and urgently required, and that the apparent quietening of the gang scene – a return to the gang/community balance – was no reason not to act. With the dominant discourse focusing on gangs as organised criminals, the lack of overt violence was a menacing development and not one to feel reassured by.

Police fears that the proposed laws may stall were not without foundation. Given that the violent incidents in both Christchurch and Invercargill had long been quelled, the haste that had been so evident before the election slowed considerably and the new government was rather slow in reappointing members to the Justice and Law Reform Committee, which would consider the Harassment and Criminal Associations Bill. Ordinarily, as with moral panics generally, the issue may have died down naturally but as the proposed legislation had already been drafted, the subject was kept alive. And police concerns that the progress of the laws would falter were, eventually, allayed.

Following the election, the reformed Justice and Law Reform Committee was made up of five National/New Zealand First MPs, three Labour MPs, with one MP each from Act and the Alliance parties. Former police officer and New Zealand First MP Rana Waitai was appointed the Chairperson. After 28 April

1997 – the closing date for submissions on the Bill – the committee considered the proposed legislation, and they had much to consider.

The Proposed Law Changes

Before examining reaction to the proposed law changes, and ultimately their effect, the following section provides a brief summary them. These measures were originally bundled together and moved through parliament and the Select Committee process as the Harassment and Criminal Associations Bill. When introduced into parliament for the final reading, however, they were split up into a series of new laws and amendments to existing laws.

Harassment Bill (1997)

The provisions in the Harassment Bill included both criminal and civil harassment, and recognised that “individual acts that may appear trivial or innocent on the surface may amount to harassment when viewed in context” (Harassment and Criminal Associations Bill 1997 No.215-2: p.iii). The law would make it an offence to “harass another person so that the person fears for his or her safety or the safety of members of his or her family” (*ibid*).

The offence of criminal harassment was directed at more serious forms of harassment. Under this provision, a person would commit criminal harassment if they harassed another person causing the victim to fear for the safety of themselves or those with whom they share a family relationship. The act of harassment had to occur twice within a 12 month period.

Subjective/objective tests were proposed to judge what constituted harassment, as this “recognises that acts that may cause fear in an elderly person who lives alone may not instil fear in a different class of persons” (Ministry of Justice, 1997: p.21)

Amendments to Crimes Act (1961)

A number of amendments were sought in relation to the Crimes Act. One of these was a proposal to create a new offence of participation in a criminal gang. In order to be charged, a person would have to participate in a criminal gang, defined as three persons having previously commissioned or attempted to commission three or more serious offences on separate occasions, with the intention of promoting criminal conduct. The maximum penalty for participation in a criminal gang was set at three years imprisonment. Given there were many existing laws that targeted aiding and abetting criminal activity, this offence would be used when, “for some reason, a gang member is not able to be charged as a party to a specific offence” (Ministry of Justice, 1997: p.47). The proposed changes also provided another option when sentencing a person for a different offence that did allow for a penalty of three years imprisonment, and thus could allow the courts the ability to impose a more severe sanction on gang members (Ministry of Justice, 1997: p.47).

Provisions were also sought to extend police powers to intercept private communication by:

- (a) Amending the definition of “organised criminal enterprise” to reduce the number of people who need to be involved in an enterprise from six to three; and
- (b) Making interception warrants available for-
 - (i) The offence of money laundering by members of an organised criminal enterprise;
 - (ii) Certain offences relating to perverting the course of justice;
 - (iii) Serious violent offences punishable by 7 years imprisonment or more, in certain circumstances.

A final amendment sought to extend powers relating to vehicles stopped under the Act by allowing the police to search vehicles in a wider range of situations; to require a person to supply his or her date of birth; and to arrest without warrant for breach of section.

Amendments to Criminal Justice Act (1985)

These amendments would give greater power to the court in issuing non-association orders; primarily in giving judges the discretion to impose non-association orders when sentencing offenders for periods of twelve months or less. Also, the court’s power to impose non-association orders would be increased so that non-associating conditions could last for longer periods (twelve months instead of six). This order would prohibit an offender from associating with a specified person or class of persons and may be imposed where:

- (a) The person is convicted of an imprisonable offence; and
- (b) The court is satisfied that the order is reasonably necessary to ensure that the offender does not commit further offences punishable by imprisonment. Breach of an order is punishable by up to twelve months in prison.

Amendments to Local Government Act (1974)

This amendment sought to replace section 695A of the Local Government Act, a section dealing with gang fortifications⁷⁴. The proposed changes, as well as broadening the grounds on which a removal orders could be made, aimed to make removing these structures quicker and more effective. Primarily this would be achieved through streamlining the procedure for making applications, and making general laws of evidence relevant in applications, for example establishing that a person had been convicted of an offence and thereby linking fortifications to criminal enterprise.

Amendments to Misuse of Drugs Act (1975)

Under the law as it existed at that time, police had the power to obtain an interception warrant if there were reasonable grounds for believing that a class A or B controlled drug offence was being, or was about to be, committed. This amendment would mean that interception warrants were available in a wider range of situations, and, most significantly, such warrants could be obtained in relation to dealing in or cultivating cannabis (a class C controlled drug).

⁷⁴ It will be recalled from Chapter Seven that this provision was originally created in 1987 but proved to be unworkable.

Amendments to Summary Offences Act (1981)

Three main changes were to the Summary Offences Act were proposed. Firstly, two new offences would be created, based on an existing law that prohibits people from associating with convicted thieves. The new law would make it an offence for a person to habitually associate with violent or drug offenders when it could reasonably be inferred that the association would lead to the commission of a crime. For someone to be convicted of these offences, they would need to be given three warnings by police, and the drug/violent offender with which they were associating would have to have been convicted of two or more drug/violent offences.

Secondly, under the existing law (Section 21) there was a range of behaviours that made certain acts, relating to intimidation, an offence. A new clause (Clause 88) would make two amendments: a) stopping, confronting, or accosting a person in a public place was added as a further category to the list of behaviour deemed to be intimidation; b) the *mens rea* was reduced so that the offender just had to be “reckless” as to whether or not their behaviour is intimidating. Therefore, offenders only need the knowledge that their behaviour is “likely to reasonably cause” a person to be frightened or intimidated. These changes were aimed at the intimidating nature of gang behaviour in public places that was seen to affect the public’s daily lives (Ministry of Justice, 1997: p.108).

The final significant amendment to the Act proposed to increase the level of fines for most of the offences that it incorporated. With few exceptions, penalties had not been amended since their original enactment in 1981. It was proposed that most penalties be doubled.

Amendments to Telecommunications Act (1987)

The main purpose of these amendments was to regulate the obtaining of call associated data – obtained through the use of telephone analysers or by other technology – by both the police and customs. This is not to be confused with interception communication, as the data under the Telecommunications Act does provide the content of calls, but only information on who people have been calling, and when these calls occurred.

The Quiet Challenges and Political Resolve

On face value at least, the measures outlined above were the most wide ranging legislative thrust aimed at gangs the country had ever attempted. As has been discussed, the measures were sparked by a number of serious gang incidents that created a strong political drive in the lead up to the 1996 election. Away from the political spotlight, the laws were given sober analysis and scrutiny by a number of groups, and were questioned as to their need, their potential for efficacy and their impact on liberties and human rights. However, the Justice and Law Reform Committee – as a political body bound by the pre-election rhetoric, and chaired by a former police officer – was unmoved by such critiques and steadfast in its support of the proposed law changes.

Notwithstanding the significance of these new laws *in toto*, some of the provisions, for example, the changes relating to the Telecommunications Act, were uncontroversial. Similarly, changes to the Crimes Act that widened interception warrants to involve dealing in cannabis were largely seen as fair and reasonable. Equally uncontroversial were the proposed increases in certain penalties, for instance within the Summary Offences Act, where such penalties had not been reviewed since their inception in 1981. Other changes, however, were both more significant and more contentious.

Several rights-based arguments were offered in relation to the proposed new offence, under the Crimes Act, of participating in a criminal gang, with fears they would undermine a fundamental freedom of living in a democratic society (Auckland Council For Civil Liberties, 1997), and diminish control over one's own life (Privacy Commission, 1997a). The proposal was also questioned due to its "troubling" vagueness and uncertainty (Privacy Commission, 1997a: p.12); and because the policy behind the offence was unclear (Human Rights Commission, 1997).

A rights-based argument was also offered against extending the powers of non-association orders, which were seen to give "wide discretion" enabling them to be used for quite different situations than those explicitly proposed (Human Rights Commission, 1997: p.3). The right to associate freely has long been recognised in human rights documents and the New Zealand Bill of

Rights Act 1990 (s17) seeks to protect such freedoms, stating that, “Everyone has the right to freedom of association”.

Although few submissions expressed concern over increasing the variety of offences, the Privacy Commissioner (1997a), the Christchurch Community Law Centre (1997), and the Human Rights Commission (1997), were all concerned by the whittling away of the threshold that constitutes an organised criminal enterprise from six people to three. The Privacy Commissioner Bruce Slane said in his 1997 annual report that: “There is no ‘magic’ in the figure six and therefore it is difficult to offer a cogent case in favour of that figure as against the figure of three. However, I consider it is incumbent upon state authorities seeking to obtain extra powers of intrusive surveillance to make the case, and not for others to have to establish the reasonableness of the status quo” (Privacy Commission, 1997b). Such a low figure also appeared inconsistent with police assertions that high numbers of gang members were involved in criminal operations (Christchurch Community Law Centre, 1997a).

The need for an extension of police powers to intercept private communication was also questioned, due to the proposed changes being “a major expansion of the powers to intercept private communications” (Privacy Commission, 1997b). When enacted in 1987, interception powers in Part XIA of the Crimes Act 1961 – phone tapping and premises bugging – were intended to be extraordinary powers for dealing with sophisticated criminal activity, influenced by the spectre of growing Asian organised criminal syndicates. At that time, the number of participants (six) was deliberately

framed to ensure it was targeting organised criminal groups, and thus reflecting Parliament's intent that such intrusive powers should not become an ordinary law enforcement tool (Ministry of Justice, 1997: p.60). Indeed, it has long been established by New Zealand courts that a warrant to intercept communication "is a step never to be lightly authorised in New Zealand society" (Privacy Commission, 1997a: p.1).

Although academics were conspicuously absent during the submission process, at least one, Kevin Dawkins, a criminal law expert from the University of Otago, questioned some of the changes in the *New Zealand Law Review*. Specifically, he addressed the proposed new offence of criminal harassment. There already existed many provisions targeting types of harassment: threatening (Crimes Amendment Act 1961, ss 306, 194 and 196; Summary Offences Act 1981, s 21); intimidation (Summary Offences Act 1981, s 21); intentionally or recklessly causing psychological harm or injury (Crimes Act, ss 188 and 189); making annoying, disturbing, or malicious phone calls (Telecommunications Act 1987, s 8); loitering and trespass (Summary Offences Act, ss 3, 4, 8, and 12); disorderly or offensive behaviour (Summary Offences Act, ss 3, 4, and 5); causing a criminal nuisance (Crimes Act 1961, s 145). There are also related provisions under the Domestic Violence Act 1995, Summary Proceedings Act 1957, the Human Rights Act 1993, and even the Employment Contracts Act 1991. These considerations led Dawkins (1997: p.23) to conclude that, "the very idea that we need a charter on harassment is disputable".

The necessity of creating new offences for associating with violent or drug offenders was also questioned. As previously noted, the new offences were based on existing law that made it illegal to associate with convicted thieves, but since the mid-1980s, there had only been two convictions for that offense. This extremely low rate of prosecution seemed anomalous with an extension of such powers. The Christchurch Community Law Centre was opposed to the changes saying: "Certainly it would be hard to say the equivalent offence of associating with convicted thieves has reduced the incidence of theft or receiving stolen property" (Christchurch Community Law Centre, 1997b: p.2). Indeed, of the seven submissions relating to the proposed offence, only the Police Association and the Invercargill City Council supported the change; those organisations not in support included the Human Rights Commission, Auckland Council for Civil Liberties, and the New Zealand Law Society.

Concerns were also raised in relation to the proposed new power, outlined under the Crimes Act, to stop and search vehicles without a warrant. The Christchurch Community Law Centre felt that the police could simply use the laws to go on "fishing expeditions" without the restraints of the existing law provided via the prerequisite of warrants (Christchurch Community Law Centre, 1997a: p.3). The New Zealand Law Society felt that such fears could be mitigated by applying procedural requirements such as those required by the Misuse of Drugs Act (New Zealand Law Society, 1997). Similarly, the Legislation Advisory Committee thought that safeguards ought to be considered because the new provisions would be available for general law enforcement use and not merely in relation to criminal gangs (Legislation

Advisory Committee, 1997: p.4). This argument was particularly notable given that such measures were requested for general law enforcement by police in 1988 (when a Select Committee examined search warrants) and in 1993 (when the Crimes Act was amended); on both occasions such powers were deemed unnecessary by parliament, yet now, when proposed as gang laws, the measures gained favour.

Indeed, the framing of the new laws as 'gang laws' served to inhibit greater public debate about them. Lost within the political rhetoric was the fact that the new laws, while ostensibly targeting gangs, were not formally restricted to such groups. Judge Steven Erber expressed this in relation to non-association orders when he said there was no doubt "that the primary target was gangs, but it is clear that an order may be made against a person who is not and has never been associated with a gang" (*Police v Harris*, Unreported, District Court, Christchurch, Erber S, July 1998). Regardless of the stated intent, once these measures were put into law, police could use them against anybody. How seriously this issues was regarded, is reflected by the fact that so many different groups – unconnected to gangs – made submissions opposing the laws.

As was the case in the media flurry before the election, the gangs remained silent, as none chose to make submissions to the Select Committee. It will be recalled that in the late 1980s, certain groups did engage with the political process in relation to issues that affected them, and their failure to do so in the 1990s suggests a certain withdrawal from political engagement. I suspect

this reflects two things: firstly that the gangs were ignorant of the process or nonplussed by outcomes; and secondly, before the demise of the social agenda there was a government belief in the benefits of engaging with such groups, something that no longer existed in the 1990s era of 'zero tolerance'.

Predictably, police input into the proposals suggested that many of the measures did not go far enough. For example, police felt the number needed to form a criminal enterprise (in order to gain interception warrants) should be just two (Ministry of Justice, 1997: p.59); that only one warning should need to be given before a charge is brought against an individual for associating with a violent or drug offender (Ministry of Justice, 1997: p.104); and that the police should be able to apply for an order to remove a fortification – an order that could not be appealed – “even if it would infringe the respondents’ rights” (Ministry of Justice, 1997: p.96). Although these suggestions were rejected by the Select Committee, they did not attract the negative reaction that the Committee of Inquiry into Violence (1987) had expressed a decade before; and political views were now largely in line with those of the police. In fact, given Mike Moore was largely reliant on police information, the police were instrumental in the formation of political opinion; a point critical to later discussions.

Where concerns were raised during the submission process, the committee either disagreed with the submitter and moved on, or made counter arguments to nullify such concerns. The latter was the case in relation to rights-based concerns. For example, the committee countered issues raised

in relation section 98A of the Crimes Act which sought to criminalise participation in a criminal gang. They asserted that the changes were consistent with the Bill of Rights because the proposed law had “a number of thresholds and was therefore properly targeted” (Justice and Law Reform Committee, 1997: p.vii).

They were similarly resolute when countering concerns levelled at the changes to interception warrants. The committee acknowledged that interception powers should not be available for general law enforcement purposes and recognised concerns relating to the lowering of the threshold for the number of people constituting an organised criminal enterprise from six to three. However, they were ultimately persuaded by police concerns that the existing law’s definition was too restrictive and thus recommended that the “threshold of three persons be retained in the bill” (Justice and Law Reform Committee, 1997: p.viii).

The committee also dismissed the concerns that were raised regarding the proposal to stop and search vehicles without a warrant. The committee again acknowledged the concerns, but were “satisfied the amendments...are justified and expect that Police will use the new powers in a reasonable way” (Justice and Law Reform Committee, 1997: p.xi).

Similarly, the committee did not agree with those concerned about the doubtful efficacy of many of the measures, but in one instance at least, its belief wavered slightly. In relation to the extension of powers regarding non-

association orders, the committee said, “We consider there is a lack of information to help assess how well orders are enforced, how often they are imposed and their overall effectiveness” (Justice and Law Reform Committee, 1997: pp.xii). They did, however, conclude that the extended powers were “important and provide a means of enabling offenders to break their connections to the gang. In this way we see the orders as something which may be beneficial to the offender” (Justice and Law Reform Committee, 1997: pp.xii-xiii). This was a rare show of uncertainty, however, and the resolve of the committee was ultimately steadfast.

This resolve, however, was not built upon a great deal of evidence. Although the Ministry of Justice felt it was “clear” that police and public concern about gangs had “some basis”, they conceded that “it is not possible to point to independent data or research that assesses the nature and level of gang involvement in organised crime or the extent of public concern about gang behaviour” (Ministry of Justice, 1997: p.3). It was a telling admission, and it points to the fact that rhetoric rather than research was the driver of the legislation; an issue I will elaborate on shortly.

Having been the strongest proponents for legal change, largely through Mike Moore but also Phil Goff, the Labour Opposition endorsed the proposals as they returned to parliament from the Select Committee in an unusual show of political bipartisanship. Indeed, the only political advantage available to them was to argue that the legislation was not strong enough. Mike Moore welcomed the moves but suggested they only went “half-way” (*NZ Herald*

9.7.1996) and went further to propose that gang members should have any court sentence immediately doubled (*NZ Herald* 20.9.1996). With few exceptions, the debate in the House during the Bill's readings reflected the politicking that had occurred leading up to the drafting of the laws as politicians sought to outdo each other and position themselves and their parties as suitably tough on gangs. With his early reticence clearly swept away by the tide of political opinion, the Minister of Justice, Doug Graham introduced the final reading of the Bill saying, "Society is no longer prepared to tolerate the activities of gangs and other criminal association. The time has come to get tough" (*NZPD*, vol.565, 1997: p.5532). His National Party colleague, Wayne Mapp, reinforced this view, "Undoubtedly, gangs are the great scourge of our times...It is clear that gangs are an evil force and that society must find a way to break them down" (*NZPD*, vol.565, 1997: pp.5549-5550). Select Committee chair and member of the coalition Government, New Zealand First MP Rana Waitai said, "when we talk about gangs these days we are talking about organised crime...This Bill adds strength to the arsenal of the police to deal with crime and gangs on behalf of society" (*NZPD*, vol.565, 1997: pp.5536-5537).

Reflecting the fact that the gang problem had been redefined away from violence and disorder toward profit driven criminal enterprise, Phil Goff said, "When we talk about the gang problem today, we are not talking about the usual street violence and stand-over tactics that were once associated with gangs in New Zealand: we are talking about organised crime....It is important that the police have the powers we give them in this Bill" (*NZPD*, vol.565,

1997: pp.5534-5535). He was joined by his colleague George Hawkins who said, “this is a very, very important Bill...What is behind those fortifications? It is not a little fairyland; it is not where Father Christmas is, but it is where serious crime goes on. There are drugs, guns, distribution networks, computers, faxes, and everything. It’s sophisticated illegal business” (*NZPD*, vol.565, 1997: p.5542). He argued that the National/New Zealand First Government was “soft” in not making certain measures more severe, suggesting that the Bill was an improvement but “perhaps it does not go far enough” (*NZPD*, vol.565, 1997: p.5542). Fellow Labour MPs, Lianne Dalziel and Mark Peck were equally emphatic. Dalziel said, “It is important we are tough on the criminal element...They are the Business Roundtable of the underworld” (*NZPD*, vol.565, 1997: p.5549). While Mark Peck, in a rare acknowledgement of the type of behaviours that had actually sparked the law changes, said the laws were “sending a very clear message to the gangs not to expect any sympathy from this House because they will have none, and they deserve none. Their very reason for being is crime... The citizens of my city are entitled to safe streets. They are entitled to know they can go about their normal business without having to put up with these unsavoury characters, who would harass and intimidate them every step of the way” (*NZPD*, vol.565, 1997: p.5551-5552).

The political bi-partisanship of the two main parties meant that any meaningful debate on the necessity or efficacy of the laws was lacking. Indeed, when members of the left wing Alliance Party questioned the measures, they were castigated. Alliance Justice Spokesperson, Matt Robson said, “In this Bill we

are actually perpetuating a fraud on the people of New Zealand. We are saying to them that when crime rises and when there is violence, we deal with that by taking already strong laws and punitive powers and strengthening them” (NZPD, vol.565, 1997: p.5538). In response, National’s Pansy Wong said, “I remind every individual out there who is fearful of intimidation by gangs, that the Alliance is against this Bill. I remind everybody who is frightened of gang activities and feels the police should be given more powers for community protection, that the Alliance is against the passage of this Bill” (NZPD, vol.565, 1997: p.5540). It reflected the extent to which the debate on gangs had swung toward a suppressive approach, that anybody seeking to offer alternatives was quickly dismissed as soft on crime.

But, as evinced by many of the submissions to the Select Committee, the enthusiasm of politicians was not shared by everyone. Although the sober reflections of legal experts and other concerned bodies expressed during the submission process did not gain much – if any – media attention, the media did begin to carry alternative views as the proposals progressed through parliament. With moral panic long over, the media began to perform its ‘fourth estate’ duties.

Perhaps sparking this turnaround was the research of an academic that challenged the prevailing knowledge of gangs. In 1997, prominent New Zealand sociologist Greg Newbold (1997) wrote a paper on organised crime in New Zealand for an American Journal. In that, and in turn publicly, he announced that, while the gangs were involved in profit drive crime, the

majority of New Zealand gangs were “guileless” and criminally “incompetent”, and that the threat they posed to the country was relatively minor (Newbold, 1997: p.91). In stark contrast to the prevailing popular opinion, this academic view generated media interest in the basis of the laws, which were founded on the very idea that gangs dominated organised criminal activity and were a dire and pressing danger to the country. Newbold told the *New Zealand Herald* that the gangs were “disorganised” and if the Harassment and Criminal Associations Bill became law it would be “unlikely to have any significant effect on criminal gang activity” (*NZ Herald* 6.8.1997). Although, in the same article, these issues were disputed by the president of the Police Association, Greg O’Connor, others began to publicly voice concerns over the proposed legislation.

Barry Wilson, the vice president of the Auckland Council for Civil Liberties, told media that the changes within the Harassment and Criminal Associations Bill were “clearly another attack by Government on basic civil liberties” and that that would not be limited to use against gang members (*NZ Herald* 10.9.1997). Prominent Queen’s Council (QC) Peter Williams lamented the lack of effective opposition from the Left. He believed the lack of debate compounded a New Zealand tendency to accept police authority to the detriment of civil liberties: “The so called Labour party in this country has always been pretty right wing when it comes to penal matters. Instead of an active left wing acting as a sanction and reviewing such moves, people like Mike Moore and Phil Goff are in many ways trying to outdo the right wing by being even more draconian” (*Sunday Star Times* 26.10.1997). He also

expressed concerns about the reach of some of the legislation saying the general nature of the provisions could mean those with family members in gangs would find themselves caught up in the laws (*Truth* 19.12.1997). Auckland solicitor Chris Read said “many” lawyers were concerned by the proposals, but in highlighting his fears he demonstrated that strong rhetoric was not just the domain of the advocates of the legal provisions: “I find it offensive. It’s exactly the sort of thing Hitler did and it will be the poor and those with little knowledge of the law who will suffer most” (*Truth* 19.12.1997).

Scott Optican, senior law lecturer at the University of Auckland, was more analytical but equally sceptical about the laws saying that, law makers needed to assess whether the gang problem was big enough to require new police powers and to ensure it was not simply a “knee-jerk political reaction” (*NZ Herald* 10.9.1997). He said:

Whenever we look at creating new police powers because we’re worried about a certain class, or group of people or criminal conduct, we’d better make darn sure that the problem is big enough to warrant the powers and that the existing powers are inadequate...Laws which may look neutral on the face of it can end up being abused because of their application (*NZ Herald* 10.9.1997).

Further to his earlier statements, Newbold was more blunt in his appraisal, “I think this bill is largely a sop to public opinion. I think it’s a political device to make people feel that something is being done about something that the

public has been encouraged to feel frightened about” (*NZ Herald* 10.9.1997). But these public critiques were not only rare, they came about after the debate had been framed and thus had little or no effect on the political discourse. By this time the passing of the laws was all but a *fait accompli*.

Of significant interest was the transformation within the overall political discussion. Conspicuously missing in the discussions on gangs were the social considerations that had dominated thinking in the 1970s and 80s. This is not to say they were forgotten, more that they appear to have been ignored.

The Ministry of Justice reported that:

It became clear during the development of the bill that no single legislative initiative would achieve the desired result of reducing gang activity. A longer-term broader strategy to deal with gangs and their offending needs to be developed. This is likely to involve action a number of fronts and to include measures that will not require legislation (Ministry of Justice, 1997: p.3).

Passing comments by politicians from both sides of the political spectrum made similar references. However, no such strategy was developed and arguments of this kind were conspicuously sidelined, further indicating that the issue was one of political expediency and not a serious attempt at truly countering the problems of gangs.

The new laws finally passed through their third reading in parliament in November 1997 and came into effect between January 1 and June 1, 1998. Of the six parties (and one independent member) in parliament, only the Alliance did not support the measures.

The Outcomes – The Failure of the Political Promise

Given their well-constructed lobby to push for the new laws, it was of little surprise that the police enthusiastically embraced their passing, and promised to use them to “crack down” on gangs. Assistant Commissioner Neville Trendle said the laws gave police more power to target the gangs and he thanked all those in the police who had contributed to getting the legislation passed, “I want to thank all staff who contributed and provided feedback and information. This has helped get legislation through that will make a big difference to our job” (*Ten-One* 19.12.1997). The head of the National Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, Detective Inspector Cam Ronald, said officers around the country were following a directive to “put police on the front foot” by using the new legislation (*NZ Herald* 8.7.1998). In Christchurch, where gang activity had helped spark the calls for legislative change, the police gang liaison officer, Detective Richard Neale, said the new laws gave police more “weight”, saying, “We’ll be stronger, we’ll be able to detect offences a lot more quickly and deal with them more appropriately than we have been able to do” (*NZ Herald* 8.7.1998). Indeed, it was in that city that most significant use of the new laws was to occur.

Following a gang-related brawl outside a bar in the Christchurch suburb of Hornby in May 1997, during which eight people were assaulted and two people stabbed, several members of the Road Knights were charged with, and convicted of, assault (*NZ Herald* 5.7.1998). Subsequent to the laws being passed and during the trial, police, under the new provision within the Criminal Justice Act, applied for non-association orders to be served on those members involved. Subsequently, six members or associates of the Road Knights, including three of the Harris brothers, were served with orders that banned all contact for twelve months between themselves and a number of other 'named' persons – members or associates of their gang. The case was a groundbreaking effort at splitting up a gang and was given further significance because it involved separating kin. Judge Erber was aware of the case's significance and in making the order he recognised the right of free association, the public interest in keeping families together, and the "strong and genuine domestic bond" the Harris family exhibited (*Police v Harris*, Unreported, District Court, Christchurch, Erber S, July 1998). Despite these considerations, Erber was convinced that lawmakers had intended the law to be used in such circumstances. An appeal was made to the Christchurch High Court; however, the orders were upheld (*Harris v Police* (1998) 15 CRNZ 632). In May 1999, Ricki Harris was found guilty of breaching the non-association order by attending a family barbecue at Corsair Bay and was sentenced to four months periodic detention; a decision upheld on appeal (*Harris v Police* (1999) 22 TCL 42/8). Local police claimed the order had "crippled the gang's power base" (*Ten-One*, 12.3.1999). But despite the claims of success, the measures have not been replicated, and no

subsequent non-association orders of this kind appear to have been issued against any gang or any gang members anywhere in New Zealand. In fact, data provided to me by the Ministry of Justice in 2009 did not record the orders used against the Road Knights; showing no orders had ever been made.

In September and October 1998 respectively, police gained court orders to remove the fortifications of the Black Power and Highway 61 headquarters in Christchurch under the amended Local Government Act. In making his judgement on the Highway 61 property, Judge Graeme Noble said he was satisfied that the fences and associated structures (platforms and security cameras) were being used for the concealment of weapons and drug sales (*Perry v Kingi*, Unreported, District Court, Christchurch, Noble G, May 1999). Under the new legislation, the gangs had 30 days to remove the fences or appeal the judgment. If neither were undertaken successfully, police could forcibly remove the fortifications.

Highway 61 actively fought the measures. Although their appeal was unsuccessful, ongoing legal uncertainties meant the fortification remained in place until July 1999 when, amid much media fanfare, it was destroyed using an excavator (*The Press* 21.7.1999). In the end, the new 'streamlined' measures had taken nearly a year to implement. Moreover, as soon as the original wall was removed by police, the gang replaced it with two metre high fence. Interestingly, the feelings of the gang's neighbours were mixed. While one said, "I think it's [pulling down the wall] a good idea" another said, "I think

it's disgusting. It's not as high as other fences around here. It now means all of us neighbours have to put up with noise" (*One News* 20.7.1999).

The order against Black Power also ran into difficulties, though in this case these were due to uncertainties over who actually owned the property (*The Press* 29.6.1999), before being pulled down by the gang, which they quickly replaced; and the new one was not covered by the court's ruling (*NZ Herald* 15.10.1999).

Despite police saying more fortifications would be targeted, no other orders were successfully made in Christchurch. And I have only found one other example anywhere in New Zealand, a removal order made against the Outcasts MC in Hamilton in mid-2005⁷⁵ (*Gray v Hamilton Property Investments Limited*, Unreported, District Court, Hamilton, Wolff R P, August 2005). After the failure of the law when it was initially enacted in 1987, the new provisions do not appear to have been a great deal better. Gang fortifications, erected to secure gangs from opposition groups, had once again proven remarkably resilient to police and legislative challenges.

Because the majority of the new legislative measures were general law enforcement tools, it is impossible to judge how often they have been used specifically against gang members as official statistics do not distinguish between gang and non-gang convictions. This, however, does not prevent a judgment being made on the new crimes of habitually associating with violent

⁷⁵ Judge Wolff ruled that much of the fortification had to be removed but that the fence could remain, along with a single video surveillance camera.

or drug offenders as per the changes made to the Summary Offense Act. Ministry of Justice data supplied to me show that by 2007 just two people were charged with associating with a violent offender, and one of those people was convicted. No charges at all were brought in relation to associating with drug offenders. By anyone's measure, these laws cannot be heralded as a gang-busting success.

One measure that was ostensibly gang specific was section 98A of the Crimes Act, regarding participation in a criminal gang. Keeping in mind the claim, originally made by Commissioner of Police Peter Doone and subsequently promoted by Mike Moore, that New Zealand had just five years to tackle the gang problem, data obtained from the Ministry of Justice by National MP Chester Burrows, and subsequently given to me, show that just 13 people were charged and only two convictions gained in the first five years of the law's enactment. Like many of the others laws, it had fallen flat. Following that initial period, the law was amended in 2002 to make convictions easier by redrafting what constituted a criminal group, but by 2006, just 45 convictions had been gained. Interesting, the numbers I gained from the Ministry following this, showed an even more miserable story, with no convictions prior to 2006, and just seven in 2006 and 2007. The reason for the discrepancy in data is unclear, but the underlying story is consistent.

Police gang liaison officers I have talked to have told me that the majority of the new laws were either not particularly well targeted or simply unnecessary.

One said:

There was no expert advisory panel for the government on gang stuff, where they talk about how you're actually going to apply this law and how's it going to work, what are the benefits and what are the shortcomings. It just goes to the police legal section and then it gets spit out as legislation. They bring in laws without talking to the practitioners at street level that have got to go and enforce them, and they sort of miss the point.

Another told me:

I think they made some progress on some of the judicial things like witness protection and all that, that was an area that needed strengthening, but by and large we were using the Crimes Act, the Misuse of Drugs Act, and the Arms Act. I didn't have any problem with the [existing] powers that were there really. It was more resourcing than anything else. I had five detectives when I could have kept 25 busy.

In relation to the powers to remove gang fortifications that were originally enacted in 1987, and amended in 1997, one told me:

In relation to gang fortifications, we looked at that but we were too flat out with everything else to really even enter in to it. We looked at each clubhouse to see which was a problem and none of them really were

too major for us getting in, so our efforts were just on criminal investigations rather than that. We sought of saw those things as a luxury to do if we ever had time rather than a priority for us.

Despite the dire threat that the gangs were said to pose, and the great urgency that was required to deal with the issue, much of the resulting legislation has been rarely used and/or has proven superfluous; in fact, if a clearer break down of many of the provisions was available, it would almost certainly find that the laws have overwhelming been used against people not in gangs. But even ignoring that assertion, it is difficult to conclude anything other than that the laws had little or no effect on New Zealand's gang scene. They did, however, have an indirect effect, via the process which they were derived; that being to create a public perception that gangs were the country's foremost crime problem and that the gangs existed solely for reasons of crime. These ideas continued to be promulgated by police, particularly in relation to organised criminal activity.

Gang Activity in Perspective and Police 'Blue Vision'

The legislation that stemmed from the build up to the country's first MMP election stands not a reflection of the great threat gangs posed, but instead as a testimony to political folly, the failure to gain an informed view, and the power of moral panic. But the perceptions created at this time endured. In keeping with the rhetoric that began in 1996, two years later the Police Association, with Greg O'Connor as its president, claimed that gangs were responsible for 80 percent of serious crime in New Zealand (*NZ Herald* 18-9-

1998). That this claim was made as part of an argument for increased police staffing levels, indicates an element of lobbying by the association⁷⁶. But more than that, I will argue it exemplifies what I call 'blue vision'; something that was at the heart of the transformation of the public's perception of gangs. But before explaining the concept of blue vision, it is important to seek a clearer perspective on criminal offending related to gangs; something that brings into serious question many of the persistent claims that had their genesis in the 1996 moral panic.

Although it was mostly from within the police that the claims of gang dominance in crime stemmed, remembering that Mike Moore was largely reliant on police sources for his public statements, it was a systematic police study from late in the decade that sharply drew into question many of these assertions. In 1998, the Office of the Commissioner established an Organised Crime Project (OCP) in order to prepare a police strategy on combating organised crime (McCardle, 1999: p.3). The OCP, headed by Detective Sergeant Hamish McCardle, published a report in 1999 that outlined the findings of a comprehensive survey of senior police officers. The report identified five types of organised crime groups (McCardle, 1999: p.12). These were:

Category A – Structured gangs

Category B – Structured groups other than gangs (like Asian crime groups)

Category C – Family crime groups

⁷⁶ Such calls also occurred before the 1996 election (*The Press* 26.6.1996)

Category D – Activist or Paedophile crime groups

Category E – Career criminal crime groups

In total, the report identified 337 organised crime groups in New Zealand, but suggested that as many as 660 such groups could exist (McCardle, 1999: p.3). The report concluded that more than half of the known groups were involved in organised burglary, drug sales, car theft, intimidation or violence, and drug cultivation (McCardle, 1999: p.24). Just over a third of the groups were involved in robbery and fraud, and there was lesser involvement in drug importation, running illegal bars, prostitution, gambling and pornography. The study categorised the 337 groups into: 115 structured gangs, 44 structured groups other than gangs, 82 family groups, 15 activist groups, and 81 career criminal groups. Therefore, although traditional patched gangs were the single largest group, they made up just 34% of the total organised crime groups within New Zealand (McCardle, 1999: p.15).

If, as the public had been told, gangs dominated 80 percent of serious crime in New Zealand, then it meant that two thirds of New Zealand's organised crime groups were remarkably under-employed. Moreover, McCardle (1999: p.30) explained in the report that while the number of 'structured gangs' was a highly accurate number, other groups were likely to have been significantly under represented due to their covert nature – hence the fact, as noted above, that the estimated overall number could be double those reported. This being the case, and remembering my assertion from Chapter Nine that not all patched gangs were engaged in organised criminal activity, the rhetoric

about gang involvement in organised crime was a long way from the objective reality.

This assertion is particularly evident in the drug trade. As was highlighted in the previous chapter, many gangs did have significant links to drug dealing, and tinnie houses were often gang operations. The dominant discourse of the 1990s, however, linked gangs and drugs so often that it appeared as though gangs monopolised the industry. Wilkins and Casswell (2003) have challenged police assertions that gangs control marijuana cultivation in this country. They suggest that gang obviousness leads to police targeting them, that police intelligence is often is often narrow in focus, and that “the New Zealand police experience of...gang involvement in cannabis cultivation may lead to an exaggerated and false perception of the prevalence of these types of operations in the illicit cannabis market” (Wilkins & Casswell, 2003: pp.773-774). In short, the idea that gangs dominate marijuana cultivation is false.

Moreover, as Newbold (2004: p.60) has made clear, “numerous operators outside of gangs manufactured, imported, and distributed drugs in an organised or semi organised way”. Some of the most highly profiled arrests during the decade demonstrate the significant non-gang involvement in drug importation. For example, in 1995, Alan King was arrested in Hamilton for importing \$2m worth of heroin (Newbold, 2000: p179). Similarly unrelated to gangs was the largest attempt to import cocaine into New Zealand in 1998, and the two largest ecstasy busts that occurred in 1997 and 1999 (Newbold, 2000: p.181). Indeed, data from the Department of Justice prison census

conducted in 1991 shows that just 2.2 percent of gang members were incarcerated with their major offence being drugs, compared to 8.5 percent of inmates without gang affiliations (Braybrook, 1990: p.72). By 2003, the last time such a survey was undertaken, this gap had closed, and 8.5 percent of gang members and 8.9 percent of non gang affiliated inmates were incarcerated due to a primary conviction for drugs (Harpham, 2004: p.31). The closing statistical gap lends support to the fact, outlined in Chapter Nine, that gangs more significantly entered the drug trade in the 1990s, but offers little support to the argument that they monopolised, or even, dominated it.

A further point to consider here is that while certain gang members were gaining significantly from profit driven crime, the vast majority were demonstrably hand-to-mouth men, with very little, if any, significant assets.

And finally, it is also important to note that the drug trade is demand driven. This being the case, any successful effort at eradicating gangs would simply create a vacuum in the market that would quickly be filled, and therefore little or no long-term effect on New Zealand's drug trade is likely to ensue. Gangs may be an easily identifiable target for the frustration of society's ills, but the focus on them tends to oversimplify more complex issues.

It will be recalled from Chapter Seven that the police attitude toward gangs was roundly and pointedly criticised by the Select Committee on Violence in 1987 in what was known as the 'Roper Report'. Similar criticisms appear valid in the 1990s and beyond, when considering many of the public statements

made by police, but it is more useful to understand the police view rather than to simply condemn it.

In my experience, the police are not being deliberately dishonest about the nature of the gang situation. Most individual police officers truly believe, and will vigorously defend, the picture that has been created, and therefore uphold what I have termed 'blue vision', a form of 'group think' or cognitive dissonance whereby police officers only accept information that supports their preconceived notions of gangs and dismiss evidence that counters it.

Although its key influences are derived from a lack of research and problems in intelligence gathering, I believe that the foundations of blue vision, as it pertains to gangs, derive from both similarities and differences between the gangs and the police. Veno (2003) described the outlaw club view of the police as the 'big blue gang', and many police officers quip that they are the biggest gang in the country⁷⁷. Indeed, I would suggest that the camaraderie within the police and the gangs is very much alike. Furthermore, when a new police officer steps out onto the street in their uniform, the feelings of pride and power are very similar to those experienced by gang members wearing their patch for the first time; although these feels undoubtedly dissipate over time, they nevertheless remain. Although it easy to overstate this case, these similarities appear to create the basis for a natural confrontation between the groups.

⁷⁷ Suggesting this is not a new development, in the late 1970s, the *New Zealand Herald* (23.4.1979) reported that, "A couple of North Shore policemen let a carload of Black Power members know precisely where they stood last week. The officers introduced themselves as members of the exclusive Blue Power group, the biggest gang in the country with more than 4000 members".

But significantly adding to this, although paradoxically in contrast to it, is the fact that many of the groups' core values – largely relating to issues of law and order – mean that they are diametrically opposed. For the police, the gangs are an affront to the principles they are charged with upholding. Consequently, there is a widespread, and often deeply held, disdain of gangs within the police. It is on the basis of this prejudicial view that many police seem drawn to information that highlights negatives and ignores positives, which thereby works as a shutter against information that does not support the view that has built up about gangs as inherently criminal entities.

Because interactions between the police and gang members generally occur in antagonistic circumstances, police are unable to get close enough to gang members to gain a true sense of the gang scene. Moreover, the police tend to view the world in 'black-and-white', in 'good guys' and 'bad guys' a somewhat natural result of an institution that seeks clear-cut outcomes of 'guilty' or 'not guilty'. Obvious, rebellious, and often criminally inclined, patched gang members provide a perfect focus for law and order issues, and therefore police zero in on them. This was noted in McCardle's (1999: p.30) report, which stated that gangs come to police attention so often that a focus is always on them, meaning police form what he called the "normal 'gang' view of organised crime".

Adding to this, police tend to have an operational focus and are not often informed by higher level systematic research that may give perspective to an

issue (Hagedorn, 1988; Jankowski, 1991; Reuter, 1995). It is therefore not surprising that when McCardle undertook such a study (1999), his findings conflicted strongly with the assumed collective knowledge of police. However, blue vision meant that the findings of such a report were glossed over or, possibly unconsciously, ignored; certainly it appears to have done little to change overall police perceptions.

Moreover, much of the gang intelligence collected by police is informally gathered and comes from either paid informants or other people who have a vested interest in telling police something (such as those seeking bail, getting charges reduced etc) or via street information that is often based on rumour or misinformation. One of the most striking things that emerged throughout my fieldwork was the numerous stories and myths that exist within the gang scene itself, and particularly between different gangs. Those able to move between the groups and get close to them can better appraise this information but the nature of the relationship between the police and the gangs generally prevents this from occurring. I discovered that many claims that I heard in and around the gang realm proved to be false; often ridiculously so⁷⁸. Some claims are made purposely to save face or are cultivated to demonise a particular group because of animosities or a falling out. Others appear to become enlarged or distorted by boasts, 'big noting', or simply by 'Chinese whispers', the natural distortions that occur when stories are on-told.

⁷⁸ Many of these involve stories about individuals, but others are about whole gangs or their activities. One that I have heard, from several members of outlaw clubs, is that members of the Hell's Angels have to sign over all of their possessions to the club when they join. Another I heard was that one gang had paid another \$50,000 following a dispute. Both of these stories – and many others – proved to be utterly fictitious.

It is unsurprising that police come to hear stories such as these, but without independent means of confirming the veracity of such tales, they can become accepted as 'fact'. This is not to say that all police intelligence is wrong, rather that it can be difficult to distinguish the good from the bad. The 'Fat Mexican' intelligence report noted earlier is a clear example of this. Similarly, the claim that Andrew Sisson was the world secretary of the Hell's Angels is a commonly held but incorrect belief among police, and is used to link the local club to the nefarious activities of overseas chapters – which may then be informed by international popular literature⁷⁹ and thereby further distorting matters. Similarly, some police intelligence can be based on truth but then misinterpreted. It will be recalled from Chapter Six that police, after becoming aware that an outlaw club member was buying red phosphorus, believed the substance was being purchased to make smoke bombs. As previously noted, police were quite right to believe the purchases were suspicious, but the conclusion they drew was quite incorrect. All of these examples show the difficulties faced in gaining accurate intelligence, and the misleading picture that can be created when it is incorrect or misconstrued. A former Detective Inspector in the New Zealand Police, Dave Haslett, in his Master of Arts thesis on outlaw clubs, said that due to issues such as these, there is "considerable room for distortion of fact, prejudice, and outright misinformation and mythmaking" (Haslett, 2007: p.128). One such myth that has been

⁷⁹ The dearth of literature on gang in New Zealand means that overseas literature is often the only source of information of gangs. Because books tend to be written about extreme examples of criminal activity, they may work to instil or support an unrealistic understanding of the local situation. A reliance on overseas books is evident in a submission by a former police officer, Trevor Morley (2008), to the Law and Order Select Committee in 2008, who recommended two Canadian books be read in order to understand gangs "in our society".

perpetuated by blue vision since 1996 was that patched gangs dominate organised crime in New Zealand.

One undercover police officer told me that when he first entered the field, the local police were adamant that a particular chapter of the Mongrel Mob was controlling the drug trade in the area. What he found, however, was quite different:

At [place name] the detective there was telling us about this – it was [president's name] at the time – and he had just got out for rape and he was supposed to be this big time drug dealer... really well organised – it was presented like these guys were a well oiled machine and they were dealing in every commodity available and they're trying to take over the whole town. I went down there and I think it took two attempts to buy a tinnie and they just couldn't put an ounce together – they tried and tried and they couldn't do it. I could go to [non-member's name] house ... and he could have a pound on his doorstep in 5 minutes. They [the Mob members] were violent thugs, basically, and that was them, they weren't trying to take over any town [through drug dealing].

Having interviewed the former undercover agent in late 2005, I questioned him about comments made in the *New Zealand Herald* (18.4.2005) in April of that year by the head of the Auckland's organised crime squad, Detective Sergeant Daryl Brazier. Brazier said that 90 percent of drug crime is linked to "motorcycle gangs". The undercover agent said such views were common,

and went on to use an example of how information is spread in the police: “Where does he – where did he get that from? I was at a drug conference last year and this guy – a Taupo detective was telling us that you can’t sell cannabis – because of methamphetamine – you can’t sell cannabis in Taupo now they’re just giving it away. What bullshit!” He continued on to say that he struggled coming out of the undercover programme and back into mainstream policing where myths around gangs and their activities were in abundance: “This is where I differ from a lot of police, unfortunately. I’m not alone, don’t get me wrong, I’m not saying I’m the only one that thinks this”. What makes him distinctive is that he has had firsthand experience, yet his views remain in the minority. And like many people in small subsets with alternative views, their voices are often marginalised, dismissed or subsumed by the majority.

Although blue vision, as part of a sub cultural belief system, is largely confined to the police realm, and discussed and affirmed in police bars, conference rooms, and training facilities it can, under certain conditions, spread more widely. Because of the respect and authority that the police generally enjoy, many people accept the knowledge that they impart without question. Either directly, or via intermediaries like politicians, the information built up and supported by blue vision is then transmitted through the media. In this way, the wider public, who, without sufficient information to counter it, begin to see the world through the distorted lenses that blue vision provides. In the build up to the 1996 election, within the mercurial context of a moral panic, blue vision was transferred like a contagion. The police view that gangs dominated profit driven crime in New Zealand and were vehicles established for criminal

offending, became deeply, and seemingly permanently, ingrained in the collective psyche of the country. Blue vision, as it were, became an epidemic, the symptoms of which endure to this day. The fundamental change in perceptions about the gang issue was so significant as to make it the fourth pivot point in New Zealand gang history.

Conclusion

Previous pivot points in this country's gang history have occurred because of events or activities that have happened within the gang scene. As such, the pivot point that occurred in 1996 is unique – deriving as it did from political influences. Although this pivot point was clearly linked to gang violence in Christchurch and Invercargill, these events were not unprecedented, and there is little that gives them great importance to the gang scene, excepting that they acted as the spark that set aflame a moral panic; and it was upon these developments that the pivot point hinged. Stemming from political rhetoric in an important election year, and reliant a police view clouded by what I have called blue vision, a wide and encompassing perception of the gang scene was created, and the effects of this were manifold.

It will be recalled that during the 1970s and 80s, gangs were seen as countercultural or rebellious communities that could be managed, primarily through work schemes, and were therefore seen as legitimate, or at least semi-legitimate, entities. By the late 1990s, this perception had transformed dramatically and gangs were seen as inherently criminal and illegitimate. One upshot of this is that when gangs are seen as entities existing solely for criminal ends, the fact that they are constructs of social and economic

influences tends to be ignored. In turn, therefore, they become not a concern of social agencies or policies, but are firmly affixed to the police as an issue of law and order.

While it was true that many gangs or individual gang members were involved in profit driven crime, the degree to which gangs were seen to dominate such activity appears demonstrably incorrect. Moreover, the framing of gangs as organised criminal groups tended to mask the reality that the vast majority of gangs were not primarily profit driven entities and that they existed for, and were sustained by, reasons other than crime. These complexities were lost in the generalisations of political rhetoric, and have not been seriously challenged since; although certain cracks in this enduring perception of gangs – in very recent times – are beginning to appear.

Chapter Eleven.

The Trials & Challenges of Patched Gangs: 2000-

Introduction

For much of the first decade of the new century, New Zealand's economy enjoyed a boom time. This buoyancy, however, was not reflected in the patched gang scene, which faced significant problems. A number of well established outlaw clubs folded, and while the patched street gangs fared somewhat better, they too faced problems rejuvenating their numbers with young members, particularly given the arrival of a new form of street gang in New Zealand.

This chapter will examine the problems facing the outlaw motorcycle clubs and the patched street gangs, and the numerous and complex nature of the problems facing these groups. It will then explore the rise of LA-style street gangs and the similarities and difference that exist within this important new development within the gang scene.

The Economic Recovery and Political Changes

By 1999, after nine years in power, National and National-led governments had overseen a moderate recovery from the dire economic situation of the early 1990s. New Zealand's unemployment rate had dropped from its double

digit peak in 1992 to 7.2 percent by the end of the 20th century (Statistics New Zealand, 2000: p.326). Economic growth, however, though buoyant between 1993 and 1996, stalled through to 1999 (Dalziel & Lattimore, 2004: p.9).

In 1998, the National/New Zealand First coalition government, struggling to adjust to the new political environment following the introduction of the MMP electoral system, disintegrated and New Zealand First withdrew from the coalition agreement. The National Party was able to remain in power until the following year's November election with the support of a number of New Zealand First MPs who defected from their party. But the voting public was ready for a change and after the election, the Labour and Alliance parties were able to form a minority coalition; the first of three governments that Labour was to dominate over the next nine years.

Although the economic framework that had been established from 1984 to the early 1990s did not substantively change, the successive Labour-led governments "became engaged in economic planning to a degree that could not have been contemplated during the previous 15 years" (Dalziel & Lattimore, 2004: p.vi). Furthermore, led by the highly intelligent but a somewhat divisive Prime Minister, Helen Clark, Labour also sought to proactively manage social problems such as poverty and educational under-achievement. It announced a policy of 'closing the gaps' that was intended to ensure that those sectors of society worst affected by the previous decade's reforms did not continue to be alienated from the country's success

(Humpage, 2002). The government's approach and its outcomes impacted on the gang scene during the new millennium.

During Labour's reign, New Zealand enjoyed a period of sustained economic growth, unprecedented for a generation of younger New Zealanders. The Gross Domestic Product increased more than 60 percent between 1999 and 2008 (Statistics New Zealand, 2008: p.340). The stock market soared, with the share price index rising from 1778 in 1999 to 4107 in 2007 (Statistics New Zealand, 2008: p.446), and the average house price appreciating in value from \$183,000 in 1999 to \$362,500 in 2006 (Statistics New Zealand, 2002: p.478; 2008: p.413).

Reflecting this economic buoyancy, by late 2007, the unemployment rate had dropped to 3.6 percent (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). In addition, in 2007 those deemed to be on 'low incomes' – defined as those living on less than 60% of the median income – were 13 percent of the population, down from 17 percent in 2004 and 20 percent in 1994 (Ministry of Social Development, 2008a: p.62). Furthermore, during the period between 2004 and 2007, the income of those in low and middle income households grew strongly, while the incomes of families in the top 40 percent increased between two and four percent only (Ministry of Social Development, 2008a: p.60). The Minister of Social Development, Ruth Dyson, said that this was largely due to the government's 'Working for Families' package (*NZ Herald* 29.8.2008), which offered 'tax credits' to supplement the incomes of working parents. (www.workingforfamilies.govt.nz).

While much of the population benefited from the economic successes, and despite the explicit intent of the Labour government's policy, some sectors of society still remained behind. Although unemployment in 2008 was at two-decade lows, Maori and Pacific Peoples remained over-represented in unemployment statistics, with rates at 7.7 and 6.5 percent respectively. Some communities evinced intergenerational unemployment and were suffering as a result of the clustering of state housing communities, discussed in Chapter Five. These areas became islands of poverty – unreachable by the economic good times – and it was within these communities that significant gang issues arose.

Indeed, despite Labour's efforts, social and economic 'gaps' still remained between Pakeha, and Maori and Pacific Peoples. Both Polynesian groups featured poorly in many key social indices such as health, education, crime and overcrowded housing (see for example Harpham, 2004; Lang Consulting, 2005: pp.26-28; Ministry of Health, 2009: pp.7 & 9; Ministry of Social Development, 2008a: pp.23, 27, 39, 43 & 67; Statistics New Zealand, 2006; Tobias & Howden-Chapman, 2000). These indices reflect the inherent problems of depressed and marginalised communities, and highlight contributing factors to the 'multiple marginality' of certain youths, which aid gang formation and membership.

Given the severe economic downturn that began in late 2007, following a crisis in world financial markets that started in the U.S, the issues facing Maori

and Pacific communities seem unlikely to improve in the near future, and in fact may be set to become worse. In New Zealand, the consequent recession has resulted in a sharp decline in the share market, serious falls in property prices, increasing unemployment and large projected government budget deficits. But by November 2008, these were not Labour's problems. Under the moderate and populist leadership of John Key, the National Party was triumphant at the polls and, supported by a number of smaller parties, formed a minority government.

The Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs

While the booming economy during much of the first decade of the new millennium was good for New Zealand generally, it was not so salubrious for the outlaw clubs, many of whom failed to refresh their membership with new recruits or maintain existing members, and subsequently faltered or folded. Although this was evident throughout the country, nowhere was it more obvious than in Christchurch, a city that had previously been highly populated with outlaw clubs.

Conflicts between Highway 61 and the local chapter of Black Power in Christchurch had occurred sporadically throughout much of the 1990s due to the close proximity of their clubhouses in the central city. It will be recalled that following one clash between the groups, noted in Chapter Eight, Black Power member Max Shannon had walked from the Christchurch District Court laughing, after witnesses refused to testify against him. However, this was not the end of the matter. In the early hours of Sunday 6 August 2000, a relatively

insignificant incident outside the Revelations nightclub in the central city between Shannon and Highway 61 member Murray Simms re-sparked the ongoing conflict.

Highway 61 took exception to the fact that Shannon chose to fight Simms, who had previously lost partial use of one arm as a result of a motorcycle accident. Later on the morning of the fight, Highway 61 members were summoned to their clubhouse on Maces Road in Bromley where they decided that retribution was required. The club's president, Mathew 'Bomber' Grant, in fact, suggested that someone had to die (*R v Grant*, Unreported, High Court, Christchurch, Chisholm J, August 2001). Detailed retaliatory plans were made and it was decided that Max Shannon would be shot while at his rugby league training. For the remainder of Sunday, Monday, and much of Tuesday, several of the club's 19-strong membership made preparations; gathering up a shotgun, a .38 pistol and ammunition, and stealing a car to use in the shooting.

Just after 7.45pm on Tuesday 8 August 2000, Max Shannon, having finished training at a sports field in Woolston, got into his car. As he did so, the stolen car carrying at least three members of Highway 61 drove past him and numerous shots were fired at Shannon as he prepared to drive away, inflicting injuries that resulted in his death the following day.

Despite members preparing the clubhouse for Black Power retaliation or 'back up', it was from within the club that the biggest threat to Highway 61 existed.

At the clubhouse after the shooting, Bomber Grant told his members that, “*If everybody keeps their mouths shut no one will do a big lag*” (italics in original) (*R v Grant*, Unreported, High Court, Christchurch, Chisholm J, August 2001). Unfortunately for Grant, one of the members, fearing prosecution, broke ranks and agreed to testify against those involved⁸⁰. Five members of the club were subsequently charged with murder. Simms, whose initial fight had led to the attack, decided to plead guilty to the murder, and three others, including Grant, were found guilty by a jury, while another was found not guilty. All of the guilty men received mandatory life sentences with minimum parole conditions ranging between eleven and 14 years (*R v Grant*, Unreported, High Court, Christchurch, Chisholm J, August 2001).

The convictions were a significant blow to Highway 61 in Christchurch. In the mid-1990s, the club had had three chapters in the city, but these were already in decline by the time of the Shannon murder. One chapter, situated on Vagues Road, had been decimated by police following convictions for drug dealing from the clubhouse, which was subsequently confiscated under the Proceeds of Crime Act (1991), and the other two chapters had dwindling numbers. The remaining members from these chapters had consolidated under Grant’s leadership at the Maces Road address. With Grant and four others in prison (one, not charged with murder, was jailed for firearms

⁸⁰ It will be recalled from Chapter Nine that the killers of Christopher Crean were brought to justice largely due to testimonies given by gang members who turned and give evidence against those involved. This situation is rather common, and has led to convictions in numerous other cases. For example, Nomad leader Dennis Hines was convicted of attempted murder due to evidence given by his former deputy in 1996. A further example involved a member of Highway 61 testifying against member Kingston Heemi for killing Nomad associate Malcolm Munns in 1997. Although brotherhood is upheld as tantamount within the gangs, self interest often takes precedence when a member’s liberty is in danger.

offences in relation to the attack on Shannon) and another having left the gang in order to testify against his comrades, the club was in tatters and eventually the clubhouse was sold.

Although the fall of Highway 61 in Christchurch was punctuated by dramatic events, other clubs in the city found themselves arriving at the same end point. Along with the three chapters of Highway 61, in the 1990s Christchurch had been home to chapters of the Epitaph Riders, Devil's Henchmen, Templars and Road Knights. By 2010, with the exception of the Epitaph Riders – which had fewer than six members and no clubhouse – none of those clubs remained⁸¹. The situation in Christchurch, however, was somewhat representative of the decline in the outlaw motorcycle scene around the country, with many clubs suffering similar fates.

By 2010, both chapters of the Tyrants (Pahiatua and Levin), the Hastings chapter of the Hell's Angels, the Sinn Fein (Upper Hutt), and at least one other chapter of Highway 61 (Auckland) had all folded. The Lost Legion (Blenheim) and the 'Gold Coast' (Kapiti Coast) chapter of the Satan's Slaves have also either closed or appear to be in terminal decline⁸². Moreover, in

⁸¹ A renegade group of the Devil's Henchmen formed in 2008 following the official chapter being forcibly closed down by the Timaru chapter – but at time of writing this appears to have folded.

⁸² Interestingly, it was the police who almost added to the faltering patched club scene. In late 2005, in the publications of both the New Zealand Police Association (*Police News* December 2005) and the International Police Association (*Ipagram* November 2005), calls were made for the formation of a local chapter of the Blue Knights Motorcycle Club. The Blue Knights are just one of several patched motorcycle clubs around the world made up of law enforcement officers; with the best known being the Wild Pigs (Lavigne, 2004: p.421). But the thought of police forming a club mimicking and similar to outlaw motorcycle clubs (Librett, 2008), was galling to officers involved with gangs in New Zealand and disquiet was expressed in the *Police News* (March 2006) The police officer behind the idea, Geoffrey Lester, told me in 2009 that he was “overwhelmed” with interest from police officers to join, however, he also received correspondence from others that “went to the top of the organisation” opposing the club. In the end, Lester decided that it “wasn't worth the hassle” (pers.comm.).

2010, clubs comprising six or so members are considered by many outlaw club members and associates to be in reasonable shape, a number that would have been considered small just a decade earlier. Using the criteria that I outlined in the introduction, a 'gang' was defined as having a minimum of six members, and therefore one might best view groups falling below this number as a gang in 'recess'; a state from which they could either rise again, or, equally likely, disappear.

A Complex Decline

As has been clear throughout this work, there have been numerous internal and external factors that have affected and contributed to the rise and development of outlaw clubs and, indeed, gangs generally. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that there are numerous factors contributing toward their decline in the new millennium. The individual importance of each factor is difficult to assess, but together they have proven damaging to the scene generally, and ruinous to many outlaw clubs.

One of the most significant and obvious signs of the problems facing the outlaw clubs is the advancing age of most members. As previously outlined, since the early 1980s, the outlaw clubs had benefited from the stability and loyalty of a longer-term membership base. However, by the end of the 1990s and into the new millennium, the clubs were struggling to recruit new and younger members; and there are a number of explanations for this. As discussed above, by the late 1990s, the New Zealand economy had recovered from the difficulties of the early 1990s, and went on a path of

tremendous growth through into the mid-2000s. With unemployment among Pakeha at record low levels, the pool of rebellious and disaffected Pakeha youth, from which many outlaw clubs tended to draw members, was shrinking. It is perhaps significant, then, that the Hell's Angels⁸³, the Tribesmen and the Filthy Few, three multi-ethnic outlaw motorcycle clubs, appear to have survived best during the new millennium. Although, reflecting the complex nature of the overall decline, the same cannot be said for Highway 61, a similar group that has gone into a noticeable nationwide decline, although it still maintains a number of its North Island chapters and a presence in Australia.

But this economically determinist argument requires caution. It will be recalled from Chapter Four that the outlaw motorcycle clubs first emerged in New Zealand during prosperous times, and therefore the strengthening labour market offers only a partial explanation for the scene's problems.

A further, and, in my view, more significant explanation for the lack of youthful rejuvenation stems from broad societal changes in social pursuits and fashion. It seems that for many rebellious youth, European and American motorcycles no longer held the appeal that they once did, and instead modified Japanese cars have become increasingly *de rigueur*. Termed 'boy racers', and inspired by overseas media – particularly such American movies as the *The Fast and the Furious* film franchise⁸⁴ – these motor vehicle thrill

⁸³ Despite losing the Hastings chapter the Auckland and Wanganui chapters remain strong.

⁸⁴ The *Fast and the Furious* film series began with a film of the same title, which was released by Universal Studios in 2001. The film proved to be a box office hit and spawned four further films, the latest of which is due for release in 2011.

seekers and/or enthusiasts, in driving through streets *en masse*, congregating together, drinking, and often racing one another, can be seen to be engaging in behaviours similar to the milk bar cowboys of the 1950s and 60s, who, it will be recalled, were equally inspired by pop cultural influences. The boy racers are also causing similar consternation, demonstrating that the problems associated with rebellious youthful activities are not solely confined to the issue of gangs. Although some cliques appear to exist within the boy racer scene, and these are sometimes advertised via specific decals on cars, the broad sub culture does not exist in anything other than friendship groups or mainstream car clubs that do not conform to the definition of gangs used in this thesis; nor are they viewed as gangs by the wider public.

To what degree boy racers have siphoned off potential recruits for outlaw clubs is moot, but what is quite clear is that young people are not being attracted to join the clubs and that this lack of youthful rejuvenation had a significant impact on the outlaw club scene. As the average age of members slowly increased, a generation gap was created between existing members and wider groups of rebellious young men who might have considered joining. In the past, there had been a seemingly limitless supply of young men wanting to join such groups, and because of this, outlaw clubs were not accustomed to having to actively seek members. Their failure to respond to the changing social market conditions meant that the issues of aging membership went unchecked. Moreover, the existing members had undergone rigorous prospecting periods – in times of greater competition for

patches – and few were willing, to simply let new members join in an ‘easy’ way.

Perpetual changes in bellwether factors that help define generations, such as in music, fashion, and social activities, as well as a natural affiliation that exists between men of similar ages, created something of an age-related ‘generational barrier’ to membership, and many clubs gradually lost touch with youths who in the past may have been drawn to prospect.

By the 2000s, rebellious young males who showed an interest in the clubs often found themselves surrounded by a bunch of older men, full of wild stories of the past but no longer engaging in the behaviour that created these stories. In the previous chapter, I argued that one of the reasons for a diminishing number of gang wars in the 1990s was that the country’s gang geography had been divided up. But increasingly, another reason for the lack of violence between gangs was their aging memberships. Due to the natural maturity that tends to come with age, men of 40 or 50 are not as likely to fight as men of 20, something supported by age related data of violent offenders (Harpham, 2004) and recidivism rates (Spier, 2002). Indeed, I have found that older members tend to put a handbrake on youthful members or associates of the clubs because they are wary of youthful bravado leading to police attention or sparking inter-gang confrontation. Although in certain clubs older members may not want to draw police attention because it may interfere with illegal money making ventures, it has been my experience that it is usually

because they simply cannot be bothered with conflict and, often with families of their own, they are more wary of the effects of a long jail sentence.

Somewhat ironically, given that I began this section with the devastating effects of violent actions undertaken by Highway 61 members in Christchurch, I believe that the lack of physical confrontations between gangs may have contributed to their overall decline. In Chapters Four and Six, I discussed the importance of conflict in aiding gang cohesion and highlighted how battles with police or other gangs create strong group solidarity. It stands to reason, then, that when these conflicts are removed, so too is a key driver that helps to forge important elements of a gang's internal dynamics. Without an enemy for a sustained period of time – without the mirror upon which to reflect – a gang begins to lose some of its sense of self. When an enemy threat is present, there is sharpness to the group; weaker members may leave the gang during times of conflict but those who remain have an increased commitment to the gang, which is therefore strengthened. As the enemy threat diminishes, so too, I suspect, does the gang.

A further factor that negatively impacted on the outlaw motorcycle club scene relates to the liberalisation of liquor licensing laws that occurred with changes to the Sale of Liquor Act (1989). Amongst other things, changes to the law allowed for extended opening hours for drinking establishments, including provisions sanctioning 24 hour licences. As more pubs and bars were open for a greater number of hours, particularly late at night, gang clubhouses were no longer the only place open for people to drink late at night or on Sundays

and the competition decreased their role as a social hub. Numerous club members have told me that this severely impacted on their support base and their profitability. Like any social institution, people often beget people, so as numbers began to fall away from club houses, this precipitated an even steeper decline as the social function that the clubhouse provided to many in the community was reduced. This had two related effects; one was that fewer people were being introduced to the club, and therefore an important recruitment avenue was diminished; the other was that for people who might have sought membership, the general lack of atmosphere lessened their enthusiasm to join the gang. The important community function of a social hub that clubhouses had provided in the past was all but gone.

Moreover, with fewer people having direct connections with the groups, a greater number were reliant on media depictions to shape their opinions of the outlaw clubs; representations that made people cautious – or outright scared – of going to the clubhouses. On several occasions I have been out with gang members and we have met people while socialising, but when they are invited back to the clubhouse they have balked, fearing violence. In one particular instance, I met a man who worked with an outlaw club member and they had formed a friendly relationship over a mutual interest in Harley Davidson motorcycles. The member invited the workmate to the clubhouse, something the man told me he was quite keen to do but was fearful his bike may be stolen by the gang. I told him that, in my experiences with the club, his motorcycle would likely be safer inside the clubhouse walls than anywhere else in the city, and that the club members would not even consider stealing it.

But his fear – based on media representations of gangs – was much stronger than my assurances. These general, and often unfounded, fears also meant that the number of people coming to the club houses further declined, shrinking the pool of ‘associates’, and therefore undoubtedly contributed to the overall malaise that has affected the outlaw scene.

But perhaps the most significant development to negatively impact on the outlaw clubs – and, the gang scene generally – was the rising popularity of a smokable form of methamphetamine, commonly referred to in New Zealand as ‘P’, which is an abbreviation of ‘pure’.

Methamphetamine or ‘P’ (Part I)

As noted in Chapter Eight, methamphetamine had been evident within the outlaw club scene since the 1980s and had traditionally been ingested by nasal insufflation. When intended for ‘snorting’, methamphetamine is often mixed or ‘cut’, typically with glucose, which lessens its strength and increases the profit margin for dealers. Pure methamphetamine, however, is uncut to ensure that it is clean to vaporise when heated, and there are significantly greater health problems associated with its use in this form (Topp, Degenhardt, Kaye, & Darke, 2002).

Notwithstanding that, moderate (defined as monthly) use of pure methamphetamine only slightly increases a person’s chance of suffering

some psychotic symptoms⁸⁵ (Rebecca McKetin, Hickey, Devlin, & Lawrence, 2010). Habitual use, however, not only increases these health risks but can also lead to addiction; and those who withdraw from the drug incur moderate depressive and psychotic symptoms for around a week and a 'craving' that can persist for more than a month (Zorick et al., 2010). Furthermore, the purity of P means that the cost of the drug is high. Priced at more than \$100 for a 'point' (one tenth of a gram), habitual P users can quickly be faced with significant financial costs.

Although it can be liquefied and delivered intravenously, the use of needles in the patched gang scene was universally banned by the early 1980s, as discussed in Chapter Eight. P, therefore, is usually smoked using a glass pipe and, to a lesser degree, snorted. Although smoking P may be associated with less severe dependence than injecting it, both means of taking the drug result in similar levels of other harms (Rebecca McKetin et al., 2008). This may be in part due to the fact that those who smoke the drug tend to use more of it than those preferring other forms of delivery (Kinner & Degenhardt, 2008; Rebecca McKetin et al., 2008). Anecdotally, at least, this appears to be the case in the gang scene and, from my observations, members who 'burn' P are typically heavier users than those who snort it. In speaking with numerous members, it is clear that the sociable nature of passing around a pipe and the inoffensive vapour produced by P makes it easy and enjoyable for members to consume together; and over time this meant that the means of taking the drug became as important as the ends (the drug's effect). For example,

⁸⁵ Such as delusional moods, grandiose delusions, delusions of control, delusions of persecution, or hallucinations

instead of using a line of two of speed to gain the energy to make it through a long night's activities, smoking P often becomes the focus of an evening, and therefore consumption of the drug is increased.

Certainly, habitual use became widespread within the scene and consequently problems, both social/psychological and financial, became common. I witnessed numerous outlaw clubs become concerned by the behaviour and reliability of members who had become 'fried' through P usage, and a number of clubs banned smoking P – although many still allowed snorting it; evincing a common belief, based on the results of collective experimentation and observation, that smoking the drug is at the root of the problem rather than the drug itself.

In Chapter Eight I argued that the organisational structure adopted by New Zealand gangs meant that they were able to identify risks and mitigate them. Yet, despite this, P was largely not identified as great concern nor rapidly addressed by most. I believe there are at least two reasons for this. The first reason is that the drug itself was not new. As mentioned above, methamphetamine ingested via the nose had been used by some outlaw clubs since at least the 1980s and had apparently not caused significant problems. Adding to this, the fact that P was smoked – like marijuana – added a familiar element to the drug, and passing around a pipe became a sociable group activity. The second reason the drug took hold in many groups is that it was only identified as a problem after a period in which the drug was widely used, by which time many members were habitual users, and psychologically

or physically addicted to the drug, and therefore were unwilling or unable to give it up. In many gangs, this meant that there was insufficient support amongst members for a ban. Certainly it appears that banning it quickly was the key. Without exception, the groups that I have observed that did not ban the smoking of P have been the ones to suffer the most significant declines.

In one outlaw club that I have had significant dealings with throughout my research, the effect of P was dramatic. The substantial financial cost involved in using P habitually forced members into debt – to both the club and to outsiders. Although certain members were dealing the drug, the trade only supported its use; and before long it failed to do even that. One member could not afford the payments on his motorcycle and it was repossessed, two others sold their bikes to pay for their habit. Another member suffered a mental breakdown and was committed to a psychiatric hospital for several months. All four were expelled from the gang due to outcomes associated with the use of P, but the drug was still tolerated because key members among the dwindling group still used it and were unwilling to give it up.

In the ever shrinking outlaw motorcycle club chapter, the loss of four members was significant, and the situation was compounded when the remaining members, becoming demoralised, began to forego their rostered nights on duty at the clubhouse, which meant that associates were unable to access the clubhouse or the bar. Therefore support for the club – offered by an already meagre group of core associates – waned further, almost becoming non-existent. The formal weekly club meetings began to start later and later as

members were not turning up on time, if at all. Eventually the meetings stopped altogether. Soon after, the club was failing to pay its power, telephone and pay-television bills.

Within the five years that I closely associated with the chapter, which had more than a 30 year history, it had transformed from a strong and committed group, to a disparate, unmotivated one. During that time, membership dropped from around a dozen to finally just three members, and eventually it collapsed and dissolved. Given numerous other factors described above, P cannot be totally blamed for the fall of the club, but in this case, without a doubt, it played a primary role.

The problems facing outlaw clubs in New Zealand, then, are many. Indeed, the complexities involved in the decline of the scene appear as many and varied as those involved in their rise. In fact, the outlaw club scene in New Zealand at the end of the first decade of the new millennium was weaker than it has been at any time since the formation of such groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s. But despite the rapid and obvious contractions of outlaw clubs and outlaw club members, it is unlikely that such groups will vanish altogether; at least not in the foreseeable future.

Signs of Life

Although P may yet claim more clubs, many of the remaining groups have banned smoking the drug and thus have nullified a significant threat. Indeed, many of the clubs that have banned smoking P remain in relatively strong

positions. For example, The Devil's Henchmen in Timaru, the Mothers in Palmerston North, the Hell's Angels in Wanganui and Auckland, and the Head Hunters 'East' Auckland chapter⁸⁶ are showing no signs of collapse. Moreover, many clubs are beginning to recognise the difficulties they are facing, and some may begin to take measures to proactively recruit new members. Exactly what form this will take is difficult to predict, particularly given that many of the factors negatively affecting them are beyond their control.

Through the fall of numerous outlaw clubs, however, a natural equilibrium may be achieved; in effect, balancing supply and demand with fewer clubs servicing a smaller pool of prospective members. In this way, the outlaw club scene may consolidate around the surviving clubs. Moreover, the Hell's Angels in April 2009 gave the scene a potentially significant green shoot by forming a new club in the city of Nelson called the Red Devils. The Red Devils is an alliance of motorcycle clubs around the world that support the Hell's Angels. But whether or not this new club evinces new life within the scene or proves to be a false dawn, may be dependent on the ability of the outlaw clubs generally to engage a younger membership.

While it is conceivable that the recently deteriorating economy may bolster some clubs by providing a greater number of disenfranchised people, unless the unpredictable pendulum of fashion swings back and the motorcycle finds

⁸⁶ This Head Hunter chapter, under the leadership of Wayne Doyle, is one that is growing considerably in member number and community function, running events like boxing/kick boxing 'Fight Nights', one of which I have attended and I found incredibly professional and impressive. The chapter also has a large gym that is open to the community. It is important to note, however, that as outlined in Chapter Five, the Head Hunters are something of a crossover between an outlaw club and a patched street gang.

a resurgent market among rebellious youth, the heyday of the outlaw clubs in New Zealand appears to be over.

The Patched Street Gangs

Many of the problems faced by the outlaw clubs in the 2000s were also being experienced by the patched street gangs, and consequently I will draw on many of the arguments I have used in the section above. Once again, it is an incident in the city of Christchurch that helps illuminate issues relating to the scene.

Early in the first decade of the new millennium, a Mongrel Mob 'Aotearoa' chapter was established in the Christchurch suburb of Phillipstown. The chapter members transformed an old villa into the gang's clubhouse. Typical of all gang clubhouses, the property became the hub for the Mongrel Mob members and their associates to meet and party, but atypical of clubhouses in the 2000s, the gang pad also became a 'tinnie house', or what were later renamed 'drug dealing houses'.⁸⁷

Police attention became focused on the gang when an internal feud erupted after one member of the Aotearoa chapter was expelled from the gang, but was then re-patched as a member of the 'Notorious' chapter, a largely North Island-based chapter of the of the same gang, and subsequently attempted to get members from his old chapter to join the new one. During investigations

⁸⁷ To better reflect the fact that a greater assortment of illicit drug were being sold from 'tinnie houses', police began to call such places 'drug dealing houses'(Organised & Financial Crime Agency New Zealand, 2010: p.9). Despite cannabis remaining the primary drug of for distribution, I believe to be a better and more accurate description.

into violence between the established and new chapters of the Mob, police became alerted to the telltale sign of numerous short-term visitors to the Aotearoa Mongrel Mob's address on Wilsons Road and launched Operation Crusade – the name taken from the region's 'Canterbury Crusaders' rugby team, whose home stadium was situated a short distance from the clubhouse. The gang's drug dealing was brash, perhaps best highlighted by the note I saw that was pinned inside the gate to advertise the price of one tinnie, "\$25 or Fuck Off".

The police officer in charge of the operation, Detective Sergeant Ross Tarawhiti, told me in 2009 that the investigation began in late July 2002, and ran for 14 months before being terminated in early September 2003. During the operation, police officers purchased drugs, installed wire taps and bugs, and took surveillance photographs in order to gather sufficient evidence to charge all of the members of the gang and numerous associates with various offences. The resulting trial appears to be New Zealand's largest criminal case, in terms of the number of defendants; 18 were tried at one time.

The trial lasted four weeks, and 15 of the defendants – including all of the chapter's 13 members – were found guilty of conspiracy to sell cannabis, along with a range of other crimes that came to light during the police investigation, notably firearms and violent offences. The guilty parties were sentenced to between eight months and four-and-a-half years imprisonment, depending on the degree of involvement (*R v Beattie*, Unreported, High Court, Christchurch, Panckhurst J, November 2004).

The Mongrel Mob's activities in Christchurch are important when considering certain issues relating to gang involvement in organised criminal activity, as well as issues relating to law enforcement of such groups, both of which will be discussed in the following chapter. But for now I will examine three issues relating to this case study and demonstrate how these reflect issues facing the patched gang scene generally. The first of these issues is the loss of the gang's clubhouse, the second is the age of those members convicted following Operation Crusade, and the final issue to consider is the effect this bust had on the Mongrel Mob.

Following the arrests of the Aotearoa Mob chapter in Christchurch, the rented villa in Philipstown became a pad without a gang to occupy it and it was subsequently pulled down by the owner, becoming a vacant lot⁸⁸. Similarly around the country, formal clubhouses were disappearing from the patched gang scene. On a tour around the North Island with a Mob member in 2004, I came across numerous towns and cities where the gang had left, or been evicted from, properties that had served as gang pads (three of them, following eviction, were burnt out by the gang). Similarly, three chapters of the

⁸⁸ Interesting to note, Operation Crusade (although only temporarily) led to the near eradication of the Mongrel Mob in Christchurch further cleared the gang scene in that city. As outlined above, outlaw clubs had virtually disappeared from Christchurch, yet despite various claims, such as those noted in Chapter Nine surrounding the relationship between gangs and criminal offending, little had actually changed. Crime statistics – specifically, statistics recorded for ‘drugs and anti social’ offences and ‘violence’ offences, two grouping synonymous with gangs – appear to have been affected little. In the Canterbury District, an area dominated by Christchurch, drug and anti social offences increased from 4,474 in 1999 to 6,053 in 2008, while offences of violence increased from 4,148 to 5,285 (Statistics New Zealand, 2009a). One can see from the data that the disappearance of most of Christchurch's patched gangs had failed to reduce incidences of these crimes, in fact, instances of these crimes actually increased. Although these data offer a broad picture only, they support the notion that even if all gangs were to vanish, the social problems associated with them – like crime – are unlikely to be affected in meaningful ways.

Black Power chapter (in Christchurch, Wellington, and Hawkes Bay), with whom I had dealings, are all without formal clubhouses. These changes were also evident to police, as reflected by the Police Association which in 2009 said that “to a very large extent” the traditional clubhouse “is very much a phenomenon of the past” particularly in urban centres (New Zealand Police Association, 2009: p.7). Although the Police Association attributed this regressive development to gangs pursuing a lower profile due to moves into organised criminal activity, in reality the situation is less deliberate and more complex. As with outlaw clubs, and outlined above, the niche social function performed by the street gang clubhouse was reduced, in part, by Liquor Licensing Act of 1989 (with a greater array of competing drinking establishments available in the cities). Moreover, greater demands from families as members matured meant many clubhouses lost their centrality. In many instances, leases expired on rental properties and another venue was never sourced, or the gangs simply failed to make payments and they were evicted. Other times, as happened with the Mongrel Mob in Christchurch, an event impacted the group to such a degree that the clubhouse was no longer viable. In my view, the loss of clubhouses evinces a wider weakness and decline within the setting generally, and one that may in fact exacerbate this decline by removing, what has hitherto been, a key component of the patched gang existence.

This is particularly relevant given that the Black Power and the Mongrel Mob were also facing recruitment issues. Of those convicted following Operation Crusade, the youngest was 26 years old, and most were over 40. Like the

outlaw clubs, the patched street gangs were creating generational barriers to new members and a greater maturity is evident in many of these gangs, which, as I argued in relation to outlaw clubs, can result in fewer violent incidents. Following the Highway 61 killing of Black Power member, Max Shannon, outlined above, senior Black Power member Shane 'Baldy' Turner appealed for calm, saying that anyone seeking vengeance should think of their families: "My concern is the women and children. Your kids come first, so if a leader wants to drag their families or kids through a war...it's not good for them" (*The Press* 18.8.2000). As Turner explained to me, it was not like it was in the "old days" and there is greater effort to avoid war, whereas in the past "we looked for any excuse [to engage in violence]"⁸⁹. Although I have found the large patched street gangs – particularly the Mongrel Mob – prone to violence (at large functions that I have attended, it is rare that there is not one or more fights between members or attacks on prospects), the lack of large scale wars between the groups is further testimony to the influence of the maturing membership.

A combination of this increasing restraint, or age-related inertia, and a drive toward more family-orientated approaches that I have observed among numerous chapters of the patched street gangs, has helped fortify generational barriers to these traditional gangs and, unintentionally, created a niche market for a youthful new form of 'LA-style' gang. This development is

⁸⁹ Clearly Turner's attitudes have changed over time as he was actually the instigator of a dramatic gang battle in Christchurch's Cathedral Square in 1980, which resulted in a Black Power member being hit on the back of the head with a small axe; an incident caught on film. A series of stills were reproduced in a book by Ray Comfort (1980).

potentially so critical to the street gang scene that I will investigate it further in a discrete section below.

But while youthful recruitment appears to be a significant issue, and many chapters of the large patched street gangs have contracted, overall they seem to have maintained their existing membership far better than their motorcycle equivalents; and there are a number of reasons for this.

The incarceration of the Mongrel Mob chapter in Christchurch would have likely been enough to destroy a smaller gang or most outlaw motorcycle clubs, but the size of the Mongrel Mob meant that it had no discernable impact on the nationwide group. The large street gangs have been able to survive in part due to their sheer weight of numbers, and as such, negative influences on them have been less obvious than on the smaller outlaw clubs. If a group falls away in one place, members from other regions can bolster it, or remaining members can move to join another chapter. Moreover, large contingents of members of these gangs in prison means that attachments and associations remain strong – and are indeed beneficial given the realities of ‘might makes right’ that exist in prison life – during periods of incarceration.

Furthermore, although the economy strengthened throughout the 1990s, the economic benefits did not impact to the same extent on Maori and Pacific communities, from which the patched street gangs have tended to attract members, meaning these gangs were not as threatened by reducing recruits or the loss of members to mainstream society. As outlined in Chapter Ten, a

survey of Mongrel Mob members from the mid-1990s showed how significantly they had become divorced from the legitimate workforce, and while no similar survey has been undertaken since, one can reasonably assert, from anecdotal evidence alone, that this separation has only increased in the new century, making integration back into mainstream life near impossible.

But while macro economic factors have certainly played a part in this social isolation, its entrenchment has been solidified by member commitment to gang life. And it is within that we may find a further explanation as to why patched street gangs have better maintained member numbers. As variously outlined throughout this work, member allegiance to gangs is strong across the board, but within the patched street gangs commitment has often been made patently, and permanently, obvious via facial tattoos of gang or gang-related insignia. Through interviewing early patched gang members, I have traced the origins of gang related facial tattoos to the country's prisons in the early 1980s, and I suggest they have obvious implications for members who might consider leaving the gang; acting as they do as a powerful means of social control.

One policy used in New Zealand prisons to inhibit the threat of gang violence during the influx of gang prison numbers during the 1970s and 1980s was the banning of wearing or displaying gang related insignia (Meek, 1992: p.270). Although prison guards could confiscate gang drawings and the like, tattoos were impossible to regulate.

The genesis of these facial tattoos appears to come from a jailhouse subculture, and they were not initially gang related. In what can be seen as secondary deviation (Lemert, 1951) and, quite literally, an exercise in self labelling, some incarcerated men began to imprint dots or stars below the outside edges of their eyes to represent their time in jail; something that criminologist Greg Newbold (2010 pers. comm.) believes has occurred since as early as the 1960s. As gang members began to become a significant part of the prison muster a decade later, many followed suit. By early 1980s these tattoos became larger, more obvious, and gang specific. One such inmate to mark his face in this way was Mongrel Mob member, Dennis Makalio. Makalio was sent to Paremuremo in the early 1980s after attacking two police officers in the gang's Porirua clubhouse. He told me:

Ahhhh, they came in waving their fuckin' batons like Starski and fuckin' Hutch. I thought, fuck that! [So] the gates were closed and I switched off the lights. Well, I fucked them, punched and kicked them, burnt them with cigarettes and all that. The cunts were...bleeding like fuckin' pigs.

The crime was such that Makalio was sent to the New Zealand's maximum security prison at Paremuremo, where he was among long term inmates. While there, Makalio marked his face with prison tattoos,

But they [the small facial tattoos] represented jail, eh? I thought what the fuck am I representing jail for when I represent the Mongrel Mob? So I fuckin' did that (pointing to the word 'Mobster' tattooed on his forehead).

It was an extraordinary way to express commitment to the gang, and one that quickly became common among the Mongrel Mob's membership. Facial tattooing, with words like 'Mongrel', 'Mobster', or 'Mob' and/or incorporating the gang's bulldog motif, in many instances grew to cover the face in what the gang calls 'masks'. Many members of Black Power too began to mark their faces with motifs representing their gang. As an example, of the four members convicted of the murder of Christopher Crean, an event discussed in Chapter Eight, just one did not bear gang related facial tattoos.

In 2006, I asked Makalio how he knows when a prospect is ready to be a full patched member. With an explicit understanding of the power of facial tattoos, he replied, "Give me his face". But such tattoos do not just exemplify a tremendous degree of loyalty to the gang; I argue that they also work as a powerful form of social control. Once a member is marked in such a visible and permanent manner, his ties to the gang become that much harder to break and, as such, the tattoos work to place limits on a member's thoughts of leaving the gang. Even if membership is severed, a man with such tattoos is always going to be perceived as a member by the public, and by opposition groups, yet he will lack the social and physical support offered by

membership. In this way, these tattoos may have helped to maintain numbers in Black Power and the Mongrel Mob during the first decade of the 2000s.

Methamphetamine or 'P' (Part II)

Like the outlaw clubs, however, the patched street gangs are struggling with the effects of members smoking P. Reflecting the growing popularity of methamphetamine use by the end of the 1990s, an updated version of Black Power's national rules taken from a meeting held in Auckland in January 1999, states that the outlawing of "Hard drugs" is "Deleted", undoubtedly reflecting the popularity, and potential profitability, of methamphetamine. By the mid-2000s, however, many Black Power chapters were beginning to rethink the decision. I am aware that chapters in Auckland and Hawkes Bay have since banned members from smoking P. One Black Power leader from Hawkes Bay, Mane Adams, told me in 2003 that because its use is so widespread amongst members, it is difficult to ban it at the national level. He said that the general feeling is that it's "not desirable, but that if you are using it you are still my brother, but don't do it in my area [where it's banned] or in my face". Christchurch Black Power president, Shane 'Baldy' Turner, told me in 2005 that his chapter has banned it, though the ban seems to operate on the principle of 'out of sight, out of mind': "Well, it's banned in my club, anyway. If you want to do it and you're in my group then good luck, that's all we say, good luck but we don't want to see you around as long as you're doing it".

The Mongrel Mob appears similarly conflicted. The Notorious chapter has publicly scorned P, and in association with the Salvation Army is attempting to get its members off the drug (*NZ Herald* 2.10.1010). The Notorious president, Roy Dunne believes that up to 80 percent of the gang was addicted to the drug, and he links the deaths of 12 of his members to its use (*ibid*).

But banning the drug is not easy and how strictly any ban is enforced is difficult to gauge. For example, a member of the Mob with whom I have had significant associations strongly advocates the drug's ban, but on two occasions while he was under the influence of alcohol, I saw him use it. Within many chapters of the large street gangs, the drug's use has become so prevalent that to ban it would mean splitting the gangs into two groups, users and non-users. At this stage, at least, its use is tolerated to keep the gangs together; an ironic situation given that in many instances, such as those outlined above in relation to certain outlaw clubs, P is doing significant damage to gangs; making members who habitually use the substance unreliable and more committed to the drug than to the gang.

The problems that P is creating within the gang scene are not going unnoticed by the police. Gang intelligence officer, Senior Constable Mike Watkins told me in 2006, "If I could take credit for introducing P into the gang scene, I would. It's done more damage to the gangs than we ever have". Despite the gangs being linked to the drug's production and distribution, with few exceptions I would argue that overall gangs and gang members are victims of the drug rather than benefactors of it.

Since the mid-2000s, social worker and life member of Black Power, Denis O'Reilly has taken up the anti-P cause and runs a national project called, Mokai Whanau Ora, which seeks to engage both Mongrel Mob and Black Power leadership in an effort to educate them away from the drug's use and trade (O'Reilly, 2005). O'Reilly told me that it is a "struggle" and that within the large street gangs, "We wax and wane a bit according to availability and the addiction level of leaders but the trend is, I think, downward and away from P". As noted in Chapter Eight, gangs have previously banned the use of heroin, and it is likely that such a ban around the smoking of P will eventuate due to the increasing awareness of its detrimental effects, but this will only occur if – perhaps when – the drug fades from popularity and the ratio of users versus non-users shifts so that the non-users are able to enforce prohibition.

Small Gains

As noted earlier, the problems facing the patched street gangs have not had as devastating an impact as they have had on the outlaw clubs, and in certain instances, Black Power and the Mongrel Mob have benefited from the decline in the outlaw motorcycle club scene. One town where this has been particularly evident is in Timaru, formerly a stronghold of two outlaw motorcycle clubs. After the establishment of the Devil's Henchmen and Road Knights chapters in Timaru in the late 1970s, no other patched gangs attempted to move into the territory for 30 years. However, by the mid-2000s, both Black Power and the Mongrel Mob had chapters there; the shrinking size

and changing internal dynamics of the Devil's Henchmen and Road Knights chapters has meant that neither chapter is willing to engage in a territorial war to protect their turf from new arrivals. Similarly, the Mongrel Mob now has a presence in Blenheim – a town that used to be the exclusive territory of the Lone Legion, and which they had successfully defended against other groups until their apparent collapse in recent times. In Invercargill during June 2006, a fire lit by members of a new Mongrel Mob chapter, who also stole and destroyed at least two of the Road Knights' motorcycles, gutted the Road Knights' clubhouse (*Southland Times* 20.6.2008). Retribution by the Road Knights does not appear to have been forthcoming.

But despite these small gains, overall the patched street gang scene is far from flourishing, and while the struggling economy of recent times may offer them support, perhaps their greatest challenge comes from youthful competition via the emergence of LA-style street gangs, which are a surging and potentially critical new development in New Zealand's gang scene.

LA-style Street Gangs – A look at the Future?

Since their inception in the early 1970s, patched gangs have almost exclusively dominated the New Zealand street gang domain. But during the 1990s, another form of gang was quietly emerging as a threat to patched dominance, one which will arguably shape the future of gangs in this country. In 1990, a small article in *The New Zealand Herald* (23.5.1990), reported concerns about a group of youths in South Auckland who were wearing "colours" (bandanas) and dressing like "violent American street gangs", and

calling themselves the 'Tongan Crip Gang' or 'TCG'. This form of gang was so unfamiliar to New Zealand that the media source incorrectly spelt 'Crip' as 'Crypt'. Using knowledge that reflected the rather homogenous – that being patch wearing – nature of New Zealand's gang scene, police told the *Herald* that they were not a "gang" and were "nothing more than five teenage thugs" (*ibid*). While that may have been true at the time, within a decade of so, by the mid-2000s, these groups had grown in size and in number and may represent the future of New Zealand's gang scene.

Crip gangs are one half of a predominately African-American gang phenomenon. With their counterpart rivals, the Bloods, these two groups were initially formed in the city of Los Angeles in the 1970s, but, driven significantly by popular cultural influences, soon spread throughout America and much of the world; (Covey, 2003; Germet, 2001; Gruter & Versteegh, 2001; Hagedorn, 1999, 2005b). Increasingly throughout the 1990s, these influences became obvious in New Zealand, and these LA-style street gangs became increasingly prominent (see Eggleston, 2000).

The trends becoming obvious among youth in New Zealand in the 1990s and 2000s were a reflection of a modern vogue coming out of America, based on hip-hop and rap music. As Covey states, "One only needs to walk through any major city to hear the pervasive influence of 'gangster rap' and hip hop music that promotes the street gang lifestyle" (Covey, 2003: p.30). Hip-hop is seen as a wider cultural trend within the context of poor African-American communities and includes speech patterns, 'Mcing', 'Djing', graffiti, dance,

ideals and music (Richardson & Scott, 2002). Rap music is a part of hip-hop culture and this type of music is supported by an enormous multi-million dollar industry. In 2000, for example, rap music is believed to have generated U.S.\$1.8b in sales (Rose, 2001: p.22).

'Gangsta rap', one particular type of rap music, consistently contains violent lyrics, as well as misogynous themes and hypermaterialism (Ro, 1996). The behaviour of some of its artists has attracted significant publicity. Numerous celebrated rap artists have participated in gang violence and some have been killed, most famously Tupak Shakur and Christopher 'Biggie Smalls' Wallace in 1996 and 1997 respectively (Kathy Scott, 2000).

That rap music often equates violence to masculinity and problem solving (Ro, 1996) is significant. Glamorised violence and an emphasis on ostentatious wealth – typically, achieved via crime – is a potential driver of New Zealand's developing youth gang culture; and something that sets apart these gangs from the early formation of the traditional patched street gangs; a point to which I will return.

Notwithstanding the importance of music and music videos, a further influence came about from Hollywood interpretations of gangs including the film *Colors* released in America in 1988 and followed three years later by *Boyz n the Hood*. Eggleston (Eggleston, 2000: p.160) reported that early members of these new gangs in New Zealand linked the rise of Crips and Bloods in this country to the film *Colors*.

Referring to this type of emerging youth gang in New Zealand in the late 1990s, Eggleston believes that the Americanisation of New Zealand has been increasingly influential on this country's youth. He sees the new "gangsta" style being mimicked by these groups as a feature that demarcates them from the existing "more established" New Zealand gangs (Eggleston, 2000: pp.149 & 160). Be this as it may, as has been shown in the early parts of this thesis, New Zealand's traditional gangs also had their genesis in American culture, both via the youth movements of the 1950s and later, and more significantly, through the Hell's Angels in the 1960s.

Despite these incipient gangs attracting some media concern during the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s, it was in 2006 that they became seen as a significant and pressing problem. Following one killing in October 2005, there were a further nine deaths related to or associated with LA-style street gang violence in wider Auckland in 2006 (*NZ Herald* 11.9.2007). Street violence was an ongoing problem in many areas of Auckland, and while the close timing of the killings seemed to suggest otherwise, the killings did not necessarily reflect a dramatic rise in overall youth gang activity. Just two of the deaths were the result of a premeditated intent to kill, with the others being, as one South Auckland police officer told me in 2009, "the consequence of booze and bad luck". Be this as it may, the fact that the victims or perpetrators were all LA-style gang member, drew focus on these new gangs.

As will become clear, the spate of deaths sharpened media and public focus on this new type of gang, particularly in South Auckland where eight of the ten killings took place. The media drew public attention to gangs hitherto unknown to most New Zealanders with names like the 'Juvanyle Crip Boys' or 'JCBs', the 'Motherfucker Ruthless Cunts' or MRCs, and the 'Penion Drive Boys' or 'PDBs'. Using the definitions that I have devised, these groups are clearly 'incipient gangs'. In the same way as the youth gangs of the 1950s and 1960s, and the skinhead groups of the 1980s, the vast majority of these new formations appear to have little or no organisational structure and they form and dissolve rather quickly.

It is clear that some of these groups have connections to established patched gangs (Ministry of Social Development, 2008b) and their colours reflect this; Those groups associated – through familial ties, social contacts, or simply because they share the same neighbourhood – with Black Power wear blue, and those with connections to the Mongrel Mob wear red. These are, interestingly, the same colours used by the American Crips and Bloods respectively.

Perhaps the most evolved LA-style gang is the Killer Beez. The Killer Beez were founded in Otara, South Auckland, around 2003, under the leadership of Josh Marsters, a member of the predominately Maori and Pacific Island outlaw motorcycle club, the Tribesmen (New Zealand Police, 2006: p.14). The direct and active involvement of a well established adult gang member – Masters turned 30 in 2008 – meant that the group was formed under adult

supervision and was not, to use Thrasher (1927), a typical unsupervised 'play group' that often typifies earlier gang formation. Furthermore, Marsters was an impressive figure, and combined with his hard man reputation, earned on the street and in the kickboxing ring⁹⁰, his appeal for many wannabe youths is rather obvious.

The gang, with their yellow colours⁹¹ reflecting those of the Tribesmen, flourished and grew quickly, becoming the most widely known LA-style street gang in the country. Their growing profile was aided by media that focused heavily on such groups in the wake of the 2006 spate of killings, and such groups sprung up around the country, similar to the way that the Mongrel Mob spread in the early 1970s. As Inspector Jason Hewett, of the South Auckland police, told me in 2009, "If you wanted to join a gang at that time which would you join? The Killer Beez – they were everywhere [in the media] at the time" (pers. comm.).

But, with a remarkable – and atypical – degree of organisational ability, the gang in South Auckland was also creating its own media. Mirroring the links seen in the U.S. between street gangs and the rap music scene, in 2007 the Killer Beez established a recording studio and formed a record label, Colourway Records. The following year they released an album 'Skull Fingers Up'. Like the title, the music videos are clearly linked to the gang – one song *Put Your Colours On*, upholds the theme of gang representation and

⁹⁰ Marsters has held the WKBF heavyweight title.

⁹¹ Initially the group designed a back patch, one of which I have seen, but they have since taken up the usual form of LA-style street gang identification of bandanas, and hand signals. The centre motif of the original back patch – a skulled hand pulling the 'finger' – is still used on t-shirts and other items, including tattoos, used to represent the gang; and this was latter augmented with the \$ symbol.

numerous gang members appear in it. By early 2009, the video had nearly 400,000 hits on the internet video networking site *YouTube* (www.youtube.com). As a further salute to U.S. developments, that being the East Coast-West Coast record label feud⁹², at least one of the album's songs featured a 'diss' track, which attacked pioneer New Zealand hip-hop label Dawn Raid. Unlike the traditional patched gangs, the likes of the Killer Beez were attuned to, and reflected, current trends and were therefore more relevant and appealing to youth.

In the poor areas of South Auckland, the Killer Beez offered a distinct function for members to fulfil the dream of mimicking the gangster life styles portrayed by their U.S. counterparts. In February 2008, Marsters told the daily current affairs programme, *Campbell Live* (15.2.2008), that, "As Killer Beez, we're standing up and saying, if you're not going to give us the options, we're going to create options for ourselves". As will become clear in the following chapter, the opportunities available to many youth in South Auckland were limited, but music was not the only available option to obtain the desired 'ghetto bling' lifestyle. Despite Marsters' explicit denial during the *Campbell Live* interview that he or his gang were involved in the illicit trade, it was to be drug offending that would bring the Killer Beez to nationwide attention just three months after that interview took place.

In May of 2008, numerous members and associates of the Killer Beez, including leader Josh Marsters, were arrested on drugs charges, and police

⁹² In the mid-1990s, Death Row Records and Bad Boy Records were locked in a public hip-hop/gang war. The two most prominent casualties – one from each side – of this conflict were Tupak Shakur and Biggie Smalls, mentioned earlier.

raids on several properties in the South Auckland suburbs of Otara and Papatoetoe uncovered \$200,000 in cash and an estimated \$500,000 worth of P (NZ Herald 6.5.2008). Detective Sergeant Ross Ellwood of the Counties Manukau police said the arrests had “taken the core out of the gang. All the Killer Beez leaders are gone. Some are in custody, some are out on bail but are on very strict bail conditions,” (Herald on Sunday 21.12.2008). Nevertheless, as shown in Chapter Six, prison sometimes has the effect of solidifying gang membership rather than breaking it down. Certainly, by 2010 the Killer Beez have shown no signs of folding and, in fact, there are numerous groups also calling themselves Killer Beez, either as formal associates or as copycat gangs, in the increasingly crowded LA-style street gang scene throughout the country.

While some of these young gangs appear to be acting as feeder groups to the patched gangs, the lack of youthful rejuvenation in New Zealand’s traditional gangs suggests that some of these young groups are achieving longevity and becoming permanent entities in their own right, and in the future will continue to provide greater and more direct competition to the established gangs. There is evidence to support this growing permanency; by 2009, it appears as though the membership base of many of these incipient gangs is getting older, although they are still called ‘youth gangs’ by the police, a minority of members are now in their 30s (Jason Hewett 2009 pers. comm.).

Looking into the Future

There appears to be an obvious fork in the road for street gangs in this country. As I see it, the first possible path relies on changes to popular culture and a diminished influence of hip-hop/gangsta culture that may see these young gangs fall away and those members who want to stay involved being absorbed into the traditional patched gangs. The second path will see these current incipient gangs maintain a distinct identity and mature into more organised entities and mark a distinct transformation in New Zealand's gang scene.

I suspect, however, the future will not prove so clear cut and that a middle ground is likely to occur. It seems likely that some of these LA style gangs will survive, and recognising the threat to their dominance, the patched gangs will respond by more actively seeking to recruit young members into their ranks. But whether they are absorbed or continue to exist as separate entities, these future adult gang members are likely to have a significant impact on wider gang activities moving forward. This potential to re-shape the gang scene is tied to a fundamental difference between the formational attitudes of LA-style street gangs and their patch wearing counterparts. To use Merton's (1938) terminology, we can see a very clear shift from 'retreatism' to 'innovation'.

It will be recalled from Chapters Four and Five, that in the early formation of the patched gangs in the 1960s and 1970s, members rejected the ideals of the mainstream and demonstrated their desire to drop out of society through purposely cultivated 'ridgie' dress that was not in keeping with accepted social norms; importantly, this response did not require financial resources. In

contrast, this new generation of gang members seeks the accoutrements of success, including designer clothes and jewellery (known as 'bling') that is highlighted in the images in many U.S. rap music videos. As Gruter and Versteegh (2001: p.141) said of the LA-style gangsters emerging in the Netherlands, they "wish to look like the boys in the daily MTV clips". However, this hypermaterialism requires significant financial resources, something that most of these young people are unlikely to be able to access through legitimate means. One, perhaps inevitable, response, therefore, will be a greater degree of profit driven crime within the New Zealand gangs.

Conclusion

Despite the intent of patched gangs to stand apart from society, they are deeply rooted in wider social context and affected by societal changes. This was true of their rise and is equally true of their faltering existence in the new millennium. Like many businesses that have enjoyed a monopoly, the gangs, faced with changing trends and emerging competition, have struggled to adjust to the challenges of a new era. Although patched gangs have dominated the New Zealand gang scene for around half a century, in recent times there are clear signs that this dominance is not immutable.

While it is much too early to ring the death knell on patched gangs, the challenges faced by these gangs are not insignificant. Nevertheless, these groups have proven resilient in the face of past adversity and their revival cannot be discounted. However, changing fashions among young people

mean that such gangs no longer hold the appeal that they once did for rebellious youth looking for a means to express themselves.

While groups of boy racers have none of the formal structures associated with gangs, and importantly are not viewed that way by themselves or outsiders, I would suggest that many of the youth that are now drawn to the boy racer set may once have formed the pool from which the outlaw motorcycle gangs drew their members. More significant, then, to the future of gangs in New Zealand, is the rise of LA-style street gangs, which are most prominent in South Auckland, but exist all around the country. Not only are some of these groups perhaps set to challenge the dominant position enjoyed by the patched street gangs for decades, but they may prove to be more troublesome and criminally orientated than New Zealand's traditional gangs.

Chapter Twelve.

History Repeats - Official Responses: 2000-

Introduction

The rise of LA-style street gangs ignited a response to gangs not seen in New Zealand since the 1980s; that being an awareness and recognition of gangs as an outcome of social and economic factors. Consequently these gangs were targeted with a comprehensive policy programme based on New Zealand and international research.

But while this new form of gang was considered as part of a broad context, the patched gangs continued to be popularly framed as organised criminal groups. As has been the case in recent history, these traditional gangs were the target of a suppressive crackdown, this time in the small North Island city of Wanganui. The resulting furore and legislative approach in that city is broadly consistent with numerous political responses highlighted by this study, and it is a further example of the piecemeal approach to policy formation around patched gangs.

This chapter will examine the informed approach to countering the rise of LA-style gangs and contrast this with the piecemeal methods, and kneejerk reactionism, that continues to define the suppressive efforts targeting patched gangs.

LA-style Street Gangs and the Return of Social Policies

Notwithstanding certain important sub-cultural differences discussed in the previous chapter, the surge in prominence of LA-style street gangs in many ways mirrored the rise of patched gangs in New Zealand in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Parallels are also evident in the police and political responses to the groups; initially repressive but then broadening to acknowledge the social causes of such groups. And with this came a comprehensive model designed to counter the problems associated with these gangs.

Sparked by the spate of deaths linked to the new gangs in late 2006, the South Auckland police established a Youth Gang Suppression Unit, under the charge of Inspector Jason Hewett of the Counties Manukau Police District. Comprising six police officers, the unit, in two police cars and an aging barred truck or 'paddy wagon', patrolled the streets of problem areas, such as those in the suburbs of Otara and Flatbush. While accompanying the unit in early 2007, I became acutely aware of the difficulties of distinguishing members of the LA-style street gangs from individuals or groups of friends who shared a similar sartorial style, also inspired by hip-hop culture⁹³.

⁹³ Problems of identification of gang members within broader fashion trends were made abundantly clear in a Christchurch shopping mall in early 2010 when a security guard asked a young man to take down the hood of his 'hoodie' (apparel favoured by, among others, young gang members), saying, "No

The fact that there was such crossover between gang and wider fashion styles inevitably led to blanket policing in South Auckland – similar in many ways to that of the controversial Police Task Force of the 1970s, noted in Chapter Six. Although, Hewett’s team can rightly point to the fact that no LA-style street gang killings occurred in 2007, one wonders if the police attention bred resentment among the non-gang or ‘wannabe’ gang youth, who were frequently accosted by police, often for doing no more than hanging out on the street or in local parks. Certainly, during the time I spent with Hewett’s team, the youths I witnessed being targeted by the squad were resentful of the police attention. This approach, though undertaken by well intentioned police officers, not only raises the issues of cohesion created by police conflict, outlined in Chapters Four and Six, but also created a perception among the suburbs’ youth generally that the police were a bullying force. As the Task Force was renamed Team Policing Units, so too the Youth Gang Suppression Unit was rebranded as a series of Youth Action Teams, which, as will become clear, was more than simply a euphemistic name change, but rather marked a wider and more socially aware policy transformation among the police in South Auckland. Hewett told me in 2009 that he quickly became aware that suppression alone could not solve the issue but that the tough police crackdown was set in motion because “we needed to do something” to appease the public in the wake of the media flurry stemming from the string of killings.

gangsta looks here, mate”. The man under the hood was All Black, and occasional fashion model, Dan Carter (*Sunday Star Times* 11.4.2010). This crossover between wider fashion and gang styles made police identification of gang members difficult.

Hewett and his staff began gathering intelligence on these new gangs, but as mentioned above, faced with the difficulties of identifying a *bona fide* gang member from the majority of youths who had adopted hip-hop fashion, they had great difficulty. South Auckland police quickly amassed a database of some 850 names, and Hewett therefore estimated that there were as many as 1000 gang members in region, and perhaps twice that amount in all of Auckland. These figures were given to *The New Zealand Herald* (21.8.2007), something that Hewett later told me was a mistake. In their early attempts to come to grips with the problem, police had identified any likely-looking youth as a gang member. Also, the police quickly became aware that many of the gangs came and went “in the blink of an eye” (Jason Hewett pers. com). He told me that they soon realised the list they had compiled grossly overestimated the problem, and that he regretted giving the figures to the media.

With a frankness that has defined my dealings with Hewett, he explained to me in 2009:

To be honest, we didn't have our head around it. I didn't know what I was doing, to be honest. We didn't have a definition of what constituted a gang – there was no corroboration in the early days. You know, maybe a bandana in a pocket [was enough to be counted]. And on reflection, many of them weren't even 'wannabes'.

Hewett was quick to recognise his lack of knowledge in the area and worked to address it, and he soon became the police's foremost youth gang expert; and his knowledge of international research in the area is impressive. Consequently, as will become clear, the man who had instigated the tough police crackdown quickly became a champion for the need for a broader social approach to the youth gang issue. It was reminiscent of the stance held by some within the police in the late 1970s, most notably expressed in the police association newsletter by Graham Butterworth, as outlined in Chapter Six. For Hewett, it was a dramatic turnaround for a police officer who, by his own admission, entered the police as a young man set to "lock 'em all up", but who gradually recognised the need for a more sophisticated solution to youth gangs.

The string of LA-style street gang-related deaths in South Auckland unsurprisingly also stirred a political response; but for the first time in decades, influenced by the socially aware Labour government, the response was evidence-led. Research commissioned by the Ministry of Social Development (2008b) completed in mid-2006 but not made public until 2008. Informed by international research, Greg Newbold and I (2006) contributed to this report by, among other things, canvassing the wide range of social problems that factor into the gang problem, and by outlining the numerous responses employed in the U.S. over many years. The U.S. experience is a chequered history of success and failure, but it does provide guidance with regard to best practice.

Prominent American gang researcher Miller (1990: p.265) has said that, compared with other forms of criminal activity, offending by youth gangs, in theory at least, should have a much better chance of being reduced. In practice, however, gang interventions in the U.S. have traditionally had strikingly low rates of success (Klein, 1995: p.137; W. B. Miller, 1990: p.267). In fact, it has been said that, “The history of efforts to solve the youth gang problem in the United States is largely filled with frustration and failure” (Howell, 1998a: p.285).

Responses to youth gangs in the U.S. are generally grouped in to three categories; prevention, intervention, and suppression⁹⁴. Most often these have been used in isolation to one another, but in recent times there is a board consensus that multifaceted approaches have the best chance of success, many of which have shown encouraging results (Howell, 2000: p.38). And it was upon this basis that the Action Plan for Counties Manukau was devised.

The New Zealand ‘Plan of Action’ and its Outcomes

Following a review of the research undertaken by the Ministry of Social Development⁹⁵, in September 2006 the government provided \$10m over four years to support the launch the Auckland Youth Support Network, charged with implementing a ‘Plan of Action’ titled *Improving the Outcome for Young People in Counties Manukau*. Although the additional money was limited, the change in approach was significant.

⁹⁴ For a more detailed explanation of these approaches, see Gilbert & Newbold(2006).

⁹⁵ Local research and knowledge is therefore essential due to the different nature of gangs in different locals (see for example Howell, 2000: p.53; Klein, 1995: p.71; Lafontaine et al., 2005: pp.11&104; Vigil & Long, 1990).

The approach outlined in the plan signalled a return to thinking about (youth) gangs as a social problem and not simply one of law and order. The broad approach was reflected in the range of government ministries that supported it, including Social Development, Youth Development, Justice and Education, as well as local Councils and the police, the Auckland Youth Support Network sought to implement 26 actions in Auckland with an emphasis on Counties Manukau “as a first step to addressing the underlying factors to social disadvantage and youth gang and youth crime issues” (Auckland Youth Support Network, 2006: p.6). While the plan was devised for Counties Manukau, it was seen as a pilot for action required around the country (*ibid*).

The plan of action comprised a range of programmes and policies that were designed to address the needs of young people in Counties Manukau and to encourage the government and social service agencies to work together. While much of the plan incorporated existing governmental and non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) initiatives, such as 'Family Start', an at home service to support at-risk families, and 'Youth Transition Services', which helped young people move from school to further training or employment, it ensured that there was better focus on at-risk and gang youths and that programmes were better coordinated. The plan also devised new initiatives, such as an integrated case management model to promote wrap around services for at risk youth and their families:

Integrated case management involves a youth co-ordinator, whose primary focus is the young person, and a family co-ordinator, whose primary focus is the young person's family. They work together and with other agencies to develop a plan for the young person and their family. The Plan identifies the tasks each agency will undertake relevant to the individual case. For example, if the young person's family wants to relocate (to minimise the risk of the young person re-offending), then Housing New Zealand and Work and Income will be engaged to provide support associated with the move. If the young person has not attended school or training, then either the Ministry of Education or a training provider will be engaged to facilitate the young person's education or training (Auckland Youth Support Network, 2006: p.16).

The plan also recommended the employment of youth workers to engage with young people, and it also sought to provide opportunities for sport and community activities.

In these ways, and numerous others, the plan incorporated many of the approaches identified by U.S. research, including suppression. But while a hard-line approach to gang offending was maintained, the police role was substantially modified. One way that this was evident was in the establishment of the police Youth Actions Teams across several Auckland suburbs, which, as well as more traditional policing, identified gang or at-risk youths and then liaised with other agencies to ensure integrated case

management was put in place for them (Auckland Youth Support Network, 2006: p.19). Hewett championed and embraced the “wrap around” approach that focused not just on the youths themselves, but on their family situations as well: “You can’t clean up a kid and then throw him back into dirty water” (2009 pers. comm.). Furthermore, provisions were made so that unsupervised children picked up by police, whose parents could not be contacted, were not kept in the police holding cells but were instead placed with Child, Youth and Family. Something that the Plan of Action said would better free up police time and resources, and also avoid “a highly unsuitable environment for a young person” (Auckland Youth Support Network, 2006: p.19). Given the police are often at the front line, their cooperation is vital to coordinated gang initiatives, and a lack of cooperation has been a factor in such approaches failing in the U.S (Spergel, Wa, & Sosa, 2005e: p.11.6).

By October 2007, the newsletter, *Patchwork*, which was established to inform people of issues around youth gangs, reported that the initial 26 actions outlined in the plan had been completed (*Patchwork* October 2007). In 2009, Hewett told me that he was “hand on my heart” convinced that it was the only way to effectively tackle the issue and he believed that it was working. Hewett’s faith was not misplaced.

In January 2010, the Ministry of Social Development (2010) published a review of the Plan of Action, which outlined a range of work being undertaken. By the end of the 2008/2009 financial year, the plan had delivered 47 parenting programs to just fewer than 1,300 participants. It also reported that

community youth workers reached over 9,000 youth through events and outreach activities, and that just under 7,600 young people participated in youth clubs and over 1,350 attended school clubs. Furthermore, advocacy was provided to over 250 youth in the community and 90 youth in schools. The review also said that support was provided to between 230 and 300 youth in contact with the youth justice system, and close to 120 youth had been involved in family group conferences. Also, the integrated management system was providing intensive individualised support to 421 young people and a further 76 had used and exited the programme (Ministry of Social Development, 2010).

The review reported a reduction in youth gang activity (Ministry of Social Development, 2010: p.16). Although this was only supported by certain stakeholder perceptions, it may nevertheless be valid, given that a major U.S. study (involving 21 cities) found that “perceptions [of gang improvements by key stakeholders] correlated perfectly with empirical indicators” (Howell, 1998b: p.296). Moreover, encouraging signs in relation to youth offending were captured by objective indices. Following a peak in 2006, the year the plan was devised and implemented, overall youth apprehensions dropped in Counties Manukau. Between 2007 and 2008, apprehensions by people aged 20 years and under fell by 9 percent⁹⁶, while the nationwide average was an overall increase of 3 percent (Ministry of Social Development, 2010).

⁹⁶ This decline was evident in every age bracket used to record apprehensions: under 14 years of age, 14-16, 16-18, and 18-20.

In all but one category (apprehensions for sexual violence rose in Counties Manukau by 3 percent versus a nationwide 4 percent decline), youth apprehension trends in Counties Manukau were better than the national average. These categories were: Violence (-6% vs. +5%), Drugs and anti-social (-4% vs. +6%), Dishonesty (-6% vs. +2%), Property damage (-9% vs. 0%), Property abuse (-3% vs. +3%), and Administrative⁹⁷ (-39% vs. -9%) (Ministry of Social Development, 2010: p.20).

Furthermore, positive results were found in the Manukau City Council's annual perceptions survey with regards to questions on crime and safety. Between 2006 and 2009, residents who felt 'safe' or 'very safe' in their homes, in their neighbourhoods, and in their local town centres (both during the day and after dark), increased among all categories (Ministry of Social Development, 2010: p.18).

Percentage of residents who feel safe, by place, 2006–2009

% of residents who feel 'very safe'/'safe' in their:	2006	2007	2008	2009
Home during the day	90	92	91	95
Home after dark	80	82	84	89
Local neighbourhood during the day	88	90	91	94
Neighbourhood after dark	61	55	58	77
Local town centre during the day	80	86	84	94
Local town centre after dark	37	40	37	55

While these data offer a certain degree of encouragement to the approach being undertaken in South Auckland, there needs to be an equal amount of caution; in both the indicated results and their overall effect, but also as to the security of the approach generally.

⁹⁷ This category was dominated by the offence of failing to abide by bail conditions.

When looking at the activities undertaken as part of the Plan of Action, it is difficult to definitively tell how they influenced the encouraging data. With regard to perceptions of community safety, this was acknowledged in the review document, which stated that, “It is important to note that a wide range of Council, government and community actions would have contributed to this, not just the activities funded by the Youth Gangs Plan of Action” (Ministry of Social Development, 2010: p.18). Indeed, I suggest the same could be said for the overall decline in youth offending; there are so many unknown or untested variables that could have influenced the results. It appears safe to infer the programme had some impact, but it is not possible to ascertain the exact degree of impact. Nor is it possible to determine, from the results provided, what elements of the programme were more successful than others. A longer term analysis is required, but I believe this is by no means certain to occur and that the whole approach is perhaps on a knife edge.

A New Epoch or a Political Blip?

The enormity of the task in combating gang rise and maturation is difficult to overstate. As outlined in the previous chapter, the New Zealand economy had been on a tremendous upswing in the early 2000s, but the fruits of this economic success were not tasted by many communities, which remain anchored to poverty regardless of wider economic buoyancy.

It will be recalled from Chapter Five, that Vigil’s (1988, 2002) concept of ‘multiple marginality’ – social/structural factors that influence gang

membership among ethnic minorities – was a useful framework for examining the problems facing Maori as an outcome of the urban drift. In that chapter, I suggested that the practice of clustering state housing was producing poverty ‘enclaves’. Following the economic changes outlined in Chapters Seven and Eight, by the 2000s these enclaves evinced further significant social problems, compounding the issues of multiple marginality. A study of Manukau, in South Auckland, undertaken in the mid-2000s, concluded that “a vicious cycle of poverty and lifelong, if not intergenerational, under-achievement is at work in some areas” (Lang Consulting, 2005: pp.5-6). Such areas can be seen as the relative equivalent of locales in the U.S. that have produced what is known as an ‘underclass’, from which young gangs are a seemingly inevitable result (Hagedorn, 1988; Klein, 1995: p.194; Short, 1990). As such, an overview of some of the issues facing particular communities in South Auckland provides useful context for understanding why youth gangs have emerged in places such as this.

Within South Auckland, particular suburbs, including Mangere, Manurewa, Otara and some parts of Papatoetoe, have high levels of economic deprivation as measured across nine indicators, including income, home ownership, overcrowding, transport and employment (Counties Manukau District Health Board, 2008). The areas scoring poorly in economic deprivation are also those that contain clusters of ethnic minority groups. Unsurprisingly, it is in these areas that the gangs are most prevalent.

Census data (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) from one of South Auckland's numerous deprived areas, Otara West, provide a snapshot of the problems of social and economic disadvantage facing many such South Auckland communities. Of the approximately 3,500 people who live in Otara West, nearly 80 percent are Maori or Pacific peoples, and as noted in the previous chapter, these groups feature prominently in negative health and social indices. Fewer than 17 percent of those aged 15 years and over have a post-school qualification, compared to more than 40 percent of the total New Zealand population. The unemployment rate is nearly triple the national average and almost 60 percent of people have an annual income of less than \$20,000. More than 25 percent of those living in Otara West have no home telephone and just 20 percent have access to the internet from home, one third of the national average. Almost 40 percent of families are single-parent families, compared with less than 20% nationally, yet the average number of people living in each household, 4.8, is significantly higher than the national average of 2.8.

Moreover, these areas tend to be youthful, with 42 percent of the South Auckland population under 25 years (Manukau City Council, 2009). In Otara West, over 35 percent of the population is under 15 years of age, compared with just 22 percent for all of the Auckland region (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). A significant cohort of young people, then, are faced with the factors of 'multiple marginality' that may result in their being drawn toward gang membership.

Furthermore, with New Zealand's wide, and widening gap, between rich and poor⁹⁸, many of these youth will see significant, and disparate, materialistic wealth in bordering neighbourhoods or in the media but feel it is unachievable and thus seek gang membership as a form of social resistance or in a misguided – or, in some cases, perhaps real – belief that their life chances and future happiness are better served through membership of a gang. It will be recalled from the last chapter that the Killer Beez' leader, Josh Marsters, said he wanted, "More doors to be open. For opportunities to be given to the less rich, to the poor because that's the sort of backgrounds that we come from, from round here. But we're saying, as Killer Beez, we're standing up and saying if you're not gonna give us options, we're gonna create options for ourselves" (*Campbell Live* 15.2.2008). In my view, the comments lend strong evidence to the fact that arguments of status frustration are far from simply academic musings.

Although the social and ethnic dislocation that occurred with the Maori urban drift in the 1960s and the rapid immigration of Pacific Peoples in the 1970s, and compounded by the lack of social amenities in state housing areas during these times, are not as relevant in the new millennium, there are deeply entrenched social problems and economic deprivation in many areas. While such embedded social and economic problems remain, gang membership – patched or unpatched – is set to be an ongoing issue for New Zealand

⁹⁸In 2008, New Zealand's gap between rich and poor (measured by income distribution) is among the highest third of the 30 OECD countries, and, despite narrowing slightly over the term of Helen Clark's government, since 1985 the gap has overall grown at a faster rate than any other of those countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2008). Since 2008, the gap has remained largely unchanged (Ministry of Social Development, 2009), but tax changes made by John Key's government in 2010 appear set to widen it further.

regardless of even well designed strategies aimed out countering them. As Klein (Klein, : p.147) states, “Gangs are by-products of their communities: They cannot long be controlled by attacks on their symptoms alone; community structure and capacity must also be targeted”. And these are issues that would take a generation to remedy.

With this in mind, it will be easy for a disconnect to occur between what can realistically be expected of the Plan of Action, or any other broad ranging approach, and the expectations of the public and, perhaps more importantly, those of politicians, who often require quick solutions to garner immediate electoral support. For this reason, social policies targeting gangs, I suggest, are highly vulnerable.

Although always a law and order issue, for most of New Zealand’s early gang history there was a broad acceptance of gangs as a product of wider social factors, however, since the mid-1980s suppression has been the dominant means of addressing gangs. As outlined, the fall of the social policy agenda in the 1980s occurred for a number of reasons including the fact that gangs matured into adult groups, changes in political ideology, changes in police views, negative economic conditions, catalytic events that increased public hostility toward gangs, and populist firebrand politics. And from this experience we can perhaps attempt to forecast the future of the contemporary policies targeting youth gangs.

Given New Zealand's weak economy, brought about by the global economic crisis, as outlined in the previous chapter, socially-minded policies targeting gangs are likely to fall victim to a refocusing of government initiatives on supporting the economy, and those worst affected by its recession; and may well exclude such groups deemed unworthy of assistance, like gangs. Furthermore, with the ascendance of the conservative National coalition government in 2008, such social interventions may lose favour. Particularly given the signals offered by policy initiatives such as 'three strikes'⁹⁹ and the euphemistically titled 'Fresh Start'¹⁰⁰, a hard line approach targeting young offenders. But perhaps the greatest risks stem from developments from within the youth gang scene itself. In the previous chapter I suggested that such groups are beginning to mature. If, as occurred with the membership of patched street gangs in the 1980s and 1990s, these incipient gangs become institutionalised adult groups, it may only take a few high profile catalytic events – like the Killer Beez drug bust, also outlined in the previous chapter – to change the political perception of these gangs from requiring social remedy to needing to be suppressed. Such events in the past have proven irresistible to politicians who gain traction with a hard-line approach on issues of law and order, and who have in turn have proven effective in defining public opinion. And with these factors in mind, one might suggest that the social initiatives targeting youth gangs has not so much taken over from suppression, but simply interrupted it.

⁹⁹ The 'Three Strikes' legislation was passed in 2010 as a changes made by way of the Sentencing and Parole Bill. Among other things, it lengthened sentences for serious recidivist offenders, but for purposes here it is enough to say that it signalled an accentuation of 'tough on crime' policies.

¹⁰⁰ Fresh Start was passed in February 2010 by way of changes to the Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act and allowed children of 12 and 13 years of age to be brought before the courts for serious crimes, and instigated 'boot camps' for young offenders.

Responding to the Patched Gangs

While the largely youthful LA-style street gangs, which came to public prominence in 2006, were viewed as a social problem requiring social redress, the patched street remained an issue of law and order by being defined as organised criminal groups.

A useful example of how the media have supported this idea is an article published in the *Dominion Post* (8.8.2009) in relation to a massive drug bust where 1,125 people were arrested. Only three were associates (none were members) of the Hell's Angels, which is roughly one quarter of one percent of all those arrested. Yet the headline read, "Hells [sic] Angels link in 1000 cannabis arrests". Although factually correct, the headline clearly overstates any link between the gang and the arrests, and highlights the pervasive idea that gangs and drugs are synonymous.

In April 2009, parliament passed the Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Bill, and later that year, the Gangs and Organised Crime Bill. The latter's title reflects how closely gangs and organised crime had become linked, and bolstered numerous pieces of legislation that were part of the Harassment and Criminal Associations legislation of the mid-1990s described in Chapter Ten. For certain measures, like those targeting participation in an organised criminal group and gang fortifications, it was the third time they had been addressed by parliament, something that reflects their lack of success. The Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Bill increased powers around the forfeiture of assets

gained through crime. It will be recalled that the Proceeds of Crimes Act of 1991 allowed for the seizure of assets following certain criminal convictions. The new provisions, however, transferred the burden of proof on to the suspected criminal, meaning they had to prove that their assets were legally obtained, without the court having to prove any prior criminal activity.

It is a powerful piece of legislation and one that will undoubtedly have success in securing assets from wealthy gang members who commit profit producing crime, but even a cursory glance at the gang scene reveals the modest – and often impoverished existence – of the vast majority of gang members. Furthermore, evidence for gangs as organised criminal organisations remains rather scant, despite police views to the contrary. In Chapter Ten I outlined the reasons why gangs had become framed as organised criminal groups with little supporting evidence. As these arguments are as relevant in the new millennium as they were in the 1990s, they do not need to be remade. Nevertheless, it is important to briefly contemporise the issue.

To the Law and Order Select Committee, which examined the Gangs and Organised Crime Bill, the Police Association (2009: p.3) submitted that,

The New Zealand gang environment is now more complex and serious....engaged in true organised crime. They are dealing higher value drugs such as methamphetamine, and coordinated supply and distribution syndicates have replaced many of the old inter-gang rivalries. Modern gangs are organised with one aim – to make money.

Cash flows and illegally-funded lifestyles are now at levels gang members in the 1980s could not have even have dreamed of: the methamphetamine trade is currently estimated to be worth \$1.5 billion a year in New Zealand, of which Association members estimate at least 75% is controlled by gangs.

The submission highlights two important common assumptions. The first of these is that gangs dominate the drug trade, in this instance methamphetamine. The second assumption, commonly held, is that the gangs exist solely as illegal money making enterprises. In my view neither of these propositions bare close scrutiny.

In relation to drug offending, I turn to apprehension data compiled by the police. These statistics are arranged in three, rather ambiguous, categories: Drug (Cannabis Only), Drugs (New Drugs), and Drugs (Not Cannabis)¹⁰¹. According to Gavin Knight, the National Statistics Manager at Police National Headquarters, police statistical data do not include whether or not apprehended persons are patched gang members, but they do record whether or not “persons apprehended are known to be affiliated in some way with a gang” (pers. comm.), and therefore undoubtedly capture a significantly wider population than just gang members as well as a large degree of offending unrelated to gangs in any meaningful way. But even if *all* of the offending was gang controlled, the data do not support claims of gang dominance. In each of the three years from 2006 to 2008, drug dealing by

¹⁰¹ I have been told by the National Statistic Manager that ‘new drugs’ are primarily methamphetamine and ecstasy, and ‘not cannabis drugs’ are heroin and cocaine.

gang affiliates, as measured by apprehensions for 'possession for supply', averaged 9.4 percent of total apprehensions for 'cannabis only', 11.5 percent for 'new drugs', and 7.6 percent for drugs 'not cannabis'.

It will be recalled from the previous chapter that the Mongrel Mob in Christchurch were running a drug dealing operation from their club house, which led to the incarceration of the entire chapter following the police's Operation Crusade. Although this example shows that police concerns about organised criminal activity are not entirely without foundation, it highlights the relative ease by which such groups can be apprehended.

The presiding Judge at the trial following the arrests of the Mongrel Mob members and others involved in the drug bust, Justice Panckhurst, described the gang's activities as, "short and simple organised crime" (*R v Beattie*, Unreported, High Court, Christchurch, Panckhurst J, November 2004). There is little doubt that Justice Panckhurst was correct in recognising that the gang was working as a collective to create profit – and in doing so they fall within my definition of a 'criminal gang' – but the level of organisation was far from sophisticated.

One member of the trial jury, who contacted me after the trial was complete, told me that from the evidence put before him, he was surprised at the level of disorganisation, which failed to meet the image or expectations that he had of gangs, which he had formed via media sources. It will be recalled that police

and politicians had heralded the gangs as sophisticated organised criminal groups since the 1990s. The jury member told me in 2005:

I thought there would be a lot more organisation. I thought a gang was organised crime but there's not much that is too organised with them at all. The longer the trial went on the more it became obvious that it's a gang it's not a syndicate, you know? I never expected it to be like *The Godfather* [movie] but it really fell a long way short of that idea – the stylised version of organised crime.

Indeed, the obvious way in which the Mongrel Mob chapter was dealing drugs would be a complete anathema to most professional criminals; if one wants to minimise the risk of being caught by the police, it would seem logical to avoid drawing attention to one's illegal activities. Although the obvious nature of the venture almost certainly says something about the lack of sophistication within the Mongrel Mob, and the seeming imperviousness of its membership to legal consequence, it also highlights that high profile groups, indicated by their wearing of back patches, are easily identifiable targets for police.

A long time Hell's Angel, Phil Schubert, put it to me in 2006, like this:

They have it in their head that we are a criminal organisation – but we're not real smart criminals [if we're prepared to go around] with a patch on our back – and you only have to look at the majority of

brothers who are 5 or 6 day a week [manual] workers...I don't know where all of this money is.

Indeed, the relative scarcity of large drug busts involving whole gangs¹⁰² – or whole chapters of gangs – support what I have found in my field research and that is that, overall, most drug business is the work of individuals, or small cliques within gangs, and not the work of the gangs as collectives¹⁰³. This being the case, and the fact that gangs existed long before they had any real connections to the drug trade, is a strong argument against the Police Association belief that gangs exist for the sole reason to make money.

This misrepresentation, however, is not just a matter of academic curiosity. It has had, and continues to have, an effect on public policy. By framing gangs solely as organised criminal groups, tough legislative measures are the consequence. What this means is that resources are misdirected, and laws enacted that will fail to have meaningful impact because they are ill designed and poorly targeted, and, additionally may erode basic liberties and rights.

And there is perhaps no better example of this than the response to events in the North Island city of Wanganui in 2006. It is an example that reflects the

¹⁰² A further notable case involved Black Power in, Mount Wellington Auckland. Led by national president, Mark Pitman, the gang was involved in a large scale cannabis growing and distribution operation, and following police recording 105 recorded conversations and gaining 130 text messages, 15 members and associates of the group were arrested (*Solicitor-General v Pitman*, Unreported, High Court, Auckland, Hansen, R, June 2006). Following convictions of the accused, the gang's \$500,000 'pad' was confiscated under the Proceeds of Crime Act – although as at writing, the gang remains in control of the property.

¹⁰³ An explanation for the reasons for this was offered in Chapter Ten

fact that the approach to patched gangs remains unguided by a coherent overarching strategy, and instead is driven by kneejerk reactionism.

The Wanganui Battle Ground

As has occurred in the past, populist policies targeting patched gangs sprang to the fore in the new millennium; specifically in 2006, the same year that LA-style street gangs were making headlines in South Auckland. The contrast between the approach taken in combating the new young groups and the traditional gangs, however, could not have been more stark.

In a now rather familiar scenario, it was a catalytic event – or series of events – and a rhetoric fuelled leader that brought suppressive anti-gang policy to the fore again. In late February 2006, the (then) three chapters of the Hell's Angels club (Auckland, Hastings and Wanganui) had travelled to Christchurch to attend the annual Sound of Thunder motorcycle racing event. On their return home, members of the Auckland chapter stayed in Wanganui for the night, and the next day, on 29 February 2006, two members stopped at the BP Service Station on the corner of Anzac Parade and Jones Street to get petrol for the ride home. As the two Hell's Angels members were filling their motor cycle tanks, members of the local Mongrel Mob stopped and confronted the pair. A local Hell's Angels prospect, travelling in a car, had seen their fellows Angels pull into the service station and decided to stop, seeing as he did so, the conflict unfolding. One of the outnumbered Hell's Angels then drew a baseball bat from the car. The ensuing fight, much of which was recorded on service station security cameras, resulted in the hospitalisation of two

Mongrel Mobsters, one with a fractured skull. One of the Hell's Angels suffered a broken leg. As the two groups converged at the hospital, they clashed again.

The following day the incident made the front page of the *Wanganui Chronicle* (1.3.2006). In the article, the city's Mayor, Michael Laws was quoted as saying that gang violence in Wanganui was no worse than in other areas "but it's high time that central government equipped local police with the staff and resources to deal with them once and for all". For Laws, a former MP of the National Party, a radio talkback host and a newspaper columnist, these comments marked the beginning of a concerted anti-gang campaign, in the same vein as John Banks and Mike Moore in the past.

The same day as the coverage appeared in the *Wanganui Chronicle*, *Radio New Zealand* broadcast an interview with the New Zealand Police Association president, Greg O'Connor, who asserted, without offering any evidence to support his claim, that the battle was a turf war over the control of drugs, particularly methamphetamine. But his statements were publicly contradicted the following day by Senior Sergeant Duncan MacLeod of the Wanganui police, who said they had no intelligence suggesting the violence was related to drugs, and who instead believed it was related to an earlier isolated incident between the groups (*Wanganui Chronicle* 2.3.2006). This explanation was confirmed to me by members of both the Hell's Angels and the Mongrel Mob. Nevertheless, the same claims by O'Connor were widely published, in a different article in the same newspaper, and in *The New Zealand Herald*

(3.2.2006). Links to drugs had become O'Connor's default explanation for such incidents.

At the end of that week, Laws, in his weekly column in the *Sunday Star Times* (5.3.2006), likened the gangs to the "terrorists" that New Zealand troops were combating in Afghanistan. He said that police should constantly "harass" the gangs and raised the idea of banning gang patches; a proposal he then put before the Wanganui District Council at an extraordinary council meeting, attended by Greg O'Connor, on 10 March 2006 (*Wanganui District Council Press Release* 10.3.2006). Consequently, the District Council sought to introduce a bylaw that would ban the wearing of patches and other visual identifiers of gangs in Wanganui's Central Business District (CBD) and other public areas. Interestingly, the proposed area did not actually include the locality where the clash between the Mongrel Mob and Hell's Angels, which had sparked Laws' call, took place.

Although not noted at the time, or in subsequent debates around the idea, it was not the first time that such a ban had been proposed in New Zealand. In 1988, the council in Wairoa proposed a similar ban (*NZ Herald* 8.2.1988), as did police in Ruatoria in 1994 (*NZ Herald* 28.7.1994) but on each of these occasions the proposals came to nothing.

The first iteration of the proposed Wanganui bylaw was ambiguous and it seemed to ban the wearing of the colour red, associated with the Mongrel Mob and Hell's Angels, and the colour blue, associated with Black Power – a

proposal that I, and a number of others, argued in submissions to the council, would be unenforceable. Although this and numerous other issues were remedied in a subsequent draft of the bylaw, it was concerns surrounding “human rights provisions” that delayed the passage of the bylaw in June 2006 (*Wanganui District Council Press Release 23.6.2006*). Eventually, it was decided that the bylaw would need parliamentary approval to ensure that it was not in breach of the Bill of Rights Act (*Wanganui District Council Press Release 5.3.2007*).

In the meantime, Laws’ calls for strong action against gangs increased when Wanganui became the scene of a drive-by gang shooting that killed a two-year-old girl, Jhia Te Tua, in May 2007. On the day of the killing, tensions between Black Power and the Mongrel Mob were evident during a chance meeting at a rugby league game in Wanganui. There was no physical violence, “but there was posturing, intimidatory and aggressive behaviour from both sides (*R v Wallace*, Unreported, High Court, Wellington, Gendall J, February 2009). Following the standoff, several members, prospects and associates of the Mongrel Mob, travelled in three cars to ‘hit’ a Black Power member’s address – the gang did not have a formal clubhouse in the city. Black Power, however, were prepared; pelting the would-be attackers with bricks and bottles and smashing a window of one of the vehicles. The Mongrel Mob cars left but returned shortly after; whereby the lead car of the Mongrel Mob convoy turned off its lights and engine and coasted up to the Black Power address in a successful attempt at stealth. As the car rolled past the address, Mongrel Mob prospect, Hayden Wallace fired three shots from a

30-30 rifle at Black Power members congregating outside the house. The first two bullets proved harmless; one ending up in a neighbouring yard and the other lodged in a fence post surrounding the Black power property. The third bullet, however, went through the window of the house and hit the infant asleep on the couch inside, killing her instantly (*R v Wallace*, Unreported, High Court, Wellington, Gendall J, February 2009). The death resulted in a public outcry, and this anger was funnelled toward the drive for the anti-gang patch legislation.

Jhia Te Tua's death became a national media issue¹⁰⁴. Indeed, few New Zealanders, I suggest, recall the initial violent clash that sparked the proposed bylaw, but most would remember the death of the infant, and it was utilised by the bylaw's supporters throughout the ensuing political debates. The Wanganui District Council (Prohibition of Gang Insignia) Bill was introduced to parliament on 2 April 2008 and in each of its three readings, the Bill's sponsor, National's Chester Burrows, MP for Wanganui, raised the killing of Jhia Te Tua to emphasise the problems of gangs (for example, *NZPD*, vol.646, 2008: p.15337; *NZPD*, vol.653, 2009: p.1642; *NZPD*, vol.654, 2009: p.2944). However, Burrows did not articulate the basis for his belief that the banning the wearing of patches would address this type of conflict, and to date this has still not been adequately explained.

¹⁰⁴ An internet search reveals 82 media reports of the killing in May and June 2007.

A Review of the Rationale

Indeed, the key bases for the law change are disputable. There are two primary grounds on which the bylaw was argued; preventing incidental gang clashes and preventing public intimidation. Data obtained from the police show that in 2004, 2005 and 2006 there were 11, 17, and 48 violent offences stemming from clashes between gangs in Wanganui; representing 1.5, 2.3, and 6 percent respectively of all violent offending in the district¹⁰⁵ (Rollo, 2009). To put this into perspective, domestic violence, captured in criminal statistics as male assaults female crimes in the 'Central' district, which includes the Wanganui region, accounted for between 17 and 19 percent of violent offending over the same period (Statistics New Zealand, 2009b). While gang violence is an issue, it can easily be inflated to a level of disproportionate concern. And while it is quite possible that banning the wearing of patches may stop some incidental conflict between gangs, in a small city like Wanganui most of the town's gang members are liable to know one another by sight, regardless of dress, so the effect of a patch ban is likely to be minimal. Also, gang violence is a problem all around the world, and yet New Zealand is unique in that street gangs wear patches, clearly the patches alone do not cause violence. Links between patches and violence, therefore, must be viewed with some caution.

In relation to arguments about intimidation, one finds more questions than answers. Almost certainly some members of the wider public may find patch wearing gang members intimidating. But whether this intimidation is warranted

¹⁰⁵ Figures from the Police show 20 such incidents between January 2007 and June 2009 suggesting the spike in 2006 was an anomalous year.

is open to question. In October 2009, I oversaw a telephone survey of Wanganui residents. The research found that just less than a quarter of the total respondents had personally had direct contact with a gang member. Of those who had had contact, 56 percent reported this contact as 'positive'. Just 3.7 percent said the contact was 'negative', with the remainder reporting the contact as 'neutral' (Jarrod Gilbert, 2009: pp.2&4). Given the relatively small sample size (109 respondents), the results of the survey can only be viewed as indicative, with an approximate 95 percent confidence level of plus or minus 9.5 percent.

Nevertheless, the results do suggest that people's concerns about gangs do not come from direct contact with gang members, and therefore, are likely to have been formed on the basis of third party portrayals, such as those in the media and from politicians, which as outlined in Chapter Ten are often highly distorted. Moreover, given any number of people will be intimidated by any number of things, there is an indelible problem of balancing a person's subjective – and perhaps unfounded – concern when seeing a back patch, versus the intent of the person wearing the patch. But even if gang members are purposely (or even recklessly) acting in an intimidating manner, there are already numerous laws (for example, the Harassment Act 1997, section 21 of the Summary Offences Act 1981, and sections 188 & 189 of the Crimes Act 1961) that can be used to deal with this. Therefore, the law does not seek to address the unlawful behaviour *per se*, but rather criminalises sub cultural expression.

But perhaps the most baffling aspect of the law relates to the police belief, represented most forcefully by the Police Association, that gangs are organised criminal groups. Although I have argued that this assumption is demonstrably false, if one was convinced that the assumption held true, then it is in many ways even more difficult to reconcile support for a measure that reduces the visibility of criminals. At the risk of sounding flippant, if terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda wore back patches, the 'war on terror' would be made significantly easier. This paradox becomes even more peculiar given that the problem of identifying the non-patch wearing LA-style street gangs was emerging around the same time. But while the police hierarchy in Wanganui and the Police Association both backed the measure banning patches, this support was far from universal among rank and file police.

Not long after the original bylaw was proposed, in March 2006, Detective Sergeant Daryl Brazier, the head of the police Organised Crime Unit, wrote a letter to the editor of *The New Zealand Herald* (14.3.06) saying that while Laws and his council may "mean well", the proposal to ban patches was misguided. Patches, Brazier said, were a way that gangs "could be identified and policed" and that removing them would drive such groups underground. These ideas were echoed by Steve Plowman, editor of the police association magazine, *Police News* (April 2006), who suggested that by giving gangs a lower profile the bylaw may "inadvertently...advantage" them. These public voices of dissent showed rare cracks within the police, and agency that is almost always – outwardly, at least – united. As it became clear that the police were giving the proposal unqualified support, public arguments from within the

police stopped, however, two former police officers continued to lobby against the measures. One of these, Mike Watkins, was a former Gang Intelligence Officer who worked in and around Wanganui, and who was still in the police when the bylaw was first being formulated. He told me that the measure did not have his support and that he was surprised the police bosses were in favour of the proposal. He would later say in a request to address parliament's Law and Order Select Committee, that the law "will not work as intended and may be counter productive [sic] from both policing and community perspectives" (Watkins, 2008).

Similarly, but much more publicly, the former head of the Outlaw Motorcycle Unit in Auckland, Cam Stokes, repeated these and other concerns in the media and on one occasion in March 2006, was quoted in news bulletins on *Radio Live*, the radio station that employs Michael Laws as a talkback host. Given the high level of support traditionally offered for hard-line suppressive measures, Laws was clearly taken aback by the levels of opposition his proposal was receiving and, in keeping with his mercurial reputation, he struck out at his detractors. Laws used his radio show to call Stokes an "idiot", a "broken arse" and a "bitter and twisted ex detective" (*Radio Live* 15.3.2006), and similarly dismissed other critics who questioned his idea. He called social worker Denis O'Reilly a gang "apologist" (*Sunday Star Times* 5.3.2006) and following concerns raised by a members of the Wanganui Council, he said, "There is a complete lack of understanding from Cr Ray Stevens, but that is not unusual" (*Wanganui District Council Press Release* 14.3.2006).

In an op-ed piece published in *The Dominion Post* (7.4.2006), I outlined why I considered that certain criticisms of the proposed bylaw were valid, and expressed concern that Laws' attitude toward the bylaw's detractors was not conducive to promoting healthy debate. The day the article was published, a staff member from *The Dominion Post* contacted me to say that Laws was "incensed" by my article and demanding a right of reply, which was given to him. He never responded directly to the issues that I had raised, however, and criticism of the proposed bylaw continued.

Critical Political Debate

Due in part to concerns being raised publicly, the passage of the Wanganui District Council (Prohibition of Gang Insignia) Bill through parliament in 2008 and 2009 was not smooth and it attracted much greater critique and debate than past legislation targeting gangs.

As noted, one significant concern was that the bylaw would potentially breach the Bill of Rights Act, and this fear proved correct. In February 2008, the Attorney General, Dr Michael Cullen, concluded that, "the [Wanganui District Council (Prohibition of Gang Insignia) Bill appears to be inconsistent with section 14 of the Bill of Rights Act and that the inconsistency cannot be justified under section 5 of that Act¹⁰⁶" (*AJHR*, J4, 2008: p.4). But in New Zealand, unlike many countries with similar legislation, the Bill of Rights Act is not supreme law and is simply an "ordinary statute that gives way to

¹⁰⁶ As of February 2006, this had occurred just six times since the Bill of Rights legislation was first enacted in 1990; and none of these proposals were subsequently passed into law – and in two of the cases the Attorney General's reports were seen as "decisive" in their failure to be enacted (Joseph, 2007: p.1174).

inconsistent legislation” (Joseph, 2007: p.1146), allowing parliament to pass laws in spite of such misgivings. Nevertheless, the Attorney General’s findings proved significant to many as they weighed the potential efficacy of the proposed law against breaches of the important human right of free expression.

These concerns in combination with the challenges to the bylaw’s potential efficacy by credible sources, some of which were noted in the section above, encouraged debate and offered respectable alternative points of view. This allowed politicians greater political breathing space to express opposition because they were not isolated in their dissent, unlike the moral panic-stricken environment that had existed when the raft of legislation was passed in the mid-1990s.

The leader of the libertarian-orientated ACT party, Rodney Hide, described the Bill as “shocking” and “rubbish”. Hide argued that the legislation would have no palpable effect on New Zealand’s gangs, while undermining fundamental rights and freedoms, and declared that his party could “never” vote for it passing into law (*NZPD*, vol.646, 2008: pp.15761-15762). Other MPs, such as Labour’s Grant Robinson and Clayton Cosgrove, pointed out that patches were just one way a gang could identify themselves and thus the impact of the law would prove minimal at best (*NZPD*, vol.652, 2009: pp.1644-1646 & 1648-1650). The rise in prominence of the LA-style street gangs in areas of South Auckland had made politicians aware that gang patches,

which for so long had been the key identifier of gang members in this country, were not the only means by which gang members could express identity.

Maori Party co-leader Pita Sharples told a child abuse conference in Manukau that moves to ban gang patches were “rubbish”. He said, “Clamp down on crime, yes. If a gang is doing crime, lock the beggers up. But don’t assume that people who form or join roopu¹⁰⁷, as they call themselves, are all breaking the law and are there to intimidate you, even though you are intimidated by them” (nzherald.co.nz 15.4.2008). True to form, Laws responded by saying that Sharples’ comments are “more liberal appeasement of crims and cons” (*Wanganui Chronicle* 16.4.2008). Furthermore, he argued that gang members do not deserve civil rights (*Sunday Star Times* 1.8.2008).

Although the vast majority of MPs supported the bylaw going to select committee for more detailed debate and examination, by the time of the Bill’s third and final reading, on 6 May 2009, its passing was in the balance. While the Bill already had the support of the National and United Future parties, it was opposed by Labour, the Greens and the Maori Party. The balance of power sat with the ACT party, which had initially recoiled at the legislation limiting peoples’ freedom of expression, and whose leader, as noted above, had said the party could “never” vote for it. Since then, however, ACT, with five MPs, had entered a coalition government with National, and Hide flip-flopped and pledged his support. Although the party split its votes, it was the

¹⁰⁷ Translated means a ‘group’ or ‘party of people’.

backing of three ACT MPs that allowed the Bill to be passed into law by 62 votes to 59 (*NZPD*, vol.654, 2009: p.2944).

Subsequent to it getting parliamentary approval, on 22 May 2009, at a specially convened meeting, the Wanganui District Council unanimously resolved to ban patches across the entire Wanganui district, as of 1 July 2009 (*Wanganui District Council Press Release 24.5.2009*). It is important to note that the reach of the bylaw was extended further than what parliament had intended, by banning gang insignia not only in the central business district and public parks but to a much wider area that encompassed practically all of the populated area of Wanganui; an important point to which I will return.

Possible Outcomes

Following its introduction, the patch ban gained immediate results and in the first nine months there were 13 prosecutions brought by police for the wearing gang insignia in Wanganui (*Police News* Sept. 2010). By that time, the Police Association had heralded the measure as a major success (*ibid*), but this claim is based on little evidence and it is much too early to reach that conclusion. Assuming the ban is upheld by the courts, only after several years have passed, and we are able to compare gang offending data from before and after the patch ban, can an accurate assessment of the impact of the bylaw be made. Also, given the arguments I have made in relation to the bylaw's justification, I believe that little, if any, improvements in violent crime or intimidation will be seen. Moreover, there may be latent unintended

consequences that come in to play, and two arrests thus far highlight certain possibilities.

The day following the bylaw's introduction, Mongrel Mob member, Brett Beamsley, was arrested for wearing a 'beanie' hat with a bulldog on it. The charges against Beamsley were eventually dropped as the motif on the hat was actually the Georgia University logo (*Dominion Post* 23.9.2009). Although police said dropping the charges was a mistake (*ibid*), the issue not only highlights ambiguity over what constitutes gang insignia, but also, as will become clear, that the law is often futile and one means by which the law may make the gang problem worse.

Under Beamsley's headwear, his face was tattooed with 'MMM' – a contraction of 'Mighty Mongrel Mob' – and two bulldogs. With or without any additional gang insignia, Beamsley, like many others, is unmistakably a gang member. It is worthwhile considering that the bylaw could have the unintended consequence of encouraging more members to mark themselves in this way and therefore engender a more entrenched and committed membership base. While leaving a gang is rarely easy, it is much simpler to take off a gang patch when it is on the back of a jacket rather than tattooed on one's face. But such measures do not need to be as extreme, and gangs may find more subtle ways to work around the law and make it unenforceable. It will be recalled that many groups have numerous ways of expressing affiliation including hand signals, catch cries and different colours. A successful ban may make back patches used for ceremonial purposes only,

but there are any number of other ways gang members can express membership, if they so choose.

Another arrest may also highlight possible unforeseen outcomes. On 7 September 2009, Hell's Angel Bryan Moore, Moore lingered outside the Wanganui police station wearing an old club t-shirt from the failed Hastings chapter until he was arrested for displaying gang insignia. Moore was actively seeking arrest in order to test the validity of the bylaw, and upon his arrest he immediately ripped the shirt to pieces to ensure the police were not able to keep it as a trophy (Bryan Moore 2009 pers. comm.).

One of the grounds for the Hell's Angels' challenge was based on Michael Laws' interpretation of the legislation which, as noted, above went beyond what parliament had intended. Following the Wanganui Council's decision to extend the patch ban throughout most of the city, local National MP, Chester Burrows, who had sponsored the Bill through parliament, was reported on *Radio New Zealand* (23.5.2009) as saying that when parliament enabled the council to make provisions for banning gang patches, it did so with the intent that the bylaw would only apply to small public areas, and he warned that the council's move may be open to legal challenge. Laws responded by saying that, "anyone who has studied law knows that the courts always ask what an act of Parliament says, not what Parliament meant by it" and the wording of the legislation, he believed, "empowers the council to declare virtually 99.9% of the district scheme patch-free" (*Radio New Zealand* 23.5.2009). It was an argument the Hell's Angels decided to test.

Following a hearing on 3 December 2009 in Wanganui, Judge Butler determined that the District Court did not have the jurisdiction to hear a “collateral challenge to the validity of the Bylaw” and Moore was convicted but escaped a fine (*Police v Moore*, Unreported, District Court, Wanganui, Butler P, December 2009). It was a finding subsequently upheld, following an appeal by the Hell’s Angels, after a hearing in the High Court in May 2010 (*Police v Moore*, Unreported, High Court, Wanganui, Mackenzie J, April 2010). Undeterred, the Hell’s Angels then prepared a case to challenge the bylaw’s validity via a judicial review set down for November 2010. If the challenge is successful it may very well kill the entire issue, but if unsuccessful such bans may appear around the country as numerous other councils, including those in Blenheim and Timaru, have said they will seek to introduce the measure in their respective cities if it proves workable in Wanganui (*Marlborough Express* 8.5.2009; *Timaru Herald* 8.5.2009). But of greater significance, perhaps, is that the legislative challenge represents a political awakening of the Hell’s Angels, and perhaps of the wider gang scene.

Many of the gangs in New Zealand that I have formed an association with throughout this research, not only those in Wanganui, felt that they were being unjustly targeted by this legislation. The bylaw appears to be an issue that the gangs are steeling themselves to resist.

As a guide to a possible course that this resistance might take, I turn to recent developments in Australia and the formation of the United Motorcycle

Councils, which were formed in response to suppressive legislative measures, and exist in at least four of Australia's seven states¹⁰⁸. These councils are made up of the majority of outlaw clubs, including many groups with often long histories of tremendous antagonism, including the Comancheros, the Bandidos and the Hell's Angels. The councils offer comment and critique on issues affecting outlaw clubs, and through elected spokesmen they have sought to actively lobby for public support and counter police claims against them; and in doing so they have moved away from traditional 'no media' rule¹⁰⁹. It is an interesting evolutionary development stemming from a reaction against suppression and given that two council member clubs have chapters in New Zealand (the Hell's Angels and Highway 61) such a development occurring in New Zealand is quite possible. Given the Police Association already holds concerns about "old inter-gang rivalries" being replaced with a greater degree of cooperation for the "coordinated supply and distribution" of drugs (New Zealand Police Association, 2009: p.3), one would assume that the development of such a council in New Zealand would be viewed very dimly indeed.

While all of this remains speculative with the legal challenge to the law still to be decided, it does make some things abundantly clear; namely that there is a clear lack of strategic focus when it comes to policy formulation around patched gangs. Uninformed by research, based on unsupported assumptions, and driven by populist politics, public policies around such gangs remain

¹⁰⁸ For more on these councils, see their website www.unitedmotorcyclecouncil.com/

¹⁰⁹ To view an interview on Channel Nine's *Today on Sunday*, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_Cq00sOceg

mired in sensationalist claims that fail to address gangs as complex social institutions that will survive and evolve in the face of misdirected attack.

As Huff (1990: p.313) has said:

There is nothing more inefficient or wasteful (of financial and human resources) than policies based on political perspectives and intuitive judgments. The realities of life suggest that complex socioeconomic phenomena such as gangs (or, for that matter, crime in general) usually defy simple intuitive explanations, and yet such explanations constitute the model response.

There is no easy answer to the gang phenomenon, but while police and political leaders persist in simplistic understandings and approaches they risk exacerbating the very problems they are attempting to solve. In the previous chapter I outlined a range of issues that is negatively affecting the patched gang scene; police and political attack was not one of them.

Conclusion

In the first decade of the new millennium we have, in many ways, seen history repeat. The emergence of the LA-style street gangs has produced an important political change; in so much as there has been a return to recognition that gangs are derived from wider social and economic issues. Through enlightened leadership within the police and evidence-led policy development, these new gangs were framed as a social concern that cannot be solved by law enforcement alone. Although, if history continues to repeat,

and these youthful incipient gangs became more entrenched, then I argue that it is likely a return to suppression will occur.

In relation to the traditional patched gangs, the story was equally familiar, and knee-jerk populist policies remained in the ascendency. Nevertheless, the law to ban gang regalia in the city of Wanganui was questioned and debated to a much greater degree than policies of the past. Although parliament did grant Michael Laws and his council the power to restrict the wearing of gang patches and certain other gang symbols, the effects this will have on the gang scene generally are far from certain. Although positive benefits to the wider community are likely to be limited, the way that the gangs respond may yet prove to be an important pivot point in New Zealand gang history. Either through a political awakening, or changes to their public appearance, the gangs' adaptation to this suppressive attack will offer considerable insight into their future direction.

Chapter Thirteen.

Conclusion – Gang Evolution, Gang Control, and New Zealand Society: 1950-2010

The primary objective of this research was to trace the rise and development of gangs in New Zealand, with a particular emphasis on key 'pivot points'; events that marked a significant moment in New Zealand's gang history, where the evolutionary path of the gangs or the political response to them was dramatically altered. As outlined in the introductory chapter, this was to be achieved through three principal and highly interconnected, themes: the changes in gang evolution and development; the response to gangs over the years; and the importance of the social and economic context within which gangs have existed. It is by revisiting these three themes, then, that I conclude this thesis.

Gang Evolution

The genesis of the modern New Zealand gang can clearly be found in the immature youth groups of the 1950s. This youth gang scene was divided into two distinct categories: the milk bar cowboys and the bodgies. These gangs were of a fragile and ultimately fleeting existence, but there was an ongoing churn as new groups sprung up to replace old ones. These groups were the tentative precursors to the outlaw motorcycle clubs and the patched street

gangs that were to dominate this country's gang scene for decades. Although a few of these young gangs were beginning to show some evolutionary development by the end of the 1950s, through the use of common identifiers and distinct names, it was the formation of a Hell's Angels chapter in 1960 that cemented and advanced these evolutionary traits.

This event marked the first pivot point in New Zealand gang history by fundamentally, and quite remarkably, transforming the gang scene. The formation of the Auckland chapter of the Hell's Angels introduced back patches, a hierarchical leadership structure and other significant organisational components to the gang scene. By the late 1960s, these elements were widely adopted by numerous outlaw motorcycle clubs. And by the mid-1970s, in a situation unique to this country, street gangs, with varying degrees of exactness, followed suit. These developments constructed gangs as distinct entities that existed as more than just the sum of their members, and importantly, I argue, helped enable the groups to survive membership turnover and thereby achieve longevity. Many of the gangs that formed during this period – and only those with these elements – became mainstays of the New Zealand gang scene.

Augmenting the back patch, many of the patched street gangs created numerous sub cultural symbols and behaviours. Both the Mongrel Mob and Black Power developed hand signals and catch cries that were used to identify members. But despite the obvious similarities – in both demographic composition and behaviour – between New Zealand's largest street gangs,

there were unique factors in the development of each that resulted in distinctly different elements to their respective cultures and internal dynamics. The Mongrel Mob was formed by a core of troubled youths raised as wards of the state, and their highly anti-social tendencies became instilled within the group and eventually formed a model of behaviour termed 'mongrelism'. Conversely, Black Power had early leaders who had a pro-social agenda and attempted to mould the group, with varying degrees of success, as a form of positive resistance to personal hardships. Although these differences can be overstated, they nevertheless highlight how influential elements, usually within the leadership, can distinctively shape different groups. These differences in culture and dynamics within individual gangs are then perpetuated in two ways: those who share the attitudes of a group are attracted to it, and existing members of a gang only accept those who uphold, or are prepared to learn, the values of the gang. This I believe to be true of gangs generally.

As the patched gangs grew in number, they began to clash. These battles were often over disputed territory, but were fundamentally non-utilitarian, and were driven by little more than perceptions of superiority of one group over another. But as conflicts escalated and real harms were inflicted, feelings of overwhelming animosity led to embittered wars and often decades long acrimony and loathing. It is my contention that these conflicts contributed to a number of important developments in gang evolution.

These wars often led to arrest and often imprisonment and introduced gang member to the criminal justice system and ultimately secured the adoption of

wider criminal code of behaviour.

A further outcome stemmed from the physical and psychological stresses of gang warfare, which led many weaker members to leave the gangs, while those who remained became more deeply committed to their group. Furthermore, to ensure that people who wished to join a gang had the right characteristics and commitment to uphold the ideals and mana of the group, a more rigorous initiation or 'prospecting' period was adopted. This stage of testing prospective members further entrenched internal gang dynamics by affirming a deeper commitment to the gang and therefore, among other things, perpetuated the strength obtained through conflict.

The ability for the gangs to survive over time was eventually matched by long term and stable membership, something that became apparent by the 1980s. The effect of this change was crucial as the gangs began to become more sophisticated entities, what I have described as 'grey organisations', neither fully legitimate or illegitimate, and deeply imbedded within certain communities. The gangs had always provided considerable benefits for members, primarily through a number of social/psychological functions of fictive kin relationships and a sense of status. Indeed, the fact that such groups survived and maintained longer membership is unquestionable testimony to the primacy and importance of these functions in the lives of their members. But throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, these functions became more palpable and sophisticated. The clubhouse provided a social hub with many amenities that members could not have afforded but by

collective enterprise, and many gangs began to provide or facilitate recreational pursuits, such as establishing rugby league teams or organising large community events. Many also created opportunities for employment, both legal and illegal, but it was the latter that became synonymous with the groups, largely via the drug trade.

Notwithstanding a few early pioneering entrepreneurs, profit driven crime became a significant element within the gang scene in the 1990s. Although certain gangs evolved to become criminally focused, for most groups, profit driven crime was the domain of individual members of small cliques within gangs. I believe that as time went on, the threat of a large bust bringing down an entire gang or gang chapter, and risking the forfeiture of their assets, persuaded many groups that had transitioned from 'gangs' to 'criminal gangs' to stop such activities. Another factor that worked against collective enterprise was that those members taking the risks did not want to share the rewards with others.

Nevertheless, as collectives or not, the gangs, despite their patch wearing visibility, provided many advantages to those members who chose to engage in the drug trade, including; protection from rip-off and stand over, networks for distribution, and a ready customer base in the form of gang associates. The strength of gangs within the underworld created something of a form of quasi-authority among criminals, and this was often exploited via a form of extortion known as 'taxing'. Although this authority was accepted within criminal fraternities, who spurn redress through legitimate agencies of justice,

it failed to transfer to outsiders or 'citizens'. Due in part to a police force unwilling to take bribes, those members of the public who complain of gang harassment are supported by the law. With this knowledge, gangs have tended not to target outsiders for taxing or intimidation, and therefore the wider public is generally deemed untouchable and off limits.

Despite their strength within the criminal realm growing, large scale territorial wars were largely gone by the late 1990s and I contend that there are a number of reasons for this. There is certainly some support for the idea that profit driven criminality influenced a slowdown in gang-versus-gang violence – wars being bad for business – but this is a minor consideration in my view. More important, I argue, was the fact that gang geography had long been established, alleviating the need to battle over territory, and that gangs struggled to recruit young members who were more willing to engage in physical and territorial aggression. Most importantly of all, the gangs had aged, and men of 40 or 50 are less prone to violence and wary of possible imprisonment.

But the aging membership and lack of young recruits, which was brought about by what I have described as 'generational barriers', were more critical than just contributing to reductions in violence. As the new millennium dawned, the seemingly permanent and strong position of the patched gangs began to be brought in to question. At this juncture, what had hitherto been a steady progression of evolutionary advancement began to show signs of ending and, particularly in relation to outlaw clubs, indications of devolution or

regression are evident. As important as the problems of generational barriers – and therefore rejuvenation – were, I suggest that smokable methamphetamine, or P, was the insidious influence that began to cripple many patched gangs that were not quick enough to perceive its destructiveness. This failure, by many gangs, to adapt to risk and changing circumstance, suggests a vulnerability that may prove critical, particularly given the increased competition for youthful membership that now exists.

While the outlaw clubs may have been impacted by the popularity of the ‘boy racer’ trend, much more significantly, because of the size of the patched street gang scene, is the advent of LA-style street gangs. Given the emergence of skinhead groups in the 1980s, and more demonstrably in the 1990s, new developments and new types of gang in New Zealand were not without precedent. But the emergence of LA-style street gangs may prove to be much more important.

The dramatic rise of LA-style street gangs is undeniable. In many ways their inception resembles that of patched street gangs in the early 1970s, in that most comprise a young membership and the groups tend to have a fleeting existence; but their apparent lack of hierarchical leadership structures and formal organisational components, critical to early patched gang evolution, means that their evolutionary development is difficult to predict. In other ways too, I argue, they are quite distinctive. Perhaps most significant is their ‘pop-cultural’ inspired materialistic desire for ‘bling’, or visual signifiers of success. This may transpire into a greater drive for profit driven crime. If these groups

gain longevity, their impact on the New Zealand gang scene is likely to be transformative.

Gang Control -The Response to Gangs

This thesis has highlighted the response to gangs in numerous ways including that of the wider public and the importance of media representations, but primarily the focus has been on approaches to gang control, and therefore the reaction and activities of the police and of politicians.

The Police Response

Since the inception of rebellious youth groups in the 1950s, the activities of gangs have been a significant focus of the police. In early research from the late 1950s it was revealed that the police approach to gangs was to target them at every opportunity and generally 'keep on their tails'. This early suppression-based approach was one that would go on to almost exclusively define the police activity in relation to gangs ever since.

It was, however, the advent of the back patch in the early 1960s that provided police with a visual symbol that enabled ready identification of members of troublesome groups. For the police, the patch became akin to a target on the backs of gang members. This visual representation of rebellion, however, did not just serve to make such groups obvious, it also meant that any negative or criminal behaviour undertaken by one gang member was seen as a reflection of the whole group, and that any stigma attached to the group persisted over time – despite the high turnover of membership.

I have argued that the inevitable conflict between police and the gangs – often aided by overly aggressive police tactics – led to the strengthening of internal bonds within the groups, in the same way that inter-gang conflict aided intra-gang cohesion. Although an aggressive police approach often found public sympathy, it may have been counterproductive.

Despite, or perhaps aided by, aggressive policing, such groups continued to grow throughout the 1970s and territorial conflicts between gangs increased. By the end of the decade, certain members of the police were beginning to raise concerns that gangs could not be seen simply as an issue of law and order, and that addressing the reasons for gang membership would require social policy intervention.

But these voices were seemingly in the minority and by the mid-1980s elements within the police hierarchy actively sought to attack government initiatives that were putting gangs to work. These efforts contributed to the gangs being affirmed as an issue of law and order and a problem solely for the police to address.

But despite the rhetoric of some, policing around gangs has not been driven by the goal of gang eradication, but toward the more realistic objective of restoring, what I have called, the gang/community balance. To this end, police have proven capable of implementing strategies (best highlighted by Operations ‘Shovel’ and ‘Damon’ in the early 1990s) that target gang

members and limit their activities when their behaviour supersedes that which communities have been prepared to tolerate.

Despite demonstrating their ability to control gangs when required, since the mid 1990s police have been at the forefront of calls for stronger legislation. By this time, however, police concerns regarding gangs had transformed from violence and disorder to issues surrounding organised criminal activity. While it is clear that the gang realm and the drug trade intersect and overlap to a considerable degree, the police claims – most significantly and regularly made by the Police Association – regarding gang involvement in the underground economy appear inconsistent with their own arrest data, the lack of large scale collective drug busts, and the rather obvious observational evidence that the vast majority of gang members exist in poverty.

I have sought to explain this disconnect through a concept I have termed 'Blue Vision'. Blue vision is a multistage process whereby police construct a belief that becomes instilled within the organisation's collective consciousness. I contend that the foundations of blue vision are derived, somewhat paradoxically, from both the similarities and differences between gangs and the police. Both are uniformed bodies with strong internal bonds, and both create 'us' and 'them' distinctions. But the fundamental ethos of the groups are in stark contrast to one another; the police being pro social and conformist, while the gangs are anti social and rebellious. The ensuing antagonism that is maintained within police (but which is of course mutual), mixed with a lack of high level research and a reliance on often questionable

street intelligence, predisposes them to a form of cognitive dissonance whereby evidence that supports their beliefs is upheld and evidence that contradicts it is dismissed.

Notwithstanding this, the police antipathy toward gangs may have one positive latent outcome. Because of the animosity that exists within the police toward gangs, positive and friendly contact between them is limited. Given this, there is an argument that the chances of police becoming corrupted by profit driven gang criminals is lessened. The police may break the rules in dealing with gangs during their operations, but they do not break the rules by aiding gangs through providing tip-offs or inside information; something important to the success and viability of organised crime. Certainly, I believe a lack of corruption within the New Zealand police that is one key reason why organised crime in the gang scene has not gained great traction.

Furthermore, one can sympathise with the invidious position of the police. When gangs are defined simply as an issue of law and order, the police are often subject to criticism when gangs generate community concern. There is often an unrealistic expectation of what can be achieved through suppression, and when laws fail to eradicate gang concerns, it is perhaps unsurprising that the police will seek greater powers in an attempt to avoid such criticism in the future. It is something of a catch-22, and without a review of the efficacy of the police approaches and an examination of why they fail, a snowballing effect of greater and stronger legislation is perhaps an inevitable outcome.

The Political Response

Despite their appearance within New Zealand cities since the 1950s, gangs did not become an issue of distinct political concern until the early 1970s. This was most obviously demonstrated by populist calls before the 1974 election to 'take the bikes off the bikies'. Before this time, the young gangs were viewed as part of the wider concern of juvenile delinquency and a dramatically rising youth crime rate.

The beginning of this shift is evinced in the problems of disorder that beset the Hastings Blossom Festival at both the beginning and the end of the 1960s. In 1960, the problems at Hastings were broad and undefined, but by 1969 the patched wearing gangs were easily recognisable and thereby became a focal point for concern; not just for police but politicians as well.

In the early 1970s, a multi departmental research report into the emergence of predominantly Maori patched street gangs in South Auckland communities highlighted the fact that the groups were an outcome of negative social conditions in problematic urban areas. But while the research, partially at least, recognised – and warned of – certain signs the groups were becoming more structured, the researchers were equivocal about the extent of the problems created by the gangs and their future threat

However, as the violence of gang warfare increased throughout the decade, growing public fears ratcheted up political concern. When the Moerewa riot

occurred in August 1979, an event that I have marked as the second pivot point in New Zealand gang history, specific action was deemed both necessary and urgent. Under the assertive leadership Robert Muldoon, the National government introduced a series of laws giving police greater power to target gangs' unruly behaviour, but it was social initiatives that were to define the era. Initially, Muldoon oversaw the implementation of detached youth workers to try and transform gangs from negative forces into pro social ones. Primarily this was done by encouraging gang efforts toward establishing work cooperatives to make use of government funded work schemes that had been established to tackle rising unemployment.

Following the report of the Committee on Gangs in 1981, Muldoon's approach was given further weight and the government established the Group Employment Liaison Service (GELS). Although the report outlined numerous problems that factored into gang membership and violence, it was putting gang members to work that became the focus; again reflecting the intent not to prevent gang membership but to modify gang member behaviour. Despite a belief among many that the schemes were curbing the anti social activities of the gangs, the economic reforms of the 1984 Labour government meant that the 'make work' schemes favoured by the interventionist Muldoon government lost favour and a series of high profile incidents – including the third pivot point by way of the Ambury park rape – and a realisation that the schemes were being widely abused helped ensure their demise.

At a time when unemployment and general community hardship were high,

giving favour to openly rebellious groups was politically unfeasible and in the 1990s the country entered an environment of 'zero tolerance'. Indeed, given political realities that exist with times of hardship, I believe that social policies targeting gangs may be more likely to occur in times of economic prosperity, when the wider public are more amenable to offering assistance to marginal groups. But, either way, the cancelling of the work schemes also signalled the collapse of the political belief that the gang situation needed social redress as well as a law and order focus; and the latter once again rose to monopolise the country's gang response.

Although a politically commissioned report on violence published in 1987 was highly, and unusually, critical of police attitudes toward gangs, these attitudes soon became standardised within political discourse. Indeed, a number of politicians – primarily from opposition benches – ensured the gang issue became highly politicised and gangs became the visible face of numerous law and order problems. While the gangs had been difficult to counter, they had proven to be an effective means by which to garner electoral advantage. I argue that with a mix of good intentions and cynical politicking, political leaders have done more to create wider public fear of gangs than the actions of the gangs themselves; the problem, however, is that these understandings are steeped in misunderstandings and myth.

This became most evident prior to the first MMP election in 1996, at which time the gang issue was radically reframed away from violence and disorder to one of organised criminal activity. This transformation was aided by a

belief, stemming largely from police sources, that the patched gangs had become organised criminal groups. Despite scant evidence, no research, and never being proven in the courts, this portrayal of the gangs became all consuming and widely accepted as established fact and its influence is enough to mark it as the fourth pivot point. Notwithstanding that this portrayal has often blown the gang problem significantly out of proportion, it has also created a barrier to any meaningful attempts to address the groups. Suppressive legislative measures specifically targeting gangs have largely proven to be ineffective, underutilised or superfluous; and yet, largely without comment, they continue to be enacted.

One exception to this is the Proceeds of Crime Act of 1991, which was not actually passed with patched gangs in mind. Nevertheless, this legislation has helped ensure that a financial powerbase for gangs was not created by large profits procured through criminal enterprise, and, in my view, the Act helped ensure that the patched groups did not develop into genuine criminal gangs; and dissuaded some that did to cease collective crime. Importantly, I believe, the legislation attacked criminal behaviour and not the gangs themselves (unless they committed crime) and therefore avoided any possibility of the gangs drawing strength or cohesion from specifically targeted 'gang' legislation. It is an important lesson from which to draw; as the success of this law stands in stark contrast to other, more numerous, suppressive policy failures.

It is perhaps no surprise that during this very era when suppression took a

monopolistic hold on gang control efforts, there was a distinct lack of research undertaken on the gangs. It was acknowledged at the time the raft of legislation introduced in the 1996, that no independent research was available to judge the extent of the 'gang problem'. Before this time, in 1970, 1981, and 1987 governmental committees had examined the gang situation and each time made it clear that, as a social problem, it required social redress. Without this more considered input, 'easy' and populist measures reigned supreme.

The political response to the rise of LA-style street gangs in the new millennium contrasted with this suppressive approach. With the government commissioning a study on the phenomenon – the first in more than two decades – the social causes of gang formation once again came to the fore. I have, however, suggested that this political change may prove temporary. Certainly, the politics around patched gangs have remained largely unchanged. Although certain legislative attempts at banning patches garnered a great deal more scrutiny than gang laws of the past, the broad cross party support for organised crime legislation is evidence that the perception of gang dominated organised criminal activity remains firmly entrenched.

Any political turnaround to a more balanced and evidence-based appraisal and approach to patched gangs appears unlikely. Not only have politicians become bound within the rhetoric around gangs, but any moves to address these imbalances are politically dangerous. Not only will an alternative view undoubtedly illicit a rebuke of being 'soft on crime', but the nature of much gang activity means that any number of catalytic events are likely to ensure

renegade political figures are never far from controversy. Although MMP has thrown up challenging voices, it appears unlikely in the foreseeable future that a majority opinion of anything other than suppression will prevail.

New Zealand Society and the Importance of Context

What is clear from this research is that gangs are deeply connected to, and influenced by, broader societal factors. Gangs in New Zealand have been shaped by the communities within which they formed, by wider issues existing within this country and by international trends.

Although gangs have spread to rural areas, in the immediate post war era they were initially an urban phenomenon that emerged within expanding towns and cities in New Zealand. The rapid rate of urban growth, mixed with a booming economy and technological advancements, allowed young people an unprecedented level of free time and in urban centres they grouped together; many on motorcycles. The rise of the 'teenager' also gave rise to the teenage gangs. Inspired by American pop culture, New Zealand youth adopted the styles of their international equivalents, something that would continue until the present day, most ably demonstrated by the new LA style street gangs. Although often seen as new, 'Americanisation' of the gang scene in New Zealand is as old as gangs themselves.

But despite youthful gangs becoming apparent in the economic boom times of the 1950s, these groups were nevertheless situated within lower socioeconomic strata, suggesting the importance of relative rather than

absolute deprivation in gang formation. Furthermore, and critically, it was the abundance of employment opportunities that appears to have been vital in ensuring that these early gangs remained youthful, and members matured out of the gangs and entered more conventional lifestyles. Even when the gangs achieved longevity, membership remained fleeting, as members were easily able to leave the gang for work opportunities. This finding has implications for gang control, because it highlights the importance of alternatives in ending gang membership.

Although gang formation appears to be a natural outcome of urbanisation, it was a certain form of rapid urban growth that broke the ground for gang development in this country to flourish. The 'urban drift' that saw large numbers of Maori move from rural to urban centres, was perhaps the most important element of widespread gang creation in New Zealand. Ill equipped to deal with many of the realities of city living, and with the breakdown of traditional forms of authority, young Maori faced with 'multiple marginality' formed gangs in unprecedented numbers. From the formation of gangs during this period we clearly see gangs as symptoms of wider social problems.

But if wider socioeconomic forces were at play in laying the foundations for gang membership, it was wider sociocultural issues evident in the 1960s and 1970s that provided them with fuel. The rise of a widespread protest culture, the alternative lifestyle hippies, and, specifically in relation to Maori gangs, the Maori renaissance, all bolstered the fledgling gangs by providing a supportive environment that was anti authority and questioned mainstream ideals.

Ironically, however, while this questioning liberalism aided the gangs, the groups themselves remained highly conservative and distinctly apolitical. These commitments to resist authority and convention, and a search for alternative lifestyles were important in gang development. Indeed, many of the social elements that made the 1960s and 1970s unique, continued to exist in the patched gangs long after that had become assigned to history books elsewhere in society. But these sociocultural elements did not just bolster the gangs by providing an incubating climate. They also influenced how the groups were perceived and responded to, as evinced by efforts, undertaken the late 1970s and most of the 1980s, to make the gangs pro-social – largely by putting them to work – rather than through efforts to break them up.

But while these social changes aided gang development and boosted their longevity, it was the faltering economy of the 1980s that assisted longer term membership and thereby fundamentally changed gangs in New Zealand by beginning a process in which the groups shifted towards a more mature membership. With few employment options to entice gang members toward conventional lifestyles, the gangs became not just vehicles of resistance but a means to achieve social and material fulfilment.

As part, of this transition, the patched gangs became deeply embedded within the communities within which they grew, creating what I have described as the gang/community balance; a situation that reflected the fact that communities had accepted, wilfully or begrudgingly, that the groups were permanent fixtures.

I believe that the community's relationships to gangs can be loosely divided into three categories; associates, incidental associates and the wider public. Associates of the gangs highlight the often overlooked fact that these groups have considerable support within their communities. Gangs exist outside of societal norms, but they do not exist there alone. These people enjoy the rebellious or more relaxed moral environment provided by the gang, and also benefit through functions and events the gangs provide. In this way, the gang, and their clubhouses, have existed as social hubs in many communities. At the other end of the spectrum is the wider community that has no direct contact with gangs or gang members. This sector of society, reliant largely on often sensationalist media and political portrayals of gangs, tends to be the group most concerned by gangs. It is most often when this, the largest section of the community, expresses rising concerns around gang behaviour – and consequently the gang/community balance is disrupted – that politicians tend to act. Spanning these two groups are the 'incidental associates' that have largely non-deliberate contact with gangs or gang members because they share the same neighbourhoods, familial relations, or work associations; and it is here that the gang community balance finds its nexus.

Although a perception of permanency was crucial in the formation of the gang/community balance, I believe the explanation is more complex than just this. Generally, the communities that uphold a strong gang presence share with gangs many social and economic demographics and, therefore, there exists a strong vein of similar values, troubles, concerns and outlooks of gang

members – meaning that they less likely to be concerned by a gang presence or behaviour. Notwithstanding this, however, this community acceptance of the gangs is not immutable and often requires maintenance, as recognition exists from both sides that peaceful coexistence is preferable to conflict, and that each side has an ability to disrupt the other.

As the economy deteriorated further in the 1990s and many gang members became locked out of the workforce, gang involvement in organised criminal activity became apparent, most notably in the drug trade. Although economic disadvantage and a lack of alternative options provided a push to the black economy, the expanding drug market, and its promise of high profits, provided a pull. Gang, and in fact any peoples, involvement in the drug trade needs to be contextualised in New Zealand's demand for illicit drugs. In illicit markets, as in legal ones, where a demand exists, supply will invariably occur. The drug problem, in my view, is not a gang problem.

The economy did not just affect the patched gangs, however, and new developments became apparent. As unemployment reached unprecedented levels in the early 1990s, it began to bite into Pakeha poor and with this skinhead and white power gangs formed. Although a number of pop cultural influences were important in this development, I contend that the rise of Pakeha street gangs during time evinces the fact that social conditions and not ethnic tribalism are at the heart of gang formation.

At the turn of the millennium, patched gangs were deeply entrenched

elements of New Zealand society, and they naturally became seen as ubiquitous but in recent times, almost unnoticed, their hitherto evolutionary advance is faltering. And just as the rise and development of patched gangs is intrinsically linked to an ever changing social context, so too is their current seemingly moribund state. One explanation is that changing fashions have meant that many of these gangs appear to be lacking relevance with youth; an important component of 'generational barriers'. Despite the ongoing efforts of police and political leaders, the problems facing the patched gangs are linked to factors largely beyond their control.

While the flash of skinhead gangs gave hint to it, the rise of LA style street gangs offers a reminder that gangs, of whatever style, will probably always be part of the New Zealand social landscape. The historical dominance enjoyed by patched gangs in this country belies the fact that while gangs may always exist, the style with which they present themselves is always likely to change.

Just as the rise of the patched gangs highlighted certain social and economic problems, so too does the rise of this new form of gang. The unique social and economic conditions that existed in the 1960s and 1970s have changed considerably. The factors breeding recent gang formation came not from social instability caused by rapid urbanisation, but from entrenched intergenerational poverty. Youths from such areas face a potent and uncompromising mix of severe disadvantage and socially proscribed goals, often specifically targeted through pop cultural influences, of materialistic wealth. I believe that these two factors will conspire to create a status

frustration that will undoubtedly influence gang behaviour in coming years.

The Final Word

When examining the above themes it becomes clear that each provides a different angle or lens with which to view the history of gangs in New Zealand; and while each offers insight, it is only by combining them that a more complete picture is built. Oftentimes, it is important to look at gang activities and consider not what they say about the gangs, but about the society within which they exist. In many ways this is also true of gang control methods, which may say more about those seeking to control the gangs than the gangs themselves.

In the introduction to this thesis, I said that my intent was that this broad historical study would offer a springboard for further research. This remains an important goal. Ideally, certain findings of this thesis will attract testing and scrutiny, for example, the concept of blue vision, the idea of the gang/community balance, gangs as 'grey organisations', the degree to which gangs are involved in profit driven criminal enterprise, the factors influencing the patched gangs apparent weakening state, and particularly the influence of 'generational barriers', are among those that may appear controversial or, at time of writing, currently occurring, and therefore may benefit from further study.

Notwithstanding my calls for more specific research, I end this thesis by making a number of general, but extremely important and, in my view,

inescapable conclusions. The first of these is that the basis for gang membership is largely built upon adverse social and economic conditions. Despite this, even within an environment of better social conditions, gangs will still be evident, as society will always have non conformist elements or rebels but, one would expect that these groups to be smaller in number, less entrenched and generate fewer community problems. While the country continues to have communities faced with problems such as poor education, overcrowded housing, unemployment, family abuse and poverty, New Zealand will always have gangs. Just as steam is an inevitable result of water being boiled, gangs are similarly resultant of certain social conditions. And just as one cannot stop steam by putting a lid on the pot, gangs will not be countered by efforts to forcibly suppress them; and indeed, the pressure that is built up by such undertakings may cause greater problems than those that were seeking to be solved. Certainly gangs are formed due to unfortunate social and economic conditions, but they are enabled also by positive elements such as freedoms to associate and freedoms of expression and lawmakers must be mindful of chipping away at the latter blindly or due to an inability or unwillingness to tackle the former.

If we are to accept that gangs are an inevitable part of society, the predictable disquiet that accompanies such a stance can be tempered by another important finding of this research; that being that the concern surrounding gangs has become greatly exaggerated. The fear and unease generated within the public mind has been cultivated by the incorrect or unfounded beliefs of certain police commentaries, distorted through the media and, at

times, recklessly inflated by political rhetoric. Although difficult to quantify, this perception is, in my view, at odds with reality. At the risk of over simplification, I believe the fear of gangs is analogous to that of sharks, in so much as everyone at the beach who has seen the movie *Jaws* is afraid of them, but very few will ever encounter one, let alone be bitten.

A further conclusion of this research is that gangs provide important social functions for their members, primarily by way of status as well a sense of belonging – what the gangs describe as brotherhood – and they are not primarily vehicles for criminal enterprise.

Whether riding in a pack of an outlaw club, or walking into a public place with members of a patched street gang, I could not help but appreciate the sense of power that exists within a group that will stand by one another. The feelings of being a part of something strong is rather exhilarating, and this was only enhanced by the furtive glances of curious onlookers from afar and the respect paid by those who came in direct contact with the group. At these times I had to look little further for an explanation as to why somebody would be enticed by gang membership. Unless other options exist to achieve status and social fulfilment, gangs will endure.

Indeed, I believe that without these pro-social functions, patched gangs would not exist. Legislation that seeks to attack gangs on the basis that they are simply groups of criminals, without recognising the significant social functions they provide, is almost certainly doomed to fail. We must understand the

complexities of the issue that we are dealing with before we have a reasonable chance of successfully addressing it. It is important to be cautious of political figures proffering simple solutions to undeniably complex social phenomena.

By no means do these findings suggest that gangs do not require policing – at times they most surely do. They may also require further legislative measures to combat future nefarious developments; but these must be evidence led. The point here is not to forget about issues of law and order, but to extend the debate past them to create policies that are both responsible and effective.

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