

"STREET KIDS": AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

"STREET KIDS": AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF
A DEVIANT ADOLESCENT SUBCULTURAL GROUP.

By

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A Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis examines the social organization of "street kids." Participation in street life can be an alienating and isolating experience. I suggest adolescents who leave intolerable family situations in favour of street life, counterbalance the debilitating effects of individual isolation on the streets by participating in an alternative, adolescent subculture.

This particular subcultural group I have chosen to study, constitutes a type of "pseudo family." I contend that while this "street kid" group represents a "family" for these adolescents, it also perpetuates a sense of victimization and is fraught with problems amongst its members, just like the home lives which they abandoned. Information drawn from numerous friendship networks within the "street kid" group provide evidence to support this contention.

Emphasis is placed on understanding the ongoing meaning of adolescent street life as viewed by male and female actors within this group. This is achieved by examining various contingencies and stages involved in becoming a "street kid," and by studying group structure and activities. The context in which their activities are explained is central

to the understanding of group structure, as well as the creation of their gendered identities.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Certain adolescents who are alienated from the traditional family setting or are themselves rejected by it, often for lack of alternatives, become involved in street subculture.¹ These adolescents' home lives are often characterized by disorder, emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, and are often comprised of extended kin with substance abuse problems. The teenagers who appear in this study have chosen to forgo these family situations in favour of street life.² In many ways participation in street life within a given city can be an alienating and isolating experience. These individuals require a reference group or community which offers a sense of belonging. Adolescent street subculture,

¹Many of these adolescents can be termed "throwaways," young people who have been forced out of their homes because they were physically or sexually abused or victims of extreme neglect. House Committee of Education and Labour, Subcommittee of Human Resources, Runaway and Homeless Youth, 99th Congress, 2nd Session, July 25th 1985., cited in Mark-David Janus, Arlene McCormack, Ann Burgess-Wolbert, Carol Hartman. Adolescent Runaways: Causes and Consequences. (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1987), p. 12.

²"A high percentage of these youth leave home because their families have become dysfunctional, that is, the family has such economic, marital, alcohol or mental health problems that there has been a total breakdown between the youths and families." Ibid. p. 12.

in part, counter balances the debilitating effects of individual isolation on the streets and the problems which accompany alienation from mainstream society.³ "Street kid" subculture constitutes a type of "community" or "family" for adolescents on the streets. These adolescents construct a number of organized groups through which the transmission of a set of attitudes and norms occur. I contend that while this "street kid" subculture constitutes a type of "pseudo family" for these adolescents, it also perpetuates a sense of victimization and is fraught with problems amongst its members, just like the previous families which they abandoned. This "street kid" subculture represents their attempt to construct a "normal", "idealized" family. This is implicit in the existence of street maxims which define acceptable modes of conduct. (i.e. Look out for one another on the streets. Loyalty to group members etc.) Their actions however, often appear contradictory. Evidence of the problematic nature of the subculture is found in the discrepancy between professed beliefs and their actions in reality.

The continued existence of this youth subculture and the survival of its' participants suggest there are some

³Livy A. Visano found in research on male street hustlers, "Just as the street was perceived as a solution to prior family and school difficulties, street relations are also held to be a solution to immediate problems of survival for the solitary newcomer." This Idle Trade: The Occupational Patterns of Male Prostitution. (Concord: Vita Sana, 1987), p. 123.

cohesive elements which contribute to its effectiveness and pervasive perpetuation. In this thesis I examine how active participation in one of these adolescent street groups, serves the function of shaping the attitudes and actions of its male and female participants. I am not suggesting that adolescents conform totally or internalize completely the norms of this deviant subculture in the same way or to the same extent, as they do the law abiding behaviour based on the values and norms of the larger society.⁴ Rather these individuals appear to be at least partially committed to the dominant social order, in that they frequently exhibit guilt or shame when they violate its prescriptions, and distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate targets for deviance.⁵ As Willis notes, "The dominant ideology does enforce aspects of itself on subordinate behaviour."⁶

Outline

This thesis encompasses aspects of adolescents' initial contacts with "street kids" and subsequent socialization into an adolescent subcultural group. It also focuses on the discourse surrounding their activities and experiences while

⁴Gresham M. Sykes, David Matza. "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency," in American Sociological Review. (vol. 22. no. 5. October 1957), p. 666.

⁵Ibid. p. 666.

⁶Paul Willis. Learning to Labour. (Westmead, Farnborough: Gower, 1980), p. 148.

involved in that street grouping.⁶ By analyzing and comparing the interpretations and justifications "street kids" offer for their actions, it becomes possible to reconcile the discrepancies between certain purported beliefs and the deviant actions that seem to negate the validity of such beliefs. It illuminates the inconsistencies which are a part of their lives and points to the effect of this particular subculture in continuing a cyclical pattern of victimization.⁷

Individuals who turn to the street, are socialized into one of these smaller cliques of street youth. These particular friendship circles are interconnected and form several identifiable groups. I am focusing on a group which is comprised predominantly of street youth. This group interacts and exists on the streets with other identifiable adolescent factions. These other groups include, but are not restricted to the "Punk Rockers," "Skinheads," "Preppies," "Batcavers," "Coloured Guys" and "Ginos." The majority of individuals in these other separate groups have a permanent home, thus their emphasis appears to be more on stylistic elements whereas "street kids" are more preoccupied with self preservation. Together these groups form adolescent street

⁷The majority of these individuals were subject to various types of abuse in their homes by their primary care givers. They left home and became involved in "street kid" subculture. Within this subcultural milieu they continue to be brutalized and in several instances become abusers themselves.

subculture which is part of the larger framework of street life.

This thesis begins by outlining the social organization of youth street life, focusing on the existence of groups of youth involved in street subculture in this city. I am examining specifically one sub stratum of youth referred to as "street kids." Under this general heading there are specific friendship groups. I have chosen to study a number of these friendship peer groupings. The focus of this study takes on a micro perspective. To examine the entire structure of adolescent street life is beyond the scope of this research project. Adolescent street subculture constitutes a complex web of interconnected systems and social networks which encompass drug dealing, male and female prostitution and racketeering. By examining one small portion of such a subculture I hope to ascertain elements which may be to some extent generalizable to other segments of this subculture and to mainstream culture.

Key Terms

Culture

Before proceeding to an analysis of this group of individuals who participate in street subculture, it is necessary to define a number of key concepts and terms within this thesis. Initially it is important to first understand the meaning of the term culture before one can fully grasp the

meaning of a subculture. Culture is "...that level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life, and give expressive form to their social and material life-experiences..."⁸ Culture encompasses the whole of everyday life. As Michael Brake in his book Comparative Youth Culture suggests, "Whilst culture is a cohesive force binding social actors together it also produces disjunctive elements."⁹ A culture includes,

the 'maps of meaning' which make things intelligible to its members. These maps of meaning are not simply carried around in the head: they are objectivated in patterns of social organization and relationship through which the individual becomes a 'social individual.' Culture is the way the social relations of a group are structured and shaped: but it also is the way those shapes are experienced, understood and interpreted.¹⁰

Subculture

Subcultures are characteristically groups of individuals who share certain common attitudes, associations,

⁸John Clarke et al. "Subcultures, Cultures and Class," in Stuart J. Hall., Tony Jefferson. (eds). Resistance Through Rituals. (London: Hutchinson, 1976), cited in Dick Hebdige. Subcultures: The Meaning of Style. (London: Methuen, 1979), p. 80.

⁹Michael Brake. Comparative Youth Culture. (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 3.

¹⁰John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts. "Subcultures, Cultures and Class," in Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain. (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1976), pp. 10-11.

behaviour patterns and speech patterns. A subculture is defined as,,

largely a social phenomenon in that rigid geographical boundaries do not restrict it...it is any cohesive microsystem that has certain cultural indices in contrast to those of the macro system constituting the dominant culture.¹¹

Subcultures share elements of larger class structures but are also distinct from them and as such can be seen as alternative forms of cultural expression. Subcultures are, "sub-sets,- smaller, more localized and differentiated structures, within one or other of the larger cultural networks."¹² Within the context of subcultures its members generally develop new group meanings. They also form a "constellation of behaviour action and values which have meaningful symbolism for the actors involved."¹³ They tend to focus around "certain activities, values, certain uses of material artifacts, territorial spaces etc. which significantly differentiate them from the wider culture," however, there are also significant things which bind and articulate them with the dominant culture.¹⁴ Subcultures are often comprised of several groups.

¹¹David W. Maurer. Language of the Underworld. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1981), p. 1.

¹²John Clarke et al. "Subcultures, Cultures and Class," in Resistance Through Rituals. p. 13.

¹³Michael Brake. The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures: Sex and Drugs and Rock'n'Roll? (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 9.

¹⁴John Clarke et al. "Subcultures, Culture and Class," p. 14.

Youth Subculture

When such groups are distinguished by age and generation they are referred to as youth subcultures. Some youth subcultures appear as a response to particular historical moments. (i.e. Mods, Teddy boys, Skinheads.) J. Clarke et al. suggest, "subcultures become visible, are identified and labelled: they command the stage of public attention for a time: then they fade, disappear or are so widely diffused they lose their distinctiveness."¹⁵ "Street kid" subculture shows no signs of disintegrating in the near future. Statistics indicate an increase in the number of homeless youth as, affordable housing becomes more scarce, as abusive family situations become more prevalent, and as individuals continue to require the subcultural support of an integrated, adolescent sub-system on the streets. Ineffectual social policies continue to allow these adolescents to "fall through the gaps" in community services programs and offer no practical solutions to the predicaments they face. The emergence of this sub culture is, in part, the collective response of individuals who need to "survive on the streets."

The "Street Kid" Group

Within youth street sub-culture the basic unit of social organization is the group. It constitutes the smallest

¹⁵Ibid. p. 14.

unit of cultural existence.¹⁶ All previous research into rule-breaking and non-rule-breaking activity of working class youth in their spare time notes that most activities are carried out in groups.¹⁷ My research would tend to corroborate this finding.

A clear outline of the group I am studying and the framework in which it is situated is required. (see Appendix A Table 2.) It is important to note that adolescent street youth constitute a specific substratum within street subculture. Street life in this Southern Ontario city is comprised of the adult homeless, the elderly, adult prostitutes, drug traffickers, psychiatric outpatients, street vendors, panhandlers, shoppers, tourists and others. These people interact to different degrees with one another, amid the complex backdrop of the streets. The social organization of street life includes an array of relationships, activities, rules and roles.¹⁸ In every major city there are groups of youths who spend vast amounts of their time "hanging around" on the streets of the city. William Whyte in his book Street Corner Society makes a similar observation. He claims, "The buildings, streets and alleys...form a familiar background for

¹⁶Paul Willis. Profane Culture. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976), p. 194.

¹⁷Paul Corrigan. Schooling the Smash Street Kids. (London: MacMillan Press, 1982), p. 125. .

¹⁸Livy Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 124.

the actors upon the Cornerville scene."¹⁹ Paul Corrigan in his book Schooling the Smash Street Kids suggests, "The streets on a Saturday night and in the week have always provided the main arena for the leisure activities of working class kids."²⁰ The downtown area of this city, particularly along the main streets, between the city core's major shopping centre and including the various adjacent side streets, alleys and parks, provide the social arena for this city's street youth. Within this area a particular youth subculture exists consisting of a number of inter-connected groups of adolescents. "Street kids" constitute one of the major groups.

Elements of Group Cohesion

The friendship groups I observed within this street subculture have certain members, and individuals interviewed for this thesis were able to articulate in their own terms not only who belonged, but where certain individuals were situated in the hierarchy of the group. It is important to understand that adolescents who comprise street peer groupings relay

¹⁹William Whyte. Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. xvi.

²⁰Paul Corrigan. Schooling the Smash Street Kids. (London: MacMillan Press, 1982), p. 119.

experiences and information in their own terms.²¹ It is the task of the sociologist to translate their conceptions and to provide a sociological perspective. If the researcher has not grasped the language of the streets or had it properly translated for them, the ordering within specific groups of adolescents may seem vague and disoriented.

Participation in certain activities gains acceptance amongst street colleagues. Such activities are an indicator of conformity to and acceptance of "street kid" group norms. Activities of individuals within the group often differ. A plethora of activities including welfare scams, prostitution, panhandling, shoplifting, theft, drug dealing and mugging strangers, are admitted to by various group members. These activities however, are rarely engaged in by the "street kid" group as a whole, but rather are the acts of smaller cliques involving two, three or four individuals.²² A certain clique of boys within the "street kid" group get money for food, cigarettes, drugs and alcohol by defrauding the welfare system. This income is supplemented by excursions involving "gay bashing" and "granny bashing." "Gay bashing" is method

²¹Paul Corrigan elaborates on this point. He emphasizes, "I was interested in their words and ideas...I wanted them to say the things the way they wanted, using their language and I didn't care about spelling or grammar or talking proper." Schooling the Smash Street Kids. p. 13.

²²This finding is congruent with Saul Bernstein's data on alienated street youth. Youth on the Streets: Work with Alienated Youth Groups. (New York: Association Press, 1964), p. 43.

of obtaining money through force, where the group choose either a homosexual male or male hooker and beat him up for his money. "Granny bashing" involves attacking senior citizens for their pension cheques and spare money. Boys who may use this technique of obtaining money, do not restrict their violent activities to these specific target populations. As Chuck comments,

Anyone who looks like they would be an easy take are fair game. It's not just for the money either...We beat up skinheads because they are neo Nazis...

Other group members with less violent tendencies, or at least less physical attributes to succeed in such endeavours, shoplift or steal from homes. Others in the "street kid" group use their bodies as commodities and sell their sexual services, and combine this income generating behaviour with panhandling and drug dealing.

While these "street buddies" function separately during participation in certain activities, they are all part of the same social group. These individuals appear to connect into the same social networks (knowing one another at least superficially) and hence share some of the same hangouts and participate in similar leisure activities. Each friendship clique which comprises this "street kid" subculture, shares the common standards and "values" of the street subculture.

"Street Kid"

The adolescent actors involved in the subculture of the streets are commonly labelled "street kids." Actors from a number of organized factions (including skinheads, preppies, etc.) have been referred to as "street kids" and this is where the confusion can lie. The respondents in this study are not from those groups. In this thesis I use the term "street kid" to refer to adolescents in two separate yet similar ways. The term refers to an individual who either (i) has a place to stay (either lives at various short term shelters in the city or has a temporary living arrangement and spends all his or her time on the streets of this city, or (ii) an individual who has no fixed address and lives on the streets. Quite often actors in this study fall into both these categories. Periods of sleeping on the streets is intermingled with nights staying at shelters and friends' places. Dale's²³ situation is an example. He states,

After the Missions wouldn't accept me I was sleeping on the streets. I was sleeping in stairwells...bushes. I slept in parked cars. I slept everywhere. Sometimes I would sleep at a friend's place...When I got invited over to a friend's place I would crash for the night.

Seasonal changes affect some of the respondents activities and living accommodations. During the spring and summer months several youth stay on the streets for days or weeks at a time, depending on the situation within their home

²³All names used in this thesis are pseudonyms.

at that particular time. Melanie comments, "A lot of us put up with shit at home all winter and when the warmer weather rolls around we take off and live on the streets." Others "on the run" or who have no contact with their families use the shelters and streets alternately all year long.

A large number of actors in this study either live outside on the streets or in what are commonly known as "flop houses." A flop house is an apartment or house which one individual (usually a person employed in casual labour or collecting welfare), occupies and pays rent on. This person allows others to stay there temporarily. During the winter months a large number of adolescents find some sort of shared accommodation. Other individuals find accommodation at one of the youth shelters or hostels located in the inner city core.

When individuals do manage to obtain an apartment or room they often have other friends and acquaintances over to their place which can result in friction between landlords and the individual who rents the room or apartment. This often results in eviction. "Street kids" typically move frequently, (although usually within a small radius), and settle temporarily. Many have run away from home.²⁴ In July of 1988

²⁴"Youth leaving home are experiencing a multitude of family related problems...and running away constitutes only one act of a number of acts which have placed the youth in crisis...An increasing number of runaway youth have family related problems which stem from being without a supportive, stable home environment." House Committee of Education and Labour, p. 116, cited in Mark Janus et al. Adolescent

police across Canada were actively searching for 1,114 runaways under 18, 12 of whom were from this city.²⁵ A study by Nye on runaway adolescents supports my research findings, suggesting these actors, "do not run far or stay long,"²⁶ and "many runaways who cannot or do not want to live at home find life in the streets no better and alternate between returning home and going back to the streets."²⁷ Statistics show of the 42,341 runaway reports across Canada, close to 38,000 involved the same adolescents repeatedly running away.²⁸

"Street Kid" Profile

Adolescent "street kid" subculture is specific in its orientation because participants are almost exclusively teenagers. The following provides a look at the typical features of the actors in this study. The forty five individuals I studied ranged in age from twelve to twenty three, while the majority are between the ages of fourteen and

Runaways, p. 6.

²⁵Jim Holt, Brenda Brown. "Wasted days and wasted nights," The Spectator. September 24th 1988. Section E, p. 6.

²⁶Ivan F. Nye. "Runaways: Some Critical Issues for Professionals and Society," Co operative Extension Bulletin no. 0744. Pullman. (Washington: Washington State University Press, 1980), p. 5.

²⁷Ibid. p. 5.

²⁸Jim Holt, Brenda Brown. "Wasted days and wasted nights" The Spectator. September 24th, 1988. Section E, p. 6.

seventeen. (See Appendix A, Table 3.) The girls tended to be younger. The average age was fifteen. Males tended to be older, and stayed on the streets for longer periods of time.²⁹

Both sexes are represented. This is significant since other research including work by Paul Corrigan³⁰, Michael Brake³¹, Paul Willis³², Saul Bernstein³³, and Cloward and Ohlin³⁴, focuses almost entirely on males. Brake suggests, "youth cultures and subcultures tend to be some form of exploration of masculinity. They are therefore masculinist."³⁵

The overwhelming majority of individuals are Canadian born. To account for the lack of participation by immigrant

²⁹Mark Janus et. al. found a similar trend amongst their target population. Adolescent Runaways. p. 95.

³⁰Paul Corrigan. Schooling the Smash Street Kids. _____, "Doing Nothing," in Stuart Hall., Tony Jefferson, (eds.) Resistance through Rituals. (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1976).

³¹Michael Brake. Comparative Youth Cultures: The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain and Canada. (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).

³²Paul Willis. Profane Culture. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976.)

³³Saul Bernstein. Youth on the Streets: Work with Alienated Youth Groups. (New York: Association Press, 1964).

³⁴Richard Cloward, Lloyd Ohlin. Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs. (New York: The Free Press, 1960).

³⁵Michael Brake. Comparative Youth Culture. (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 1.

adolescents, I would surmise that immigrant adolescents experience cultural difficulties infiltrating these reference groups and thus form their own cliques along cultural lines.

The individuals who comprise this target population are from fairly homogeneous backgrounds and social class. Of the twenty five individuals whose family backgrounds were available, I found the parents were overwhelmingly blue collar workers. Barnard in his 1961 U.S. study³⁶ and E.A. Smith in his 1962 study³⁷ point out the fact that teenagers reflect the class cultures of their parents and that class pervades all aspects of the teenage world in terms of its cultural elements. A large number of the adolescents' parents or step relatives are either unemployed, and on welfare, in prison, or work sporadically at different jobs.

M. Brake and A. Cohen suggest that delinquent subcultures tend to be working class.³⁸ My research corroborates that statement. I am not suggesting that there are no youth from other socioeconomic backgrounds on the streets and involved in this adolescent street subculture. Respondents in this particular study, in a medium size city,

³⁶J. Barnard. "Teenage Culture," Annals. (vol. 338, November 1961), pp. 1-12.

³⁷E.A. Smith. American Youth Culture. (New York: Free Press, 1962).

³⁸Cohen states, "The delinquent subculture is mostly to be found in the working class." A. Cohen. Delinquent Boys. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955), p. 73

may or may not be representative of the larger street population. One counsellor from a Youth Service Agency in the city suggests, "kids can come from all socio-economic backgrounds..."³⁹ I suggest however that they do not comprise the majority of youth in this particular group on the streets, in this city, during the time of my study.

Use of Accounts

Part of the socialization process into "street kid" subculture involves the adoption of group norms and behaviour. Involvement in certain subcultural activities or roles may bring an individual into contact with, and under pressure to adopt or accept, certain perspectives "incorporating values, attitudes and views."⁴⁰ Adoption of these perspectives can mean involving oneself in behaviour and actions which are in contradiction to mainstream society and condemned both legally and socially.

Due to the problematic nature of the "street kid" subculture, there are also internal contradictions. Amongst members of this "street kid" subculture there are contradictions which emerge in the codes of conduct which are enunciated, and the actual behaviour which is engaged in.

³⁹Brian Hesketh. Forum on Street Youth. April 26th 1989.

⁴⁰Visano and Salaman also argue this point. Livy Visano. This Idle Trade. G. Salaman. Community and Occupation. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 15.

Justification of their behaviour is frequently employed. A conceptual grasp of the problematic features of social interaction, identity and emergent meanings, is crucial to an understanding of the problem of social order⁴¹ and subcultural continuity for "street kids." I have chosen to use the concept of accounts developed by M. Scott and S. Lyman,⁴² and of disclaimers introduced by J. Hewitt and R. Stokes when examining these discrepancies.⁴³ I also incorporate Matza and Syke's concept of neutralization while attempting to outline, and comprehend the contradictory aspects of these adolescents' lives.

Accounts constitute formative expressions which actors use to retrospectively and prospectively present and justify their experiential and symbolic worlds.⁴⁴ An account is generally unnecessary when youths engage in routine, common-sense behaviour in a cultural environment that recognizes that

⁴¹J. Hewitt., R. Stokes. "Disclaimers," in Jerome Manis, Bernard Meltzer. (eds.) Symbolic Interaction. Third Edition. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1978), p. 309.

⁴²Marvin Scott, Stanford Lyman. "Accounts," in American Sociological Review. Vol. 33., in J. Manis., B. Meltzer. (eds.) Symbolic Interaction. 2nd edition. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974), pp. 404-431.

⁴³J. Hewitt., R. Stokes. "Disclaimers," in Jerome Manis, Bernard Meltzer. (eds.) Symbolic Interaction. Third Edition.

⁴⁴L. Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 98.

behaviour as such.⁴⁵ To discount untoward actions in their own minds and others, many individuals construct a series of accounts and disclaimers which assist in the "neutralization"⁴⁶ of any guilt or remorse they may feel.⁴⁷ These accounts are woven into their everyday discourse and are frequently employed in their interactions with agents of social control. By the use of such rhetoric, social actors attempt to persuade us that there are 'good reasons' for believing their reasoning.⁴⁸

It should be noted that accounts are distinguishable from explanations in that explanations refer to statements about events where improper action is not an issue and does not have significant implications for a relationship. Accounts refer specifically to linguistic forms that are

⁴⁵Marvin B Scott, Stanford M. Lyman. "Accounts" in American Sociological Review. Vol 33 pp.46-62 in Jerome Manis, Bernard Meltzer. (eds.) Symbolic Interaction. 2nd Edition. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974), p. 405.

⁴⁶Techniques of neutralization is a term used by G. Sykes and D. Matza to refer to justifications of deviant behaviour.

⁴⁷Sykes and Matza note, "there is a good deal of evidence suggesting that many delinquents do express a sense of guilt or shame, and its outward expression is not to be dismissed as a purely manipulative gesture to appease those in authority." Sykes and Matza. "Techniques of Neutralization," American Sociological Review. pp. 664-665.

⁴⁸Laurie Taylor. "Vocabularies, Rhetorics and Grammar, Problems in the Sociology of Motivation" in D. Downes and P. Rock (eds.) Deviant Interpretations. (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 159.

offered for illegal or untoward actions.⁴⁹ Under the term accounts, there are two sub-types: justifications and excuses. Justifications are accounts in which an individual accepts responsibility for the act in question, but denies the pejorative quality associated with it.⁵⁰ When members of this street group admit they beat up skinheads but deny the immorality of the act since the individuals beaten are Neo-Nazis, and as members of a group which profess racist ideology they deserve their fate, they are using a justification. Excuses are accounts in which an individual admits that the act in question is bad, wrong or inappropriate but denies full responsibility.⁵¹ For instance, Chuck admits he broke friendship bonds by assaulting one of his street colleagues but denies full responsibility stating, "I shouldn't have hit him 'cause he's a friend but he deserved what he got. He was asking for it...He had it coming to him for a long time."

Accounts as a linguistic device are viewed and examined as these actors' attempt to reconcile the discrepancy between involvement in certain activities, despite professed contradictory beliefs. An account is usually employed whenever a particular activity is subjected to evaluative

⁴⁹M. Scott, S. Lyman. "Accounts," American Sociological Review. Vol 33. p.46-62. in Jerome Manis, B. Meltzer (eds.) Symbolic Interaction. 2nd Edition. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974), p. 406.

⁵⁰Ibid. p. 406.

⁵¹Ibid. p. 406.

inquiry.⁵² In this thesis I am using Scott and Lyman's interpretation of an "account" as my definition. This term is defined as, "a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behaviour-whether that behaviour is his own or that of others, and whether the proximate cause for the statement arises from the actor himself or from someone else."⁵³

Disclaimers are sometimes used by participants in this "street kid" subculture. Disclaimers are proscriptive (rather than being retrospective,) and, "define the future in the present, creating interpretations of potentially problematic events and are intended to make them unproblematic when they occur."⁵⁴ The disclaimer⁵⁵ is a verbal device used to "ward off and defeat in advance, doubts and negative typifications

⁵²Ibid. p. 405.

⁵³Ibid. An account resembles the verbal component of a motive in Weber's sense of the term. Weber defined a motive as, "a complex of subjective meaning which seems to the actor himself or to the observer as an adequate ground for the conduct in question." Max Weber. Theory of Social and Economic Organization. translated by Talcott Parsons and A.M. Henderson. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1947) pp. 98-99., cited in M.B. Scott and S.M. Lyman, "Accounts" American Sociological Review. Vol 33. pp.46-62. in Manis and Meltzer (eds.) Symbolic Interaction. 2nd Edition. p. 405-406.

⁵⁴J. Hewitt., R. Stokes. "Disclaimers." p. 309.

⁵⁵Disclaimers are divided into several types by Hewitt and Stokes, each of which reflects a different set of conditions of use. They include "hedging", "credentialing", "sin licenses" and "appeals for the suspension of judgement". See pp. 311-313 for descriptions of each type. Jerome Manis, Bernard Meltzer. (eds.) Symbolic Interaction 3rd Edition. 1978. pp. 311-313.

which may result from intended conduct."⁵⁶ When Tom discussed his views about girls on the streets, he initiated the conversation by saying, "I'm not a chauvinist or anything, but girls aren't smart enough to survive for very long on the streets." This constitutes one example of a disclaimer.

Discussion of Literature

Other sociologists have explored various aspects of adolescent subcultures. In several significant ways my research findings differ from those of other social scientists. While work conducted previously explores many aspects of adolescent subcultures, I found the focus of certain studies and some of the major assumptions contained within the research limiting. This research encompasses a number of diverse yet related areas of inquiry.⁵⁷ It touches upon elements of family influence on the development of norms, values and attitudes and incorporates these into the realm of youth subcultural activity.

The sociological literature on youth subcultures contains two different theoretical approaches. The American literature on youth subcultures is to a large extent framed in terms of socialization and group structure, as evidenced by the prevalent material on gangs and street corner

⁵⁶Ibid. p. 310.

⁵⁷Topics include: child abuse, wife abuse, delinquency, home-leaving, runaways, female/male crime and street life.

societies. In the British literature however, there is a tendency to emphasize the symbolic meanings of objects or "cultural items"⁵⁸ of various social groups. For instance, Willis suggests,

It is the continuous play between the group and a particular item which produces specific styles, meanings, contents and forms of consciousness. The artefact, object or institution in such a relationship must consistently serve the group at a number of levels with meanings, particular attitudes, bearings and certainties.⁵⁹

In this study I draw on elements from both bodies of literature whenever appropriate and examine their relevance for my data.

Limited Options

Whereas most theorists assume there is an element of free, informed choice in one's participation in a subculture,⁶⁰ I contend that only a very small minority

⁵⁸Paul Willis. Profane Culture. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976). p. 198.

⁵⁹Ibid. p. 191.

⁶⁰Anne Campbell in her study of female gangs suggests her respondents choose to reject the traditional family in favour of the gang. The Girls in the Gang. p. 48. Paul Willis in his study of hippies indicates voluntary participation on the part of these individuals. He states, "they turned their backs on the supposed material and cultural advantages of middle class life style." Profane Culture. p. 7. Similarly Yablonsky suggests, participation in a gang is a matter of choice for these New York city boys. He states, "A youth can join one day and quit the next by merely stating 'I no longer belong'." The Violent Gang. (New York: MacMillan, 1963). p. 3.

actively decide that this is the type of life they want, and take positive steps to pursue it. While I am not denying freedom of will, I am suggesting that choices for the vast majority of these individuals are very limited. I argue that given often intolerable situations within the home and limited options, adolescents may have few alternatives. Many individuals who are "on the streets" do not want to be there.⁶¹ However, lack of steady income,⁶² affordable housing,⁶³ combined with limited job skills,⁶⁴ experience and

⁶¹Mark Janus et al. corroborate this point stating, "The adolescent has often [been] thrown from his home or asked to leave his/her home by a very depressed, a very drunk, [or] a very high on drugs parent who simply cannot cope with [his or her] own problem, and that these kids are forced out...it is very rare these kids want to run." Adolescent Runaways. p. 12.

⁶²The unemployment rate for the 15 to 24 age group in this city according to the 1986 Statistics Canada census was 12.4%. This was double that of other age categories. The 25-44 age range in 1986 was 5.8%. This information was provided by D. Brown at the Labour Market Information of Employment Centre in this city.

⁶³Increasing apartment rents are contributing to the shortage of affordable housing. The average rent in this city is between \$400.00 and \$500.00 per month. The maximum welfare allotted for a single individual per month is approximately \$499.00. During this study the majority of homeless persons were concentrated in the inner city. The exact numbers of individuals classified as "street kids" was unavailable. A Community Street Youth Task Force organized by the Association of Agencies for Treatment and Development has not been able to ascertain the magnitude of the problem in this city. Part of their mandate is to "determine the number of street youth, the 'wants' of street youth, and the needs of street youth..." "Interim Report of Community Street Youth Task Force." Association of Agencies for Treatment and Development. June 5th, 1989.

In an article on June 1st 1988, it was estimated there were 2000 "street kids" in this city. James Elliot. "2000 Street

education, reduce their options.⁶⁵ Combined with this are other factors including instability in the childhood home and the creation of alternative social networks which aid individuals in their progression "on to the streets." The subsequent socialization of these individuals into street life and the inherent transmission of attitudes associated with such socialization are also addressed within the context of this argument. From this research it becomes evident that the literature suggesting willing participation in street life is at the very least outdated, or in this instance inappropriate.

Second Point of Contention

In his study of a gang, Lewis Yablonsky has refuted the existence of co-operative, organized groups or gangs with definite membership and structure. He suggests that adolescents do not possess the organizational capabilities to

Kids in [City]." The Spectator. June 1988.

⁶⁴Brian Raychaba suggests, "Young people leaving the care system exhibit an alarming lack of skills needed in independent living and are, in many cases, lagging in basic personal development." B. Raychaba. To Be On Our Own With No Direction from Home: A Report on the Special Needs of Youth Leaving the Care of the Child Welfare System. (National Youth in Care Network. 1988), p. 11.

⁶⁵Livy Visano confirms my findings regarding the structure of street populations. He also cites "unemployment and lack of affordable housing as a factor contributing to the growing number of young people living in hostels or on the streets." This Idle Trade. pp. 80-81.

group together as a cohesive unit.⁶⁶ While certain aspects of "street kid" subculture including internal disputes, betrayals, inconsistencies and fluctuation in ranking and status, mirror elements of Yablonsky's target population, the subcultural group I study does not constitute a gang and cannot therefore be seen as responding to the same contingencies. Inconsistencies within my group however, can be understood in light of the volatile, tentative nature of their own previous family interactions in the traditional home. There is however a definite organization and structural hierarchy within this adolescent street group. In several significant ways it mirrors the structural relationships of these individuals' previous families. To a certain extent these individuals appear to be patterning some of their interactions on the basis of previous experiences and relationships in the home, as well as on the behaviour learned once immersed in the subculture. There is a distinction between what these adolescents want in terms of structure and therefore profess to adhere to and what in actuality occurs.

This "street kid" subculture is different from gang culture but it has been mistakenly labelled a gang.⁶⁷ This

⁶⁶Lewis Yablonsky states, "Membership definition is vague...today's violent delinquent is a displaced person-not willing or able to establish a concrete human relationship." The Violent Gang. (New York: MacMillan Press, 1965), p. 3.

⁶⁷A reason for this mistake stems from the inconsistency among researchers and theoreticians on the definition of gangs. The term, "gang" has "sometimes been used

has occurred when literature dealing with various youth phenomenon in the United States has been inappropriately applied in a Canadian context. "Street kid" subculture at this stage, does not constitute a formalized gang of the type described by Anne Campbell in her study of female New York gangs,⁶⁸ by Thrasher in his study of gangs in Chicago,⁶⁹ or by Yablonsky in his study of New York gangs.⁷⁰ "Street kids" in this study do not have initiation, structured demarcated roles, rules, names, "colours," territoriality, formal discipline codes, a specific philosophy or organized feuds with other groups, as gangs do.⁷¹ My reference to gang literature reflects the lack of theoretical information on the specific target population I am studying. Elements of the

inconsistently, sometimes loosely, and sometimes in direct opposition to each other, but never in concert." M. Klein. Street Gangs and Street Workers. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1971), p. 8

⁶⁸Anne Campbell. The Girls in the Gang: A Report from New York City. (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986)

⁶⁹F. Thrasher. The Gang. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927).

⁷⁰Yablonsky. The Violent Gang. (New York: McMillan Press, 1965).

⁷¹Anne Campbell. The Girls in the Gang. p. 233. Thrasher suggests, "the development of tradition is an element in the emergence of a gang." The Gang. p. 30. Another major element of the gang according to Thrasher is that "it develops through strife and thrives on warfare." p. 173. Yablonsky reiterates this contention stating, "A prime function of the modern gang is to provide a channel to act out hostility and aggression." The Violent Gang. p. 3.

gang do overlap with the subcultural group I am examining. I therefore draw on select threads of pertinent information and consider their relevance to my data.

Female Participation

My final point of contention is that the majority of studies of adolescent subcultures do not acknowledge the active participation or, even in some cases, the existence of females.⁷² As Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber in their article, "Girls and Subcultures" point out, "Very little seems to have been written about the role of girls in youth cultural groupings in general...When they do appear, it is in ways which uncritically reinforce the stereotypical image of women with which they are now so familiar."⁷³

It has been suggested that in some instances the invisibility of girls within adolescent subcultures can

⁷²Michael Brake, Paul Corrigan, Albert Cohen, Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin focus primarily on males in their studies. Ngaire Naffine contends that Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin suggest delinquency does not impinge on the female and as a result the delinquent subculture is, "therefore a male solution to a male problem." N. Naffine. Female Crime: The Construction of Women in Criminology. (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987). p. 15.

⁷³A. McRobbie, J. Garber. "Girls and Subcultures" in S. Hall and T. Jefferson. (eds.) Resistance Through Rituals. (London: Hutchinson, 1976) p. 209. An example is Fyvel's reference in his study of Teddy boys, to "dumb, passive teenage girls..." T.R. Fyvel. The Insecure Offenders. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), in "Girls and Subcultures," (p. 209).

possibly be attributed, in part, to the focus of researcher.⁷⁴ This apparent absence of females in adolescent street subculture is in turn often reinforced by the media. It has also been suggested that this invisibility has been cemented by the societal reaction to the more extreme newsworthy manifestations of youth subcultures. More specifically the popular press and media focus on sensational incidents within a subculture. The frequent fights between male street youth over drugs is elaborated upon in recent newspaper articles on "street kids."⁷⁵

⁷⁴A. McRobbie and J. Garber state, "With the possible exception of sexual deviance, women constituted an uncelebrated social category..." Ibid. p. 212.

Willis in his study of the motorbike subculture admits, "In retrospect it is clear I did not pay sufficient attention to the girls. Throughout the research my attention became increasingly focused on the masculinity of the bike culture. This emphasis may have been to partly repeat and uncritically reproduce the boys' chauvinism concerning the women in their culture." Paul E. Willis. Profane Culture. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976). p. 205.

⁷⁵Jim Holt, Barbara Brown. "The cold hard truth: A day in the life of a teen drug dealer" The Spectator. September 26, 1988. section E, p. 3. J. Holt writes, "I saw Mark get his head kicked in...a guy in a tight black T shirt stopped Mark right in front of the arcade window and started poking a finger into his chest. I could see the guy's tattoo bulge each time the finger made contact and pushed Mark back...I saw the assailant grab the front of Mark's long hair and kick him repeatedly in the face with his boot. Other incidents are recounted which link males with violent aspects of the subculture. Published in the September 29th 1988 edition of The Spectator is the following: "I owed guys money and these guys weren't foolin' around. They kicked my door down and beat me...fists and feet. I wasn't movin' for a little while. And they wanted money, immediately..." section C, p. 3. The only reference to females was in connection with acts of prostitution. "A Haven for Hookers" The Spectator. September

A direct consequence of the fact that it is always the violent aspects of a phenomenon which qualify as newsworthy is that these have been the areas of the subcultural activity from which females have traditionally been excluded.⁷⁶ Studies of the delinquencies of girls conducted in the 1970's however reveal that female criminality was not confined to sexual promiscuity but resembled the delinquency of boys in all aspects except frequency.⁷⁷ My research suggests violence by females is present but is less likely to be discussed since it is viewed in a different light. Boys' activities are considered serious. On the other hand it is implied girls are likely to fight over trivial issues and are dismissed by other males in the group, and hence also researchers, as simply "catty."

It can be assumed that female invisibility in some youth cultures becomes a self fulfilling prophecy for a variety of reasons. The emphasis in the documentation of

27, 1988. Section C, p. 3.

⁷⁶A. McRobbie, J. Garber. "Girls and Subcultures" in Resistance Through Rituals. p. 212. In the following excerpt Female Crime: The Construction of Women in Criminology, this argument is clearly traced. Naffine states, "...from Delinquent Boys and Delinquency and Opportunity it is possible to glean the following theory about female delinquency: there is considerably less of it than male delinquency because girls are not subjected to the general financial pressure of the bread winner; that which exists is mainly sexual because the goals of girls are narrowly relational; and girls avoid and are excluded from, delinquent subcultures whose inherent violence is symbolically masculine." (p. 16.)

⁷⁷Ibid. p. 18.

these phenomena, on the male and masculine, reinforce and amplify general conceptions of contemporary subcultures as predominantly male.⁷⁸ While the particular friendship cliques that comprise this particular "street kid" subculture are comprised of more males than females, (See Appendix A Table 1,) I contend that in groups I studied, females do exist and play an active, significant role in group relations. Indeed, evidence from this research may disprove the theory of differential association as applied to females.⁷⁹ It would appear that interpretations and the amount of relevance attached to certain situations amongst the sexes, are what significantly differ.

In some studies when females are mentioned, it is often in a peripheral sense as sexual objects.⁸⁰ It is through a process which they become in some sense objectified

⁷⁸A. McRobbie, J. Garber. "Girls of Subcultures" in S. Hall, T. Jefferson. (eds.) Resistance Through Rituals. p.212.

⁷⁹The theory essentially proports, "women do not mix in criminal circles. Their gender role defines them as wives and mothers and restricts their sphere of influence and experience to the home. As a consequence women and girls do not roam the streets learning to fight and steal." N. Naffine. Female Crime. p. 26.

⁸⁰"When girls are acknowledged in the literature, it tends to be in terms of their degree of, or lack of, sexual attractiveness" as viewed by the males. A. McRobbie, J. Garber. "Girls and Subcultures". p. 209. Willis in his study of motor bike boys mentions, "Unattached females in the subculture were generally regarded as being 'available' but what basically united them as a group for the men was an imputed inability to attract anyone. They tended to be generally less attractive to the boys than the attached girls..." Profane Culture. p. 28.

and adopt a role which is typically cast on them by male counterparts, and enforced by others. Boys "type cast" girls on the street and treat them accordingly. In many of the studies, the views and feelings of female group members are not acknowledged and their experiences are related in terms of the males' perspectives on the events.

In my research I have gathered information on males' and females' views of their roles in the groups, their responses to certain situations and have attempted to explain and articulate factors influencing their views of themselves. Within the childhood family the social construction of masculinity and femininity to a certain extent is drawn from primary reference groups, (from parents, older brothers and sisters.) I contend that a part of males' and females' attitudes can be viewed in the context of their continuing social development of masculinity and femininity within the "street kid" subculture.

Adolescents on the streets adopt attitudes of others in the group regarding appropriate roles and behaviour towards males and females. These manifestations are, I contend a reflection of females' cultural subordination within society. Furthermore, I believe the dimension of sex and gender structuring are an important though often neglected aspect of subcultural analysis. It is important to note that while the visibility of females in adolescent subcultures may have increased, "no matter how visible and active a small group of

girls become...the relative subordination of girls in the subculture remains."⁸¹ The results of my research would support the validity of this statement. Patterns of violence against women frequently seen in their childhood homes are continued on the streets. Girls who often leave their homes to escape physical, sexual and emotional abuse become victims of similar treatment on the streets.

Summary

It is necessary to be familiar with the intricacies of the social organization of this street group to fully understand the socialization of adolescents into this environment. I suggest the structure of street relations is based on the group and that acceptance into this group is a contingency that shapes the newcomer's attitude and self image. Structurally the social context of individuals' identities as "street kids" can be said to be comprised of extensive inter-personal networks, membership in small groups and intergroup relationships.⁸² These street associations provide a role for the individual to adopt. Group members generate systems of belief and values which specify acceptable behaviours and attitudes unique to their street subculture.

⁸¹A. McRobbie, J. Garber. "Girls and Subcultures" in S. Hall, T. Jefferson. (eds.) Resistance Through Rituals. p. 215.

⁸²Glynis, M. Breakwell. Coping with Threatened Identities. (New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 35.

When these professed beliefs and actions are violated accounts are employed to resolve the inconsistencies.

In addition to being a source of practical information, this adolescent street group may be a source of some socio-emotional support, self esteem and courage. In this way the group resembles elements of family and reference groups formed by "normal" youth in schools. Unlike the 'ideal' family or conventional school peer groups however, these contacts are often the "locus of behaviour that is exploitive, manipulative and physically brutalizing."⁸³ The majority of individuals in this study do not however, come from conventional, nuclear families. While their previous homes may have offered some support, they too were the source of various type of abuse. In this respect the street "family" created by these adolescents does indeed mirror their previous home lives. I contend such networks contribute to the survival of "street kids" and yet are a major source of their continued victimization.⁸⁴ It is this contention that will provide the focus for the examination of this "street kid" subcultural grouping. Through an examination of their social world and personal interactions, an understanding of the complexities and reasons for apparent contradictions can be

⁸³Eleanor Miller. Street Woman. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986). p. 37.

⁸⁴Miller in her research findings on street hustlers in Milwaukee corroborates this contention.

ascertained. Before proceeding to this analysis however, it is necessary to outline the research methodology employed in this study.

Chapter Two

Research Methodology

Outline

Insight into the cycle of victimization experienced by these adolescents can be gained by studying it from their particular viewpoint.⁸⁵ Thus, research for this thesis into the "street kid" group and the interaction between these actors, was conducted through a combination of participant observation and formal and informal interviews. I chose participant observation as my preferred methodology because it allowed me to acquire first hand knowledge about the particular social world in question by incorporating a number of methods. These included direct participation and observation, variations of informal observations⁸⁶, informal and formal interviews.

Participant Observation

Participant observation allowed a direct and comprehensive accounting of "street kids" by penetrating their everyday worlds.⁸⁷ It also enabled me to become responsive

⁸⁵Mark Janus et al. Adolescent Runaways. p. 13.

⁸⁶D. Downes. The Delinquent Solution. (New York: Free Press, 1966), p. 195.

⁸⁷N. Denzin. "Sociological Methods: Critical Reflections" in N. Denzin, (ed.). Sociological Methods: A Source book. (New York:

to changing situations and open to pursuing issues and leads in detail.⁸⁸ Tilly in his 1970 article notes, "this style is disciplined since observers are required, in a painstaking process, to accompany subjects through their daily rounds and to apprehend their views."⁸⁹ In doing so I was able to avoid imputing erroneous meanings, motives and effects of their behaviour and actions. Becker and Geer elaborate on this process defining it as,

a method in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly in the role of the researcher or covertly in some disguised form, observing things that happen, listening to what is said and questioning people, over some length of time.⁹⁰

McGraw-Hill, 1978), p. 1. I. Deutscher. "Words and Deeds: Social Science and Social Policy," in William Filstead. Qualitative Methodology. (Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1970). p. 35. Paul Corrigan. Schooling the Smash Street Kids. (London: MacMillan, 1979), p. 13. L. Visano. This Idle Trade. (Concord: Vita Sana Inc., 1987), p. 46. P. Willis. Profane Culture. (London: Windus and Chatto, 1978). p. 195.

⁸⁸J. Bennett. Oral History and Delinquency: The Rhetoric of Criminology. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) p. 249.

⁸⁹C. Tilly. "An Anthology on the Town" in W. Mann. (ed.) The Underside of Toronto. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. 22

⁹⁰Howard S. Becker, Blanche Geer. "Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison," Human Organization. vol. 16, no. 3 (Fall, 1957) pp. 28-32 reprinted in Jerome Manis, B. Meltzer (eds.) Symbolic Interaction. 2nd edition. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974), p. 102. The following researchers corroborate this definition: Florence Kluckhohn, "The Participant Observer Technique in Small Communities," American Journal of Sociology, vol. 45 (November 1940), pp. 331-43. Arthur Vidich, "Participant Observation and the Collection and Interpretation of Data," American Journal of Sociology, vol. 60. (January 1955), pp. 354-60. William Whyte, "Observational Field-Work Methods," in Marie Jahoda, Morton Deutsch, and

The use of this research method enabled me as investigator to discover the organization of action by getting close to my "hosts" and spending time on their "turf."⁹¹ I found it important to explore matters which were meaningful to street youth. This could only truly be done by spending time with them.⁹² It is only by examining their everyday lives and world that a researcher can hope to capture the actor's experiences in their behavioural and symbolic worlds.⁹³ I went to the movies, bowling, hung around the arcades, frequented various community centres, wandered the streets and shopping malls after close and had lunch and supper at the local "soup lines" with these individuals. I firmly believe this was necessary in order to establish a strong rapport between myself as researcher and the youth as

Stuart Cook. (eds.) Research Methods in the Social Sciences. (New York: Dryden Press, 1951), pp. 393-514. W. Whyte. Street Corner Society. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 279-358.

⁹¹M. Wax. "'Paradoxes of Consent' to the Practice of Fieldwork," Social Problems. Issue 27, No. 3. (February 1980) p. 272.

⁹²H.S. Becker, B. Geer, E.C. Hughes, A.L. Strauss. Boys in White. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961). E. Liebow. Tally's Corner. (Boston, : Little Brown, 1967). W. Whyte. Street Corner Society. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

⁹³N. Denzin. "Sociological Methods: Critical Methods," p. 1. I. Deutscher. "Words and Deeds: Social Science and Social Policy," p. 35. P. Corrigan. Schooling of the Smash Street Kids. L. Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 46.

subjects.⁹⁴

Formal Interviews

The formal interviews I conducted lasted anywhere from two to seven hours. During a number of these interviews I used a tape recorder. As Steven J. Taylor and Robert Bogdan suggest participant observers appear divided on the pros and cons of using mechanical recording devices in the field.⁹⁵ Douglas, Taylor and Bogdan are amongst a number of researchers who take the position that recording devices have an untoward affect on the interviewing process by inhibiting respondents' answers and undermining the development of effective rapport between researcher and subject.⁹⁶

I recorded these interviews in order to capture not so much the information, but the precise way in which it was presented. When using a tape recorder if I found it

⁹⁴Livy Visano in his work with street hustlers corroborates my belief in the need for such interaction. He comments: "These boys share information about their activities more openly with those who participate in their life or with others who indicate a more sensitive appreciation of their setting and activities." This Idle Trade. p. 48.

⁹⁵S. Taylor and R. Bogdan. Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: The Search for Meanings. Second Edition. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1984), p. 57.

⁹⁶Douglas suggests, "there is every reason to believe that obtrusive recording devices have fundamental effects in determining what actors think and feel about the researcher..." J.D. Douglas. Investigative Social Research: Individual and Team Field Research. (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1976), p. 53.

Taylor and Bogdan believe people are more guarded in what they say when being recorded. Qualitative Research Methods. p. 57.

interfered with the quality of responses by distracting the individual. I continued the interview without the tape. Frequently when individuals commented about a certain person with whom we were both acquainted, they would simply cover up the microphone or lean over and stop the tape. In that way what was said was not "on the record." In most instances the recording device did not dramatically alter the tone of the interview. A few times there was an initial awkwardness when I began taping but over a short period of time respondents appeared to forget about the tape recorder and spoke freely while it was recording.⁹⁷ As Willis suggests, "The disruption caused by the tape recorder is likely to be minimal...and where several discussions are conducted over time, insignificant."⁹⁸

Each interview was unique. While I initially had a series of questions⁹⁹ I wanted to ask, the types of questions posed and the ways in which they were worded depended on the rapport developed with each informant. These formal interviews were conducted in the apartment of a friend of the respondent or some place private that was comfortable for the respondent. I usually met these individuals in a prearranged public place such as a donut shop, the Drop-in centre, or some

⁹⁷Taylor and Bogdan also found this to be true. Ibid. p. 58.

⁹⁸Paul Willis. Profane Culture. p. 195

⁹⁹See Appendix B for list of formal questions used in interviews.

restaurant. I would begin by talking with the respondent for a short while until I "got a feeling" for the individual in terms of his or her nature. For example, I needed to know if I could trust him/her and whether or not he/she was under the influence of narcotics or alcohol. I would then present them with the option of deciding where we could go to begin the more formal questions. Several respondents opted to sit outside in one of the downtown parks. Others suggested returning to a friend's room or apartment. Only a few individuals chose to remain where we had initially met. By giving them this option they could choose a place which afforded a comfortable, familiar setting in which they could relax and speak more openly.

Informal Interviews

The informal interviews occurred in donut and coffee shops, 'fast food' restaurants, on benches outside arcades, and while walking around the shopping malls, streets and alley ways of the city. During these conversations I was able to discuss freely their views, professed beliefs and discrepant behaviour, along with their interests in popular music and the latest happenings on the streets. No formal notes were taken at this time. As Taylor and Bogdan suggest, "More so than recording, note taking reminds people that they are under constant surveillance and tips them off to areas in which the

researcher is interested."¹⁰⁰ Usually I would attempt to remember incidents, my conversations with the youth and their conversations with each other at a later time and kept rough notes on all significant interactions. These casual conversations were very productive as they afforded me the opportunity to employ cross checks on information gathered through formal interviews and observations.

Adoption of Research Role

It is necessary when conducting research to acquire a role when interacting with the research subjects. As Wax suggests,

A role is required that permits the researcher to observe while being able to record, compare and analyze. This role includes movements back and forth, between being associated with one's hosts and belonging to one's sociological discipline.¹⁰¹

When I met individuals on the streets I explained to them that I was a student at the university and was collecting information on "street kids'" lives for a book I was writing as part of my work. I was usually introduced by various youth I already knew from previous volunteer work. These individuals who provided introductions also guaranteed my credibility to others. Once I had explained the project to

¹⁰⁰S. Taylor and R. Bogdan. Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods. p.58.

¹⁰¹M. Wax. "'Paradoxes of Consent' to the Practice of Fieldwork," Social Problems. Vol. 27, No. 3, February 1980. p. 273.

them I acquired their consent.

When I volunteered at the drop-in centre for street youth, I was honest and direct with the program co-ordinator regarding my identity, the purpose of my study and my reasons for volunteering. I explained I was a graduate student conducting research for my Master's thesis and thought the centre would provide me with the opportunity to meet valuable contacts and establish a positive relationship with "street kids" in a controlled setting. Through such volunteer involvement I was able to establish a comfortable role in which I was able to be "in" but not "of" their world. My volunteer position helped establish this distinction since I could interact with them, spend time after volunteering but still be seen as an outsider. The fact that I can look younger than I am also helped me to blend in with the surroundings.¹⁰²

Acceptance of this Role by Respondents

No inducement was offered to the individuals who participated in this research. They were aware of the nature of my study and co-operated largely because they were pleased to have someone show an interest in them and their way of life. Many of these "kids" know few outsiders who are willing to spend time with them, listen to their problems and offer

¹⁰²See Afterword on Research Experience in the Appendices, for elaboration on this point.

support unconditionally without being judgemental. I was perceived as an interested yet objective, non authoritarian adult. This helped in gaining their trust. The fact that I am married opened me up as someone who could give advice about relationship problems. It also alleviated any problems regarding their perceptions of me as a female. The boys knew I was not interested in their advances, and the girls recognized I was not a threat since I was not interested in their boyfriends.¹⁰³

Use of Contacts

Inherent in the structure of the "street kid" subculture is a general distrust of anyone new,¹⁰⁴ particularly adults.¹⁰⁵ For this reason I was fortunate to have been able to draw upon contacts I had made over the past two and half years as a volunteer Co-ordinator of an inner city youth group. Many of the adolescents in this group have lived on the

¹⁰³Paul Corrigan refers to the assumption of a non threatening role, in his research. Schooling the Smash Street Kids. p. 13

¹⁰⁴ Other researchers including Visano also found this to be true. He mentions, "During preliminary excursions into the field, I discovered that these boys generally refuse to divulge information about their activities to complete strangers, especially in the context of brief field encounters." This Idle Trade. p. 48.

¹⁰⁵G. Hart suggests, "Physical abuse such as child battering and sexual abuse tends to encourage distrust of adults amongst the youth." Crown Ward Administrative Review. p. 4. It is likely that this mistrust of adults as authoritarian figures also plays a large role in their negative evaluations of 'adult' outsiders.

streets, participated in street life at some point and thus had connections through street networks. Although the material cited in this thesis comes from conversations and observations during the research stage, the insights and my confidence in the accuracy of the material are the result of these interactions prior to the research itself. I started this research in October 1988, with a prior understanding of the backgrounds of these adolescents, their problems and ideas about their progression and socialization into street culture. Thus when certain themes emerged in conversation I could recognize them in the context of what I already knew.

Other contacts were gained with the co-operation of a grass roots organization which provided a hangout for some "street kids." I was allowed access to their lists of clientele and the background histories of these individuals. This was invaluable since it provided me with documentation which could be used to verify the validity of some statements made by the youth. It was in this centre that I was introduced to a number of the girls who appear in this study. Several interviews were conducted on their premises between September 1988 and December 1988.

A separate outreach program conducted by one of the community service agencies in the city for "street kids" provided an ideal forum in which I was able to meet this target population and interact with them. I volunteered at this centre for homeless youth in April 1989 and spent much

of the summer working in their "Drop In" program. During the first few weeks as a volunteer at this centre I spent most of my time playing table tennis, chess and answering their questions about me. At this point I was careful not to ask many questions but rather observe. After a few weeks the individuals who frequently visited the centre began to expect me to be there and I was able to develop a positive rapport with them. It was only after I was able to establish my credibility that I began to discuss my work and approach individuals who appeared particularly interested in what I was doing for an interview. Using a "snowball" technique I obtained a number of other interviews through referrals.¹⁰⁶

A number of individuals who made significant contributions to this study were first contacted through this organization.

From the initial contacts made I gained the cooperation of certain key members of several friendship groups who comprise the larger "street kid" population. These individuals who were enthusiastic about helping me with my work, introduced me to other group members and convinced those members who were reluctant, to tolerate my presence and in some cases to be interviewed. Without the assistance of those individuals who provided introductions and who acted as my

¹⁰⁶This technique is used by the following: J. Inciardi. "Little Girls and Sex" Deviant Behaviour. (vol. 5, 1984,) p. 73. N. Polsky. Hustlers, Beats and Others. (Garden City: Anchor, 1969), p. 124. R. Weppner. "Street Ethnography: Problems and Prospects," in R. Weppner. (ed.) Street Ethnography. (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977), p. 25.

guides in the streets I would not have been able to obtain the quality and richness of data found in this thesis.

Other Sources of Information

Data were also collected from Open Forums on "street kids" in a number of major cities and through informal interviews with representatives from Children's Aid Society, the local police and several youth workers from various agencies and group homes. Information gathered from these sources was used primarily to verify the accuracy of emerging trends in my research regarding activities and some technical aspects of the Children's Aid system and the Criminal Justice System under the Young Offender's Act.

Confidentiality

In this study to ensure confidentiality the use of pseudonyms was employed¹⁰⁷ and details of specific circumstances were altered so that no informant could be identified. Even after I explained why I had to alter their names, several respondents indicated (even requested) that I use their real names. Regardless of these requests, anonymity

¹⁰⁷This follows the sociological practice used by the following: E. Sutherland. White Collar. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 111. B. Heyl. The Madam as Entrepreneur. (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1979), p. 37. J.A. Lee. Getting Sex. (Don Mills: General Publishing, 1978). P. Willis. Learning to Labour. (Westmead Farnborough: Gower, 1980). L. Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 55.

and confidentiality were upheld.¹⁰⁸ None of the pseudonyms resembles the actual name or nickname of any of the respondents. Any similarities are purely coincidental. Information regarding potentially identifiable streets, shopping centres, parks, drop-in centres and service organizations are concealed. I have also chosen not to identify the city by name.¹⁰⁹

Possible Problems of the Study

External Validity

I am aware of the possibility of several problems with this study. One of the foremost concerns is the problem of whether one can generalize to the "street kid" subculture as a whole. It is difficult to know how representative such a sample of youth are of the larger universe of such people and the level of representativeness of this city. Whether there are elements which I may misconstrue as I generalize from the groups of "street kids" I study, to other groups of street adolescents in this city, or from the youth subculture in this city of half a million people, to that found in larger metropolitan city centres of several million, or this province to Canada. From my review of the American and British literature I suspect there are many differences. They have

¹⁰⁸L. Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 56.

¹⁰⁹Similarly W. Whyte in, Street Corner Society concealed the name of the city in which the research was conducted.

to do with social climate, population distribution within cities, level and degree of crime, as well as class differentials. In light of this it would be advisable to be cautious when looking at the particular details of social organization and extracting useable information on which to draw generalizations. General patterns of socialization tend to be more universal. As Corrigan suggests,

The problem of doing research in any one place and then generalizing over a wider area is typified by this piece of research [Schooling the Smash Street Kids.]...Sutherland is by no means 'typical' of the towns of the United Kingdom, but neither are London, Leicester, Glasgow, Chester, or Belfast...The typical town does not exist to be studied, instead we must try and draw some of the conclusions that we can, whilst all the time being aware wage differs as well as a host of other facts.¹¹⁰

Miller in her study of women street hustlers suggests, "Generalizations must be made with the utmost caution."¹¹¹ It is from research such as this that testable hypotheses for subsequent researcher can be drawn. It does not however, mean that conclusions about street youth in other areas necessarily apply. I would suggest the findings from this research are probably generalizable to other medium sized cities in Ontario. Many of the patterns involved in the initial contact stages and the subsequent socialization would be similar to a number of "street kids" in other cities. The social organization of street life in larger cities is however, more

¹¹⁰Paul Corrigan. Schooling the Smash Street Kids. p. 8.

¹¹¹E. Miller. Street Woman. p. 29.

complex and diversified according to activities and problems with regard to attaining housing and accommodation are more pronounced. Factors relating to ethnicity, which were not significant in my research, may be more relevant in larger metropolitan centres.

Internal Validity

Another possible problem has to do with internal validity. Internal validity is, "the degree to which the data gathered from the informants is accurate."¹¹² I have not however found any reason to accept my subjects' interpretations, observations and claims to be any less accurate or valid than that of others. Furthermore my focus is not so much on whether or not their statements are factually truthful but rather whether the statements are an accurate version of reality as they interpret it.¹¹³ A method of triangulation¹¹⁴ was employed whenever possible to ensure accuracy of data. When there was a fight involving physical

¹¹²Ibid. p. 30.

¹¹³L. Visano also raises this issue. This Idle Trade. p. 66. It is not unlikely that there are some exaggerated claims made by respondents, devised to create positive impressions. Such stories are commonly devised according to a "rhetoric of legitimation."
Donald Ball. "An Abortion Clinic Ethnography," in W. Filstead. (eds.) Qualitative Methodology. (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970). p. 177.

¹¹⁴N. Denzin. Sociological Methods: A Source Book. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1978). Willis also refers to Cicourel's term for this method of cross checking information gathered in research.

violence between two "street kids" I would discuss the incident separately with the aggressor, the victim, and others who may have witnessed the incident.

There is also the problem of recall and reinterpretation on the part of those being interviewed. I avoid this problem by combining participant observation with formal and informal interviews. As Becker and Geer suggest, "things may be reported in an interview through such a distorting lens, and the interviewer may have no way of knowing what is fact and what is distortion of this kind; participant observation makes it possible to check such points."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵This combination of methods makes it possible to check description against fact and noting discrepancies, become aware of systematic distortions made by individuals under study. H. Becker and B. Geer. "Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison." pp. 108-109.

Chapter Three

Outline

This chapter deals with the process through which an individual develops street relations and how those networks function to ease transition into "street kid" subculture. It looks at acceptance and socialization into the group and outlines how some of the various techniques for survival on the streets are learned. The purpose of this chapter is to reveal the transition from the traditional home to the adolescent street "family." Several of the contingencies to becoming an accepted member of this "street kid" subculture are explored. In chapter four the structure of this particular group is examined. These informal friendship cliques within the "street kid" group constitute the backbone of this adolescent subculture.

"Getting Connected"

There is a distinct process through which a prospective "street kid" must progress in order to become an accepted member of a street group.¹¹⁶ Only by becoming

¹¹⁶L. Visano refers to this as the initial "getting connected" or "becoming" stage, which involves aspects of exposure, exploration, entry, (recruitment or induction),

integrated into these street networks can an adolescent survive for any length of time in this environment.

Loners are faced with problems of harassment by any number of groups.¹¹⁷ Since they have no loyalties or alliances with other street groups they are viewed with suspicion. Solitary individuals are not tied into street networks so they usually lack contacts which could provide them with valuable information on where to find food, accommodation, money and entertainment, and how to handle various agents of social control. These individuals tend to disappear after a short period of time.

I contend the underlying process of socialization experienced by an individual who is new to the streets, is in many ways similar to the general pattern of socialization into any adolescent group.¹¹⁸ Specific contingencies are present

trial, and initiation." This Idle Trade: The Occupational Patterns of Male Prostitution. (Concord: Vita Sana Inc., 1987), p. 3. W. Shaffir, R. Stebbins, A. Turowetz. (eds.) use the term "learning the ropes." Fieldwork Experience: Qualitative Approaches to Social Research. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), p. 111.

¹¹⁷Cohen suggests, "For both sexes, the solitary delinquent is the exception rather than the rule." A.K. Cohen. Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955), p. 46

¹¹⁸Herbert Bloch and Arthur Niederhoffer suggest that organizational structure of all adolescent groups (delinquent or not) are similar. They state, "In respect to the type of organizational structure there is little to distinguish, in one sense, between middle and lower class adolescent groups. Although middle class groups of teenagers are not as apt to have the formal, almost military structure characteristic of certain lower class "war gangs"...they do have similar and well defined, informal patterns of leadership and control."

however since street subculture involves certain deviant activities and practices. Members are, therefore, generally more suspicious of outsiders. Contingencies are conditions and consequences of particular actions and represent those factors that characterize the individual, or are relevant to him or her in ways that influence his or her development of identity.¹¹⁹

It is important to note that these activities and practices are considered deviant in terms of standards set by middle class North American society and institutionalized in laws. Within the subculture the practical illegality of their activities is not questioned, but the response of society to them is questioned. Delinquency is often considered a normal form of behaviour by those adolescents who are actively involved in it. It is supported by a set of values which gives rise to a learning situation framed in a normative context differing from middle class values. The standards and values in this subculture are inherently distinct from those of the predominant culture. What is considered deviant to the majority of middle class individuals is acceptable within the contexts of this subculture. The use of illegal drugs, consumption of alcohol underage, theft, vandalism and

The Gang. (New York: Philosophical Press, 1958), p. 9.

¹¹⁹H. Becker. Outsiders. (New York: Free Press, 1963). E. Krause. The Sociology of Occupations. (Boston: Little Brown, 1971). L. Visano. This Idle Trade. (Concord: Vita Sana Inc., 1987).

prostitution do not necessarily carry the same stigma as they do for middle class counterparts.

I make an analytical distinction between societal and situational deviance. Societal deviance refers to, "those categories that are commonly sensed by most of society's members to be deviant...such deviance implies a high degree of consensus over the identification of the deviance even if there is subsequently much dissention about the appropriateness of such a label."¹²⁰ Situational deviance refers to the actual manner in which members of the subculture go about the task of creating rules and interpreting rule violations as 'deviance' in that context.¹²¹ For example stealing would be viewed as societal deviance. All members of society acknowledge that stealing is commonly regarded as deviant. Yet to acknowledge that stealing is societal deviance is not to acknowledge that it is situational deviance. Thus in situated contexts members of this street group create rules or standards which allow stealing to be seen as an accepted routine practice. Stealing is no longer viewed as deviant. "Street kids" themselves create categories of deviance among themselves. For instance, stealing from

¹²⁰K. Plummer. "Misunderstanding Labelling Perspectives," in Downes and Rock (eds.) Deviant Interpretations. (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 98.

¹²¹Ibid. p. 98.

other group members is considered deviant.¹²² It is usually only when the rule systems established by adolescents in the subculture are violated, that disclaimers or accounts are employed as a means of neutralizing guilt or remorse.

Informal Sponsorship

Any theoretical framework needs to consider the process of becoming a member of a subculture as well as the relationship the subculture has with society and the complex social and cultural relationships the two have.¹²³ To become a member of a group on the streets an individual must essentially know someone already accepted by others in 'the crowd'. It is virtually impossible to expect to walk on to the streets and strike up a friendship with these adolescents. This is clear from the remarks of Julie and Andy. Julie suggests,

If someone wanted to get into a group they would have to know someone. They would have to hang around that person and if that person took a liking to them then he would start bringing him around the other group members. He would be responsible for showing the new kid the rules of the group and the rules of the street.

As Andy also adds,

¹²²A similar example using the homosexual subculture is cited in Ken Plummer's article, "Misunderstanding Labelling Perspectives" in Downes and Rock (eds.) Deviant Interpretations. (New York : Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 98-99.

¹²³Michael Brake. The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures: Sex, Drugs and Rock'n'Roll? (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 9.

It's like a social clique...this is us and nobody else really gets in...unless its through one of us. You have to find a way in through somebody. If you just ended up on the streets you gotta run into somebody whose in the crowd and basically you get introduced.

This constitutes a very informal form of sponsorship. It does not approach the organized initiation process frequently exercised by gangs.¹²⁴ While an established member often vouches for a newcomer, the official, organized and regulated initiation rites present in gangs are not consistently practised in this "street kid" group. Rather initiation resembles a type of sponsorship similar to that exhibited by male adolescent street hustlers in Visano's study. In this case the more established, experienced "kids" teach each other the 'tricks of the trade.'¹²⁵

To gain entry into an established street group one must learn the argot, develop certain mannerisms, participate in certain socially acceptable activities and most importantly embrace the attitudes and values of others and adhere to the code of conduct on the street.¹²⁶ This may involve

¹²⁴ Anne Campbell refers to requirements of official sponsorship into gangs. The Girls in the Gang. (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

¹²⁵L. Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 128.

¹²⁶Since the street corner grouping becomes a kind of "family" for youth who are detached, disassociated and in conflict with the law abiding community, it is logical that one of the requirements necessary for acceptance is adherence to group norms.

renunciation of many previously held values. Julie elaborates:

In order to fit in and survive on the streets you have to know the rules of the street. You have to think a certain way and have a certain set of morals which you live by. If you don't you'll be screwed.

It is through these various social contacts that the majority of respondents in this study learn the "street code" and aspects of "survival on the streets."

Friendship Networks

One notable aspect of adolescent street life is the interconnectedness of its friendship networks. Adolescents from a variety of places seem to know others (at least superficially), despite the fact they are not from the same neighbourhoods or even close areas of the city and its suburbs. Adolescents from the East End of the city know others from Downtown, the West End, and from the various suburbs and satellite towns. Initially the common link between these youth is either one or more often, a series of social institutions or through other friends of friends.

Individuals rarely enter street life totally unaware of what awaits them. Many individuals have spent some time involved in the street scene while still at home. As Visano suggests, "on the basis of their own limited weekend excursions and information shared with friends, they acquire favourable impressions of the excitement of Main Street. As the downtown becomes projected as an attractive alternative,

the temptation to be on the street increases..."¹²⁷ In the following comments Andy describes his experience of this process:

Through the couple of months I was just hanging out on them I knew the streets a bit...I knew the games...I guess I had a bit of an advantage.

Two Paths that Lead to Involvement in Street Subculture

Familial Network

Among "street kids" in this city there are two paths that lead to involvement in this "street kid" subculture. The first path involves membership in a particular familial network. The second path stems from running away from home or from government youth care facilities.

Certain groups of adolescents grow up in this environment and are introduced to the street life by older brothers or sisters. These individuals receive early initiation into "adolescent street culture". They spend most of their time downtown and grow up with other adolescents and "hang out" together for a number of years.¹²⁸ They have easy access to the group through various connections and soon become accepted members. Miller in her study of street hustlers corroborates my research findings. She found that,"

¹²⁷L. Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 116.

¹²⁸One youth interviewed for an article on street gangs in Toronto magazine suggests, "Most young guys are just born into it. J. Barber. "The Swarm," in Toronto. The Globe and Mail. August 1989. p. 19

recruiters were [often] older siblings or step-siblings, cousins, or young aunts or uncles or the personal kindred or friends of these relatives."¹²⁹

Running Away

Many of these adolescents come from homes where violence and substance abuse are prevalent. They have either, no role models or bad role models and are they often subjected directly to sexual, verbal, emotional or physical abuse.¹³⁰ Such an environment leads certain adolescents to turn to the streets and seek support systems elsewhere. As a local Police officer in the youth branch states,

"There are two kinds of runners. Those who are running from something...a home where they have been sexually, verbally, physically or emotional abused...and those who run to the streets...in search of excitement, freedom to come and go as they please. It has been my experience that the former constitute the majority of repeat runners who we see on the streets. They are trying to escape a bad home situation."¹³¹

¹²⁹E. Miller. Street Woman. p. 78.

¹³⁰Sergeant Bob Melick Youth Branch of the local Police Department. Forum on Street Youth, April 26th 1989.

¹³¹Sergeant B. Melick. Forum on Street Youth. April 26th 1989. In U.S. News and World Report this point is reiterated: "Running away, for more and more children, is becoming an escape from home conditions they find intolerable, not a quest for adventure or pleasure..." May 12th 1975, p. 50. Dave Kilder, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Human Resources, characterized these youths as not, "running to but as running from" numerous forms of abuse in the home. House Committee of Education and Labour Subcommittee of Human Resources. Runaway and Homeless Youth, 99th Congress, 2nd session, July 25th 1985, cited in M. Janus et al. Adolescent Runaways. p. 12.

Miller has also suggested this pattern stating, "These same relations frequently...provide either the support and impetus necessary for successful withdrawal from the streets or make withdrawal impossible."¹³²

Background Dislocation as a Factor Precipitating Entry Into Street Subculture

Other "street kids" are initially introduced to street life indirectly, through their involvement with certain social service agencies. Brother Michael, Director of one of the community service programs which cater to the needs of homeless youth, refers to such adolescents as "throw away kids." These are adolescents whom have been involved in either the penal system, foster homes, group homes or in many cases a combination of these institutions. In July 1988 there were 1099 young offenders aged 16 to 17 in jail and correction group homes in Ontario. Another 7,678 youths of the same age were assigned to a probation officer and under community supervision. In this city, on July 26, 1988 there were 22 teenage runaways in the Detention Centre's young offenders unit awaiting trial. Another 25 youths were serving time in jail, while 34 were living in open custody correctional homes in and around the city. In addition, 552 were on probation

¹³²E. Miller. Street Woman. p. 65.

under community supervision.¹³³ Also referred to as "system kids" they are individuals who have had considerable experience being processed through Children's Aid, the courts and other formal institutions run by adults.¹³⁴ This is one "track" through which adolescents become socialized and build a friendship network. It is this network that will allow them to connect with an individual who is already part of a street group. These minors may be uprooted from their homes, placed in foster or group homes, attend the same remedial or special education classes, or share common experiences in jail or rehabilitation facilities. A consequence of such organizational processing is that the adolescent forms social contacts which may consequently affect his or her friendship networks. While in these institutions the individual forms friendships with the other teenagers who are also there. In this way they are expanding their circle of acquaintances; many of whom have (at one time or another) been members of this city's adolescent street subculture. This observation is congruent with Miller's findings. She states that, "While

¹³³Jim Holt, Barbara Brown. "Hitting the bottom at the Barton Street 'hotel'." The Spectator. September 28th, 1988, Section B, p. 3.

¹³⁴Lidia Dorosz, Case Management Supervisor at Barton Street Jail confirms my contention stating, "a large number of kids have already been institutionalized to some degree by the time they reach Barton Street [Jail]. They've been through the gamut of foster homes, Children's Aid Society group homes and correctional group homes for young offenders." "Hitting the Bottom at Barton Street 'Hotel'" The Spectator. September 28th, 1988. Section B, p. 3.

confined [in Jails] street women talked among themselves about their scams and planned how to pull them off without being apprehended in the future."¹³⁵ When they leave jail, some of the contacts they have formed are kept and renewed in the future. Visano also found that the status of marginality leads people to seek supportive relations on the street.¹³⁶ The following case history¹³⁷ will show the interface between adolescent street networks and the actual personal considerations and contingencies (including deviant street network relationships) that shape the course of "street kids'" lives.¹³⁸

At the time of this interview Jason¹³⁹ had just turned twenty years old. His life history reflects the initial instability in the home, the frequent changes in surrounding

¹³⁵E. Miller. Street Woman. Similarly Michael Benjamin in his study of juvenile prostitution refers to "system kids." He suggests that, "placement in care may be an additional occasion for these girls to learn deviant values and practices from others from a similar background." Michael Benjamin. Juvenile Prostitution: A Portrait of the Life. (Toronto: Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1985), p. 34.

¹³⁶L. Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 123.

¹³⁷As Yablonsky suggests, "The actual and representative live case needs to be kept squarely in the forefront, if the theoretical propositions that attempt to account for its existence are to have significance or meaning." The Violent Gang. p. 162.

¹³⁸E. Miller also investigates the personal considerations and contingencies that shape the direction of those respondents' lives. Street Woman. p. 44.

¹³⁹All names have been changed to protect the identity of the informants. Any resemblance to actual names of street youth is coincidental.

and the progression through the system before ending up on the streets.

My name is Jason and I was born in this city. I don't know my Dad. I grew up without my father and I grew up with my mother. We moved all over the place for a while-basically we moved from city to city to city...when I was little. I got a brother. His name is Shawn. He went into the C.A.S. I was first born so I was first kept. I never met him. He's about sixteen now. There was always people coming into the house when I was young...there was drug deals and stuff like that. My Mom's an addict. My mother hit me. Sometimes she went overboard...I figure...because of the drugs. That wasn't the only time she hit me-whenver things went wrong I was hit.

When I was ten I started beating people up. People got me angry. I got frustrated. If I had problems I settled it...I settled it the only way I knew how...it's like fuck you and then I'd punch him out.¹⁴⁰ When I was thirteen my mother got sick of me...she said "that's it" and sent me to live with my Uncle.

I didn't like my Uncle too much. When I got there I thought I'd have a father figure...wrong! He used drugs and screwed me around even more. He hit me too. I got into fights with him. The only good thing to come out of it was I learned how to really fight. One time I gave him a bleeding nose. I stayed with him the whole summer and then I got a phone call from my Mother. She wanted me back so I returned to my mother. I did o.k. for about two weeks and then...boom...all hell broke loose again. One day she came to school. She'd had it...She ripped me out of school. She goes, "You've got a choice. You can go live with your Uncle or you can go into C.A.S." I said, "My Uncle no way...I said fucking C.A.S.," and she thought about it and decided

¹⁴⁰Diana Davis suggests, "Children from violent homes may behave aggressively...they are growing up with a violent role model and are learning aggression is an effective way to control others. D. Davis. Working with Children from Violent Homes: Ideas and Techniques. (Santa Cruz: Network Publications, 1986). p. 18. This type of behaviour is reinforced within the "pseudo family" that is constructed on the streets.

she'd do one better. She decided she was gonna send me to live with her friends up north. I said, "o.k." I knew the people. I thought they were cool. They used drugs. I was there about two months and started bouncing off the walls and they got fed up with me and said "kid you gotta go." I ended up at my Uncle's again. I stayed with him half a year and got into more fights.

Jason mentioned the fact both his Uncle and his Uncle's girlfriend drank heavily and used drugs. He also admits to being sexually molested by his Uncle and his Uncle's girlfriend on numerous occasions. At the time he was thirteen. His Uncle was 38 and his Uncle's girlfriend was 36. The Uncle and his girlfriend later got married and had a child of their own. Jason was turned over to the C.A.S.

I couldn't take it any more...All hell broke loose. They ended up making a phone call and two days later I was gone. The people from C.A.S. said, "Don't worry in two months we'll find you a group home you can stay in...a family." I said, "I don't want that, I don't want to be adopted. I've had enough of families." I turned 14 in there. [C.A.S.] I started taking off from there...getting into trouble...smoking up, drinking and everything with the other kids...going downtown...stealing from stores. They made me a Crown Ward. Five or six months later, I still haven't got a home and I said fuck this. I talked to this other kid and said we're fucking going. We took off. That night we did 18 B. and E's and got caught for it. I got taken up to C.C. [closed custody] That was my first time in jail. I went to court and C.A.S. didn't know what to do with me or where I was gonna go or anything. I got off with a fine and probation. A call was made and people I used to know came down and picked me up. I stayed there. I thought it would be great. I got a family now. That's what I want. They got sick of me. They contacted C.A.S. and from there I went to this one group home...this place was scum...this place shouldn't even be open...I couldn't believe it. I was there for two weeks. I phoned up my worker and said I don't want to fucking stay here...so they shipped me to another place...another group home.

I was getting fed up with the place so, me and five other guys decided to steal a car and take off. A buddy of mine put us up at his place. I ended up getting picked up and charged with stealing the car. They sent me back to the group home. From there I did two more B. and E.'s and got caught for them. That's when they sent me to a Young Offender's Facility.

I stayed there about four days and said fuck this shit, I'm gonna take off,...so four of us took off and got caught that night. They took us to the Observation Home for kids up on the mountain. I was there for a month and took off at night time and I came downtown and got drunk and stoned.

By this time I was 16 and this was my second AWOL and Escape from Custody. I finally got caught and was sent back. I spent five months dead time at the Observation Home. I got to know alot of people there...I still see some of them today. I was sentenced and I got sent to Training School...it's maximum security and way out in the boonies.

I got really depressed out there... There was an infirmary on the third floor of the building. I played sick...got sent up there and when the nurse left to hand out meds., I kicked the door down and O.D.'ed...I took everything I could get my hands on....it was like a fucking pharmacy in there.

They sent me to the intensive care unit. I was in there four days and finally they took me out of intensive care and they put me on the Children's Ward. I was in there for a month and I had to see a psychiatrist. From there I went back to jail. I got out of jail after I'd done my time and they put me back in another group home.

We did a B. and E. and stole 26er's from this guy's house. I used to cut this guys's lawn for him and he used to invite me in for a drink all the time. We got drunk and stoned that night. I was on coke and hash and drinking. The cops picked us up and wanted to know where the booze came from. I told them, "a friend..." and one of the girls we were with was so wrecked she said, "Jason did a B. and E." and I ended up back in jail. I was upset but what can you do?

I was sentenced to seven months in maximum security at Y.O. in jail...I was seventeen then. I did my turn and I got out and I couldn't go back to the group home so they sent me to this farm. I didn't like it. I phoned my worker and told her I wasn't staying at that fucking farm. I moved again. I stayed at this other place. The guy who ran the place was an asshole. One day the guy grabbed me

and he threw me into the wall and I totally freaked out. He said I was high. I wasn't fucking high. I said I was gonna take off and I did. I stayed with another friend in the city. His mother came to live there and she and I didn't get along. It wasn't her fault...I disrupt the home. From there I hit the streets.

Many of these problems are precipitated by unmet emotional needs prior to entering the street scene. These emotional problems, combined with physical and economic needs, leave individuals in vulnerable positions when they begin to live on the streets.¹⁴¹ A family situation which offers no sense of belonging, acceptance, or home support leaves a void in their lives. I am not suggesting these individuals assert that their present participation in deviant acts within the subculture are due to forces beyond their control. (i.e. their difficult home lives.) Few of the respondents ever attempted to deny their own responsibility for their actions in this manner.¹⁴² It is apparent from Jason's case history that this adolescent had been shuffled from one place to the next and that he wanted some sense of stability and to belong. I am suggesting that this "street kid" subculture offers a type of extended family or community for these individuals and is seen by them as a pseudo family.¹⁴³ It is from this premise

¹⁴¹E. Miller. Street Woman. p. 103.

¹⁴²G. Sykes and D. Matza cite denial of responsibility as a technique of neutralization. "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency."

¹⁴³In an interview one youth suggests, "You hang around together and form a family. It's a proper family, it gives you security..." John Barber. "The Swarm," Toronto. The Globe

that I draw on the analogy of the street family, and suggest this structure perpetuates the same type of victimization as their previous family environment.

Jason is typical of many of the respondents in this study. While it was not always possible to verify the background information provided by the respondents, the consistency of elements in their various reports would lead me to suspect there is a great deal of truth in many of their assertions and allegations.¹⁴⁴ Andrea's background is similar in many respects. I have included her story to illustrate the general pattern of their life histories.

I'm 18. I have one brother that I know of. My parents were alcoholics and drug addicts and my brother and I were basically put through some abuse.¹⁴⁵ I was four. The only thing I can remember is my hands were used to put cigarettes out on. I still have some of the scars from it. [shows me her hand] I was taken from them and put into the Children's Aid. I was in one or two foster homes before I was kidnapped from Children's Aid by my Mom. I was taken back [by C.A.S.] and put through twelve foster homes in two years. I was shifted from foster home to foster home basically almost

and Mail. August 1989, p. 19.

¹⁴⁴J. Bennett suggests, "consistency under repetition is reassuring." Oral History and Delinquency: The Rhetoric of Criminology. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). p. 249.

¹⁴⁵Data from the Ontario Crown Ward Administrative review in 1984, cited the following reasons for removing children from the home and placing them in group or foster homes or other institutional facilities: "inadequate parenting" (25%), abuse (12%), rejection (12%), death or illness (physical or mental) of the parent (12.5%). George Hart. Crown Ward Administrative Review: Five Year Report. (Toronto: Ministry of Community and Social Services, December, 1984), p. 2.

every two months.¹⁴⁶ The reasons I have been given was, they did that because at that time their philosophy was we can't let this kid get emotionally attached to the place or the people.¹⁴⁷

During the beginning, two months is enough time to get emotionally attached so I was really getting messed around to a point whereby the end of the two years [at six] I had come to the conclusion that I wasn't getting emotionally attached to anybody.

There was a period where I started having black outs and was put on Ridilin. I was put in a treatment centre for adolescents. One time I hurt one of the workers when I blacked out. When I come to it's like all of a sudden I'm coming out of a black tunnel and I don't know what's going on at all. I felt bad. I ran away and I refused to go back. My foster parents at the time called the police and Children's Aid took over again. I kept trying to run away from every place I was put in.

Eventually they transferred me to a correctional institution. Children's Aid then stuck me in this place... It was this home run by Baptists. It was pretty remote and it had alarms. According to them [C.A.S] these people never give up... These people are really good with kids... They know what they're doing. They were posers as far as being Christian. They literally beat the crap out of you when you acted out. I was there for one and a half, or two and a half years... I can't remember exactly. I found you could get what you want by pretending to believe in everything they believed in. You took on a role... that's the way I looked at it.

¹⁴⁶A high rate of mobility and transiency is an ingrained aspect of life in care for a large number of youth according to B. Raychaba author of To be on Our Own with No Direction from Home. A Report on the Special Needs of Youth Leaving the Care of the Child Welfare System. (National Youth in Care Network, 1988), p. 17.

¹⁴⁷A more likely explanation for this phenomenon is suggested by Marilyn Callahan: "Frequently children are bounced from service to service, because they have multiple needs and the agency has a limited mandate. Some children move through all three systems (corrections, child welfare, mental health) according to different professional diagnoses of their problems. Children are frequently adrift in the service system, particularly in foster or institutional care." Marilyn Callahan. "Public Apathy and Government Parismony: A Review of Child Welfare in Canada," in Levitt and Wharf. The Challenge of Child Welfare. p. 22.

Then at a baseball game in the town nearby a friend of mine and I decided to run away... I was fifteen. We did some B. and E.'s which I was charged for and was put in training school. I went to training school and my probation officer moved me from there to a closed custody youth centre so I could be closer to my family.¹⁴⁸ I still called them Mom and Dad but I don't really accept them as my parents. They were the ones that made me a Crown Ward of the Children's Aid. I've never forgiven or forgotten that.

I got a room after I'd got out of there and started hanging out downtown all the time, going to these parties, getting in to the illegal side of it... getting in to the scams, the quick money. I ended up with no money, getting kicked out of my place and ended up actually on the streets.

The lives of both Jason and Andrea are characterized by multiple rejections, and their need to belong is filled to some extent by their participation in adolescent groups within "street kid" subculture.

Where youngsters home lives are intolerable, life on the streets can appear either more attractive or the only other alternative.¹⁴⁹ Penny's initial departure from home was

¹⁴⁸Many social service agencies adhere to a policy of family reunification, even though the families of these adolescents are often the source of their original problems. Interview with social worker in one of this city's youth serving agencies. April 1989.

¹⁴⁹Information provided by an informant verifies my contention. Kevin is a 15 year old boy interviewed for an article on youth gangs in the Globe and Mail's magazine Toronto. In this excerpt the situation at home which precipitates this youth's involvement in street subculture is described. "Two years ago, after his father abandoned his family, Kevin's mother took out her frustrations on him. The abuse was mutual, often violent. Children's Aid became involved. Now his mother is gone...His real family is the one he found on the street...he says, 'most of the kids got involved 'cause of their family situation.'" "The Swarm," Toronto. The Globe and Mail. August 1989. p. 19.

precipitated by the physically abusive behaviour of her mother's boyfriend. She asserts;

He used to say I was worthless and only good for one thing...that went on till I was thirteen and I just couldn't take it any more...I took off one day with a friend of mine...we stayed at a friend of Dawn's and hung out at the drop in centre and the shelter. That's where I met the others in our group.

Shelley's leaving home was precipitated by her father's continuous verbal, physical and emotional abuse. The following remarks clarify the situation:

He's an alcoholic. He was verbally abusive...constantly nitpicking me...on and on about how stupid I am, what a waste my life is. He'd call me a loser all the time and he'd think he was being funny.

Tom describes a similar situation in his home. Tom states,

My step-dad...my Mom's boyfriend...he was on an ego trip. I beat him at a game of pool one time and he got mad and took a [pool] cue and smashed me in the head. I had to have twelve stitches. He never did apologise...and he wonders why I got such an attitude. When I was little he'd [one of his mother's boyfriends] told me if I ever came home with a black eye, he'd blacken the other one...if I ever came home with a broken arm he'd break the other one. One time I got my ass kicked in a fight and I had a broken nose. I was about twelve or thirteen. I was terrified to go home. My teacher kept saying, "we'll send you home" and I kept telling her I didn't want to go. I kept thinking what's he gonna do to me...I've only got one nose.

I ended up taking off from home when I was fifteen. I just couldn't handle my Mom's boyfriend.

It has been suggested that when the nuclear family breaks down adolescents turn to the streets.¹⁵⁰ While I do not believe that family breakdown is the sole cause of this phenomenon, the overwhelming majority of respondents I spoke with and interviewed mentioned having had either an abusive or a broken home life.¹⁵¹ Their homes tended to be composed of extended family, pseudo kin and/or non family, rather than immediate kin. Such households are often headed by or contain alcoholics, drug addicts, and/or persons who have serious and repeated run-ins with the law.¹⁵² Many parents are divorced (if they had been married), when their children were very young. These adolescents had experienced a number of family changes, having had step parents or boyfriends or girlfriends, move in the home while they were growing up. Others had either been raised by a single parent or older siblings and had a number of step brothers and sisters. In this respect it is not inconceivable that such youth would view this group

¹⁵⁰"Cornered Street Kids." Forum on Street Youth. October 24th 1988. In the literature the early Chicago school, in its theories and researches, have developed this concept. F. Tannenbaum's work is particularly relevant.

¹⁵¹L. Yablonsky noted troubled family relations amongst respondents in his study. The following excerpt illustrates this point. "...He would begin discussing his family and talk would centre on his father...he would begin an outpouring...'the son of a bitch never leaves me alone, always going at me. Nothing I do is right..." The Violent Gang. p. 71.

¹⁵²Miller, in her study of street women, found this to be the case. She states, "Most of the other members of these households (and membership tended to shift frequently) were involved in street life. Street Woman. p. 90.

within "street kid" subculture as a type of family or community.¹⁵³ Given the shifting composition of their traditional families the nature of "street kid" subculture with its elements of transiency, would not seem radically different.

Teenagers who enter street life are often fleeing from home lives so fraught with economic, legal, social and emotional difficulty that when they leave, they are subsequently barely missed. In several interviews the youth in this study told me their parents turned them over to the Children's Aid Society or told them to get out of the house. As Livy Visano points out, "antecedent conditions are instructive precisely because they serve to legitimize early street involvement."¹⁵⁴

The individuals who make up the friendship cliques within this specific street group differ in their personalities from one another, yet they tend to have similar backgrounds and to share certain common beliefs and values once on the streets. It is suggested that, "the stability of

¹⁵³"The family by its internal weakness, may have been a contributing factor [to participation in gangs.] The father and mother or an older brother may have been delinquent, there may have been a sharp conflict of opinions and attitudes in the family, or bickering...or the father may have been a drunkard and given to seriously mistreating the child... In these and numerable other examples that might be cited of family inadequacy we have a source for the acceptance by the child of his payments and gang affiliates as a substitute for the home." F. Tannenbaum. Crime and the Community. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939). pp. 12-13.

¹⁵⁴L. Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 101.

any social group requires some concurrence, explicit or implicit, about appropriate and inappropriate beliefs and behaviour."¹⁵⁵ Every delinquent subculture has a set of prescriptions, norms or rules of conduct that define the activities¹⁵⁶ and behaviour of its members. These street associations are no exception. The teenager who becomes affiliated with one of the groups of "street kids" is subject to their norms, values and contingencies.

"Hanging Out"

Newcomers to the streets gravitate towards various known "hang outs." After frequenting the arcades, shopping mall, street corners, parks, youth shelters and hostels, they tend to meet up with other more established "street kids." Jeff described his experience:

I met people basically through the shelters and from there I hung around and I met other people who stayed at the shelter and other people on the street and after about a month I started getting invited to parties. I went to the parties and met more people at these parties.

While hanging around these various places the newcomer either becomes reacquainted with former contacts or establishes new ones. This is how initial contact on the streets occur. Andy comments,

¹⁵⁵Jack Haas, William Shaffir. Decency and Deviancy: Studies in Deviant Behaviour. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 10.

¹⁵⁶R. Cloward, Lloyd Ohlin. Delinquency and Opportunity. (New York: The Free Press, 1960). p. 13.

I knew a few people when I hit the streets from hanging around. The faces are always changing though. There is constantly new people appearing, other people disappearing to jail, out west, guys who get out of the street scene but drop by every once in a while to see what's going on.

Once they are acknowledged by the others in a group they may be permitted to "hang around" with them.

"Proving Oneself"

Once individuals make contact with an established member of a street group they have to prove themselves to the other group members before they are accepted. This is not always an easy task. One of the basic tenets of this subculture is a distrust of anyone new. This is clear from Mark's comments. Mark candidly admits,

At first I don't trust nobody...my family burned me...and if you can't trust family then you can't trust anyone...Trust is something that has to be earned.

Penny remarks,

At first people when I went to parties didn't trust me. They'd be real casual around me. But you know after I brought out my eight-ball they knew I wasn't a narc and everything was cool...we shared some strawberries that night and buzzed around like good old buddies.

The adolescents initially have to prove that they are trustworthy. Part of being trusted involves not "ratting" on others. Newcomers are usually not given the chance to "rat" on others since group members watch what they say and how they act around a new person. The following excerpt from a conversation with Rob illustrates this point.

Jo-Ann: How do you act towards a newcomer on the streets?

Rob: You have to be careful. There are rats...there are people who will fuck you over on the streets. You can't trust them.

Jo-Ann: How do you know whether you can trust someone then?

Rob: Through other people you find out things...when you hear about other people you take their inventory of them [the newcomer]...It's also based on first impressions...if the guy seems like a geek or asks too many questions you don't hang around him.

When I was first introduced to a number of friendship cliques, the conversations were kept to a minimum and revolved around trivial events. Typically comments were made about people passing by and questions directed to me about what I was doing. Other group members wanted to know who I was and who I was with. Only some individuals spoke to me initially, while others completely ignored me. Subcultural newcomers who first start "hanging around" with a group are not addressed directly. They are not invited to partake in any activities. They are certainly not trusted with inside information such as where to go to get drugs, or who is planning a Break and Enter or the source of a certain bottle of liquor. The following comments by Randy suggest how he felt when he was not yet accepted by the other group members:

You feel on the edge of everything. It's depressing because you want to be accepted so bad...but it takes time. I'm the same way now when there's somebody new around. If he tries to muscle his way into the crowd then right away you begin to wonder about him and what he really wants.

Marginality continues until the newcomer has made a connection with an established member. Acceptance is not always

immediate and not all newcomers are completely accepted into the group.

Initiation

In some groups prospective members are required to prove themselves by partaking in a particular activity such as getting high with the group on a number of consecutive nights or partaking in a B. and E. while other group members watch. Another alternative is to subject the prospective member to some form of initiation.¹⁵⁷ There is two fold significance to initiation. It enforces conformity to group expectations and proves acceptance and commitment to the groups' standards. The nature of initiation amongst "street kids" is not standardized. It depends upon a number of factors. The status of the person introducing the newcomer is one factor. Tom states, "They were easier on me because my brother's respected by everyone in the group." The assessment of the newcomer is based on the perceptions of the group members. Tom explains, "It depends a lot on the person too...if he seems solid, people don't take so long to let him in on stuff...if a person doesn't seem right somehow, that's different, he'll put up with a lot of shit before he's one of us."

¹⁵⁷L. Visano corroborates my research findings, stating, "their acceptance is based on the performance of certain tasks." This Idle Trade. pp. 125-126.

Willingness to share experiences aids in the process of acceptance. One evening during my field research I was out with four group members when they were thrown out of the shopping mall by Security and permanently banned from returning. The Security officers made no distinction between myself and the others and I made no attempts to clarify the situation. Once outside the others seemed pleased by this and joked about it saying, "I'll bet that's the first time you've ever been kicked out of a mall" and "better watch out, you're starting to become one of us..." At this point the girls became more receptive to my presence and took an active interest in teaching me the "how to's" of surviving on the streets, while the boys commented on how they would have to "look out for me."

Initiation may take on the form of "testing someone" to see if they are "for real." Andy elaborates on this point:

It's less of initiation...more of a period where you're watched and tested. You see with a new guy you watch him. You keep a real close eye on him. You have to listen to the way they talk...find out what they're up to. You can judge a lot about a person by the way they talk. You wait to see if they catch themselves in lies. If they're mentioning a lot of names from jail and that, you know you've gotta watch them. If they're in and out of jail then they're likely heavy into crime of some sort. You don't know if they're into ripping off their friends or just into ripping off.

He continues by recounting his own experiences, stating,

They played little games to see if they could trust me. They listened to the way I talked...the same way I do now [to others]. They also watch to see how you act...like...you can tell if somebody is just saying they hate cops and if somebody actually

does. If they go overboard on it, they're just acting. If they [the police] walk by and the guy yells "pig" at the cop, he's doing it to impress but if he just minds his own business and maybe gives them a dirty look or something, it shows he has no respect for them.

Mark describes the process of initiation as follows:

We'll keep a little bit of a watch on him...we'll feel around him...see if he's a narc...like with plastercine. We'll say "want to buy some hash?"...and if say he says, "you're busted"...you go "fuck you...it's only plastercine."

Mark pointed out another method of "testing someone":

If we think he might be a narc then we'll say, "Frank he's got some cid [acid]" and he won't...we'll wait and see what this guy's gonna do...if he tries to bust him we'll know he's a narc and say later that night cops try to bust Frank for possession we'll have a real good idea who pointed the finger.

"Learning the Ropes"

Once initial "acceptance" takes place the newcomer is tolerated but must still learn his or her role and become familiar with the "ways of the street."¹⁵⁸ In the following remarks Julie elaborates on particular aspects of this process:

We would smoke dope right on the main street right across from the park. If we were going to get a new kid high though then we'd have to take him somewhere else. If the cops would drive by you'd just hold your smoke down and look cool...the cops, they'd drive by and never suspect a thing. A

¹⁵⁸F. Thrasher notes a similar process of education amongst "street children" in Chicago. He comments, "The education of the street, to which practically every boy in gangland is subject, is basic in the development of tastes, habits, ambitions and ideals." The Gang. p. 265.

newcomer, if he saw the cops coming might panic and give us all away.

The more experienced "street kids" act as teachers. Under their guidance the newcomer becomes acquainted with the complex of places, activities, people and events that comprise street life. Henry declares,

For myself I had to be taught what different kinds of drugs are...terminology...words for stuff...all kinds of things...how to open doors, how to break locks, the best time of night to be here or be there...what to say to the police. I was really gullible and really naive and had to be taught a lot of things like that. The guys I hang around with taught me...the same people I've been busted with.

The newcomer learns the street argot, ways of avoiding problems with the police, ways of getting money and food, meeting places of the group and what are acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour. Mike describes the process:

I know how to survive on the streets. Other people taught me different scams...different things to do, like to get money. You go to another city and pick up an Emergency cheque for \$345.50 and that'll take you two days...you hitch hike. When you get there you stay at on of the hostels downtown. The next day you apply for welfare and the day after that you stay at the shelter...the day after you pick up your cheque. It costs you \$6.80 to catch the bus back to this city. You get a room and then you contact Welfare. It'll take three days for Welfare to come down. That'll take a week. Then you get on Social Services. After that when you're on Social Services, you're getting welfare...you look for a job under the table money. Other people told me what to do the first time...They said to me, "Are you going to go get a cheque?" I said, "Can I come?" They said, "Sure." I went and I seen the scheme and it works."

A newcomer must learn how to deal with the various agents of social control. The police are perceived as a threat by most

of these adolescents. According to many of the respondents in this study, avoiding the police is the best way to deal with them. Linda explains how this is done in her group:

We know where the "Cop Shop" is of course...you know what a cop car looks like and where they hang out. You learn to stay away from them...just like you

learn who's bad news on the streets...who to stay away from.

Descriptions of the police indicate these adolescents' perceptions of the police specifically, and of rule enforcers in general. Dave comments,

The cops are like another gang in the city...they're a bigger gang...that's the way I look at them."¹⁵⁹

What to do when confronted by police was considered an important thing to learn by the majority of respondents in this study. Jason states,

If you're caught by the police just shut the fuck up and say I want my lawyer...don't tell them nothing. Say I want my phone call and that's it.

Shelley emphasizes,

When caught by the cops remain cool. Don't panic. Don't tell them anything. Say, "I don't know" to all their questions or just shrug your shoulders. Go along quietly for the ride.

Brenda informed me of various techniques she learned "to handle cops." She recounts,

For instance...don't give them your name. Don't say anything. Don't have any I.D. Don't ever blow

¹⁵⁹The female respondents in A. Campbell's study held similar views about law enforcers. She suggests, "The police are viewed as just as aggressive and corrupt as any gang. Their behaviour, however is legitimated by their badge." A. Campbell. The Girls in the Gang. pp. 248-249.

into a breathalyser. If you're sitting with five people and one of you has a bag of grass throw it in the middle...on the ground. It doesn't matter if they [the police] see it...it's like...whose is that?...Not mine and everybody says it...not mine, and they'll try and bust all of you, but nobody gets busted and it's like don't talk. If you don't have your stories straight...don't say anything.

John recounts an incident when he was picked up by the police in connection with a crime:

This one cop picked me up for questioning. He told me about this B. and E. that had been committed and said they had my finger prints all over everything. He was lying. There were no prints and I knew it. You always wear gloves so there will be no prints...You just sit and listen...don't open your mouth.

Familiarity with one's setting is essential to survival. In particular "street kids" claimed it is important to learn the geographical lay out of the area. Most of the respondents grew up in this city originally and have spent a great deal of their time hanging around and exploring the streets and alleys. Newcomers to the streets learn the various safe short cuts to get from one place to the other from established group members. During periods of participant observation I accompanied these individuals down back alley ways, between buildings, along train tracks and through alleys between rows of houses. Julie states,

You have to know which alley you are safe going down at night and where you can run if someone is chasing you. If you don't know the back streets and alleys you could run into a dead end and then you'd be screwed 'cause you'd have no where to go.

The texture of their lives as "street kids," is effectively conveyed not only by the practical things they

learn, but also by the techniques for survival they acquire and use.

"Street kids" must learn to be extremely observant. The newcomer is taught to be very sharp and aware of subtleties which others might miss. They are constantly "checking things and people out" and assessing various situations. While in one house in the midst of a planned Break and Enter, John noticed a package of cigarettes on the table with only one missing. This was a clue for him to leave the house prematurely, in order to avoid being caught. John explains:

I'm a smoker. So I know if I am going to be going out for any length of time than I would naturally take my smokes with me. If I'm only going to be gone for a few minutes, then I might leave them behind.

Mark's account of detecting someone's drug use also demonstrates the acute sense of observation that these individuals acquire. Mark recalls,

I was sitting downtown talking to this girl one day and we got talking about my using drugs...right? And I turned to her and said you use drugs too. I know it. She was real surprised and told me I was crazy. She asked me why I would think that. I told her I know that she does... I have a chip in my one tooth in the front here and I smoke and it really discolours in the chipped part...turns a dark yellow. That could just be from smoking. This girl doesn't smoke cigarettes but she has a chip in one of her front teeth and it's yellow...I figure she must smoke something.

New recruits to the streets learn how to look out for themselves. Just as these individuals are observant about others around them, they also learn to be careful what information they disclose about themselves to others. During

the course of many formal and informal interviews I often had the opportunity to browse through their wallets and their purses. When they let me look through their wallets and purses, I discovered little, if any, personal information which identified them. Dave explains why he does not carry pictures, phone numbers or identification:

If I do a B. and E. or get picked up by the cops I don't want them seeing other people. That way they can't con me or find out about other people who I'm connected with or I could go down for another bust...say I know about friend dealing [drugs] and he's dealing large, they're [the police] are gonna try and come down on me hard so I'll rat on him."

Remarking on why there were no names written opposite the various phone numbers in his wallet, Brian declares,

I don't want people to know who I know. I know which phone number belongs to who and that's all that's important. Say someone wants your number and they don't believe I don't have it so they grab my wallet and look through it. With no name on the number it's not much use to them.

Jeff carries this idea one step further stating,

I don't carry no names, no nothing in there [the wallet]. I memorize numbers...when I'm on the streets I only put down the last four digits and remember the first. That way they [the police] can't trace it back.

Physical violence in the form of fighting appears to be a major part of a "street kid's" general orientation.¹⁶⁰ It therefore becomes important to learn how to fight.

¹⁶⁰Other corroborate this view. Anne Campbell in her work with female gangs, The Girls in the Gang, pp. 263-266 and Visano in his work with male street hustlers, This Idle Trade, p. 109, both indicate the centrality of fighting and violence in this subcultural milieu.

According to several individuals fighting is part of survival on the streets. Jason suggests,

I'm not afraid to be hit or to fight someone else. I put this into my head...pain only lasts for so long. When I get hit it doesn't matter cause he's gonna hit me again if I don't fucking kill him...so I'm gonna rip his fucking head off. It's all a matter of survival.

Christine states,

Street fighting isn't like ordinary fighting. You have to fight dirty...pull hair, kick and bite. I wear a big silver ring on my punching hand so when I hit someone it rips the skin. I always go for the eyes. New kids don't know little stuff like that. They have to be shown.

In most adolescent social groups individuals must conform to the members' expectations of what is appropriate, aspirant behaviour and adopt those attitudes that legitimate the group's standards.¹⁶¹ It is important to note that the behaviours and actions of group members are not always consistent with their expressed beliefs. At times the two may appear contradictory. There is often a complex interplay between thought, rhetoric and action. Not all those who profess to hold these views are so quick to act upon them or to succeed in carrying through with them. While with their peers, individuals often boast about how they are willing to resort to physical violence for any number of reasons. In private interviews and during several occasions when collecting data in the field however, I have noted a number

¹⁶¹H. Schwendinger, Julia Siegel Schwendinger. Adolescent Subcultures and Delinquency. Research Edition. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985) p. 216.

of inconsistencies. Andy and Nick both admit they would rather surrender and get hurt as little as possible, than resist and possibly suffer more severe injuries. Both admit to me they have offered no resistance to violence against them while on the streets. Nick accounts for the discrepancy between what he professes and what he actually does by saying, "Knowing when to fight and when to surrender is the key to survival." He admits,

There are times when I have had the crap kicked out of me and I admit defeat. You'd have to be stupid to fight if the odds are so much against you. I don't stand a chance if say there's three of them and only one of you or if they've got a blade.

Andy expresses the same philosophy.

I'll fight if there's no other way out and I'm going to be really worked over anyway...but sometimes it's easier to take a few punches in the head, then end up with the crap kicked out of you.

While other more experienced group members of the subculture can attempt to teach the new person the rules of behaviour and conduct, experience proves to be the most significant teacher of all. The following comments by Shelley, Rob, and Dave respectively, illustrate this fact. Shelley admits,

I'm really hard headed. I have to learn things by making my own mistakes...and that comes from not trusting anybody. Even when the others [in the group] do try and watch out for me, I figure I know better...it's like...don't try and tell me anything.

Rob comments,

Everyone thinks they know how to handle themselves. Sometimes you've gotta let them learn the hard way.

Dave claims,

There's a lot of kids on the streets now who don't know fuck all. They think they do. I was lucky the guys I started hanging around were in the know and I listened. Others learned the hard way.

Each of the "street kids" with whom I spent time and eventually interviewed, told me of a specific individual incident through which they "learned the hard way" through personal experience. For Julie it was being beaten up by a group of other girls. Julie recalls,

I remember others [in the group] warning me not to go to Nick's place alone. I think Rob told me it wasn't safe, but I thought he was just saying that because he didn't like the idea of me being with Nick, so I went and ended up getting the shit beaten out of me by three girls who were there. They kept throwing me against the wall and kicking me. See this scar on my forehead [she pulls back her bangs to reveal a small scar]...they did that. I remember at that point thinking no one is ever going to do that to me again...I'm not going to let it happen. So now if anyone looks at me the wrong way I plough them one in the face.

Others mention incidents where they bought drugs from some one which gave them a "bad high." Jamie recalls an incident in which he was "burned" for twenty dollars by a drug dealer:

I was so stupid back then. I gave this guy twenty dollars to buy a gram of hash. I never saw him again. He approached me. Now I go to someone...a friend of a friend...A trusted connection. He gets me whatever I want at a fair price. I guess I just hadn't learned before.

Andrea recounts a similar situation:

A guy ripped me off. One day he said "give me the money and I'll get you some dope" and he brought it back and the next day I gave him some money and I never saw him again. So I never did that again. The first time I ever saw 'Sensee' the guy gave me a bag of pot and said it's supposed to be all seeds

and I found out later 'Sensee' has no seeds and they're just ripping you off-weighing it down. People will pull anything off on you. Like selling you honey oil that was not that. It was garbage and then you learn what it is and what it isn't and what its' street dollar value is.

It is through such lessons, over a period of time a new recruit becomes socialized into this particular group within adolescent street subculture.

Summary

The newcomer to the subculture must develop social contacts with established "street kids" to gain access into the group. The process through which contact is established, and acceptance and socialization into the group occurs, has been analyzed. The next chapter examines the specific structure of the "family" group into which "street kids" become socialized. It describes some of the basic tenets of this street group and attempts to explain the complexities that emerge as a result of inconsistencies between respondents' professed beliefs and subsequent contradictory actions.

Chapter Four

Outline

The analysis of a subculture involves examining an organized set of social relations as well as a set of social meanings.¹⁶² This chapter describes the social hierarchy and interaction amongst "street kids," looking specifically at the qualities on which ranking within the group is based. Toughness, trustworthiness, possessing "street smarts" and a reputation appear to be primary concerns amongst the majority of "street kids." I then examine aspects of group autonomy as reflected in language, speech patterns and the use of nicknames. I also show how the adoption of specific objects are used symbolically to differentiate the group from outsiders and provide social meaning to the actors involved. These factors contribute to the cohesiveness of the group and reflect an attempt by "street kids" to create a sense of belonging within an ordered social world.

The unwritten codes of the group are intended to bind the members of the group. These codes of conduct relate to acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour. Individuals are quick to learn these rules. ("Don't rat on your friends."

¹⁶²Michael Brake. The Sociology of Youth Culture. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 9.

"Don't steal from a friend." "Look out for one another on the streets.") The existence of this code of conduct reflects, to some extent, adolescents' collective desires to maintain a sense of normalacy in their social world, by guiding their behaviour and imposing order. These codes of conduct specify ideally things that are 'always done' or 'never done'¹⁶³ As such they constitute a set of social rules which define the "street kid" subculture and define its members as belonging to a group, rather than being just a collection of individuals.¹⁶⁴

Participation in specific activities is required in order to "fit in." In this chapter I examine some of their activities in an attempt to illustrate the discrepancies which exist between their professed beliefs in these unwritten codes of conduct. I am particularly interested in acts which are in direct contradiction to these codes. I examine the accounts and disclaimers employed in group members' attempts to neutralize negative evaluations of such discrepant actions.

Group Structure

There is a definite social hierarchy amongst "street kids." I would argue that in this respect, these street

¹⁶³E. Goffman. Stigma. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963)

¹⁶⁴J. Clarke et al. "Subcultures, Cultures and Class," in S. Hall, T. Jefferson. (eds.) Resistance Through Rituals. p. 47.

associations are no different than other organized adolescent groupings.¹⁶⁵ Most groups contain core members and individuals who are more marginal and play a less significant role in the group's functioning. Each group has a leader, followers, and a hierarchical social structure, with some people being more respected and other people being less respected.¹⁶⁶ What is unique to these delinquent groups are the qualities which are held in high esteem and the activities which cause members to gain and lose respect. Distinctions in rank are evident. Those individuals who have gained the respect of others have higher rankings than those who have not.

This is where the distinction between societal and situational deviance becomes particularly relevant. Group members are informally ranked according to a scale set within "street kid" subculture. An individual who is labelled as a "rat" is ranked lowest on their social scale and is often viewed as deviant within this social ordering. Various accounts are given for "ratting" on someone. Dale commented,

¹⁶⁵H. Schwendinger, J.R. Siegel. Adolescent Subcultures and Delinquency. Research Edition. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985). Schwendinger suggests fraternities, sororities, social clubs and adolescent school groupings also have social hierarchies.

¹⁶⁶Cohen suggests, "The respect in which others hold us are contingent upon the agreement of the beliefs we profess and the norms we observe with their norms and beliefs...in dissent there is necessarily implied criticism, and he who dissents, in matters the group considers important, inevitably alienates himself to some extent from the group and from social relationships." A. Cohen. Delinquent Boys. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955), p. 57

If I want something from you or if I have a resentment against you, I'd rat or if I got caught for them doing something I'd say, "well I know somebody who did this, this and this, you let me off this and I'll tell you who this person is." It's basically a way of saving your own skin at someone else's expense...Not something I'll ever admit publicly to doing...but it depends on who's involved, what happened...stuff like that.

It is unlikely these disclaimers or accounts would be effective and those individuals who are accused of being a "rat" or "stoolie" are labelled deviant and ostracised from the group.¹⁶⁷

Seniority appears to play a significant role. Those individuals who have been on the streets the longest appear to be the instigators and leaders in various activities. Upon closer examination of their social ordering however, it is not quite so straightforward. The following comments by Andy, Tom and John respectively, clarify this point. Andy elaborates:

It's basically knowledge not necessarily length of time on the streets that helps you gain status. If you know the streets and the ways of the street you gain respect. It takes different people different amounts of time to get to know it. You have to know where the money is available...the survival techniques of the streets: where the food, clothes and shelter are available, how to get by with the least hassles...where the drugs are...where the booze is.

Tom notes,

¹⁶⁷ Respondents said that they quite often found out the names of the individuals who "ratted" on them. Chuck declares, "You find out through other people...you find out through cops...that's how I find out. The cops'll tell you as they bust you for something how they knew...it works to their advantage to try and turn us against each other."

Basically you have to make people think that you think, you're not better than they are, but that you know what's going on...you know the scene...then people will look to you and you'll be respected.

John suggests, "If you're making it, you're respected...others judge that by whether you're able to get food, drugs and money." ¹⁶⁸ Established members in good standing then, rank higher than those who have not been around the streets that long, if they possess knowledge or "street smarts." As Dave observes,

People with the more dominant personalities...the one's who know the game more, basically rule. They're usually the kids who've been around and know the score...

Physical strength and toughness appear to be elements which are highly valued in the group and thus are determining factors in the allocation of status. There are, however, various factors which come into this assessment. Someone can be tough and yet not part of the crowd if enough of the others dislike him or her. Nick explains,

If you beat up the toughest kid then you're the toughest but that doesn't necessarily mean you're respected...more like feared. It depends alot on the situation. If you dummied him in the back of the head with three of your buddies backing you up, the others [in the group] are gonna think you're an asshole and a backstabber.

¹⁶⁸L. Visano suggests, "Aside from the immediate benefits they associate with money such as partying, drugs, alcohol and lavish consumerism, money also serves to determine friendship patterns, status and respect." Visano. This Idle Trade. p.140. Money however is not the only factor which gains respect. An individual cannot 'buy' his way up the social scale within this subcultural group.

Andy also makes this point, adding, "if you tried to bully your way in, you wouldn't have that much respect."

Street colleagues are also judged and ranked according to their mannerisms. Toughness, which is linked to physical strength, manifests itself in the group as an axis of power relations and as a locus of social orderings. As Chris suggests,

Being tough has something to do with it, but it depends on what you mean by tough. Tough as in you're going out looking for fights...no...but tough as in...people think you can handle yourself...yes.

"Acting tough" and "being tough" are apparently two distinct things. This is clear from the remarks of Rob and Mark. Rob comments,

If you act tough and can prove it you will be respected but if you act tough and can't come through when confronted you'll get the shit kicked out of you and no one will respect you...

Mark makes the same point:

There is acting tough...loud mouths do that...and then there is being tough...the silent type. The guys who talk about it are the guys who fall. If you know about it [how to fight well] you don't talk about it, because there's always someone out there that's better than you. If you're continually mouthing off about how good you are, you're gonna get caught with your pants down...if you're put up to proving yourself.

This toughness is often given expression through physical violence.¹⁶⁹ Todd observes,

¹⁶⁹ Paul Willis in his study of motor bike boys and L. Visano in his study of male hustlers, corroborate my findings. P. Willis. Profane Culture. (London: Chatto and Windus). L. Visano. This Idle Trade. (Concord: Vita Sana.)

You lose alot of respect if say you get beaten up by someone everyone thinks you should have been able to beat up.

Others admit while they do not go out looking for fights they must "stand their ground" if challenged by someone. Jason claims,

If people get on my case I don't say, "I'm gonna kick your head in"...I just do it. Talk is for fucking wimps.

Nick asserts,

You have to fight to show you're not a wimp. If you don't fight you get your head kicked in...repeatedly.

If an individual is a "loud mouth, bragging and pretending to be a know-it-all" he or she will be discounted by the others and will occupy a lower position on the social scale.¹⁷⁰ Talk is not respected whereas actions are.¹⁷¹ During an informal interview Francis remarks,

The ones to watch out for are the silent guys. Chris...he's really mouthy...acts tough but he's not. I don't have to say anything. I keep real quiet. . Keep it all inside. I am tough and can prove it. It's a feeling of being really confident...The people who are real will recognize you are real too. You don't have to talk about

¹⁷⁰F. Thrasher also identifies this personality type commenting, "He is the egoist, the braggart, the boaster, the bluffer, the loud mouth of the group...he may resort to loudness to gain attention not otherwise forthcoming or...he may simply be overestimating himself." Thrasher suggests he is usually seen for this and ignored accordingly. The Gang. p. 338.

¹⁷¹It would appear, individuals who 'talk a lot' are not trusted or respected as much as those who 'keep quiet'. This may be linked on a larger scale to a distrust of the talker or intellectual which is a strong part of cultural populism in North America.

stuff. Chris talks about all the places [detention facilities] he's been and stuff he's stolen and fights he's been in. I've known him since we were kids and he's full of shit. He puts on an act and it scares some people but not the ones who are 'in the know.' People respect me because I prove things. I've done what I say...I can handle myself.

Francis admits to have been in a number of fights since the time he was nine. His one hand is very badly scarred and he claims these injuries are the result of attempting to punch someone in front of a store window and instead, putting his fist through a glass window. I was able to verify that Francis has been involved in a number of physical altercations both on the streets and in various correctional centres. Charges laid against him include two counts of assault. According to other individuals with whom I spoke, Francis is apparently a respected person. His girlfriend Pam came the closest to making a negative evaluation. Pam says, "He's got a really bad temper. I'm afraid he's going to kill someone some day."

Those individuals who cannot substantiate their grandiose claims are often ridiculed by others or completely ignored. The following account by Julie illustrates this point:

Know-it-all's tend to brag that they know which drugs give you the best high, which alcohol will give you the best buzz and about the connections they have. Most of the time you just ignore them and if they really get on your nerves you show them up by calling their bluff. One time John kept going on about the people he knew from jail. So I said, "do you know this guy?" and he said, "yea I know him." So then I said, "well then you must know this guy," and he says, "yea he and I were really

close," and at that point I told him he was a stinking liar, cause that's my Dad and there's no way he could know him from there cause he's no young offender. He's in Kingston and has been for years.

Julie mentioned how other members of the group frequently ridicule and even bully John, asking him about his contacts. He is also the butt of repeated jokes and innuendoes. His social status in the group is fairly low. He seems to be tolerated because he can be "a good laugh at times." It would appear then that ridicule is one of the mechanisms of social control employed by the group.

Respect and status are also gained by "being solid."

Randy asserts,

Basically you have to prove to people you are solid to be respected. You do that by keeping your mouth shut around outsiders...by not ratting on anybody and by being in on the action."

In the following conversation Warren reiterates this belief:

Warren: If you do the crime you do the time. That's the way it works on the streets.

Jo-Ann: What would happen if you and someone else commit a crime and you get caught. Do you take full responsibility?

Warren: That's the only thing I could do.

Jo-Ann: You could co operate with the police and tell them who else was involved. In that way you would not have to take the full responsibility.

Warren: No way man. I'm solid. I wouldn't do that. That's called "ratting" on someone...that can get you killed.

Denise recounts an incident where she and a friend were caught shoplifting.

Denise: Nancy was so scared. She had just started to put her life back together again and then this happens. I felt bad for her and I took the blame. I took her purse which had the stuff in it and so they couldn't prove anything against her. I got probation and so many hours of community work. I had

some other charges thrown in with that. It was no big deal. Jail is no big deal. It is actually a neat place. We call it the Holiday Inn. There's a T.V...you can play sports, and can hang around with your friends. The food's not that bad either.

Being ranked highly within the group is linked to the maintenance of a reputation.¹⁷² Reputations have to be gained and regularly defended. Maintaining one's social status within the group requires continual vigilance. Honour has to be defended in order to maintain reputation and social standing. This is suggested by the following comments by John and Allen.

John: Someone will say about another guy...oh he's not that tough or that guy's a goof, and the other guy who's being put down has to search out the guy who said that and defend his reputation by beating on him a bit.

Allen: To be manly you've got to be tough and even if you aren't you've got to act tough so you won't get picked on. So when you are with others in the group hanging around and you see a guy who is smaller than you, you mouth off at him and hope he isn't tougher and stronger than you and keeps walking. If he calls your bluff and tries to pick a fight with you, then you have to take him on, or back down and look bad in front of everyone.

There are several other inherent problems associated with having and maintaining a positive reputation. The following accounts by Chuck and Andy describe how people's reputations can be undermined. Chuck comments,

¹⁷²As one informant in an interview asserts, "I don't care how bad he is, deep down he's soft. But you have to play bad so people will leave you alone. You have to make a name so people don't bug you, so no more problems come on you." Interview with street youth by John Barber. "The Swarm," in Toronto. The Globe and Mail. August 1989. p. 31.

If you're popular and respected...that can be dangerous because that automatically makes you a target. You've really got to watch yourself. Some people will slander others. This guy's been going around saying Andy's a queer. Rumours spread really fast and something like that's damaging.

Andy relates other incidents,

One of my friends got beat up by somebody and this person who beat him up just ended up in jail about a day or two afterwards. That could get very dangerous for my friend 'cause someone could set him up as a stool pigeon. It's just coincidental that this guy ended up in jail but someone could take it the wrong way and spread a rumour that he's a rat. Another guy in the group already has the reputation of being a U.C. or a stoolie because of the fact he mentioned he'd like to get into the military, and become a military cop.

These qualities on which ranking are based, are manifest in the specific street jargon, "street kids" employ.

Use of Argot

The structure of the group is reflected in their terminology. An argot consisting of expressions and phrases helps "street kids" assess their experiences and organize their lives. An insider is easily distinguishable from an outsider, because of their mastery or lack of knowledge of the street jargon. Language is one sign that typifies experience on the street.¹⁷³ One's level in the social hierarchy depends to some extent on one's mastery of the argot. Knowledge of the street vocabulary signals to members of the group an individual's background or present involvement

¹⁷³P. Berger, T. Luckmann. The Social Construction of Reality. (New York: Anchor Press, 1967). p. 128.

in street life. A new subcultural member quickly learns the ways of describing the world around him which equip him to engage in prescribed activities. Rob elaborates on this point:

There are a few people...wanna be's...in the street clique here who aren't street...they just hang around. You can tell they don't belong by the way they talk. People on the streets they sort of...well...there's alot of cursing. Everything is fuck this...fuck that. Alot of people if they aren't of the streets have a different way of talking...its like, even the terms they use are different.

Through my interactions with these individuals I recorded a number of distinct words and their meanings. These are shown in Appendix C. An examination of this special vocabulary provides clues as to these adolescents' basic assumptions about themselves and how others are defined.¹⁷⁴ The derogatory terms "goof," "rat," "wimp," "stoolie," and "U.C." refer to individuals, who by their actions or reputations, are low on the social scale. The labels "queer" and "diddler" refer to those who are considered deviant in their social ordering because of their sexual behaviour.

Use of Nicknames

Nicknames or "street" names are commonly employed, and serve a dual purpose within this subculture. They help

¹⁷⁴William Shaffir, R. Stebbins, A. Turowetz. (eds.) "Learning the Ropes," Fieldwork Experience: Qualitative Approaches to Social Research. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980). p. 116.

make a distinction between insiders and outsiders, and can aid in the transformation of identity. Several individuals choose their own nicknames, based on popular media figures. One fourteen year old boy calls himself Ozzy, in tribute to the British "Heavy Metal" musician, Ozzy Osborne. A few respondents adopt names used by various musicians or musical groups, hoping to emulate their idols' success and fame. Others incur their names as the result of a specific incident. Dale suggests,

One of my nicknames is "D." I got that because one night I was so stoned and I couldn't remember my name. All I remembered was that it started with a "d."

Others like Slither, Hash Brown, Bear and Blow Queen, claim they adopt such nicknames to suit their newly developed identities. A girl who calls herself Bear says,

Things that I can't do as Tricia, I can do when I'm Bear. The idea of being cute and cuddly like a bear appeals to me. When I work [the streets] I feel it's Bear doing the things she does and not really me.

Aside from the concept of transformation of identity and the notion of fantasy characterizations, the use of nicknames serves a functional purpose. Rob, Julie and Brian respectively, identify this purpose. Rob comments,

No one knows my real name. I like it that way. If we steal or a scam goes bad and a new person in the group gets caught, there is less danger if they rat on you 'cause they won't know your real name and it will be much harder for the cops to find you.

Julie reiterates this sentiment commenting,

Only a couple people know my last name. I keep that to myself. I'm known as Gizmo. I don't remember how I got named that. I used to be called French Fry- cause I used to crimp my hair and it'd be wavy like french fries. Everyone has nicknames. Iggy, Pedro, Dude, Ozzy, Chief, Shaggy, "D" and Jumper...Rob is Jumper. We've always called him that...ever since his dad caught him in bed with this girl when he was eleven. He jumped out of there real quick. That was a long time ago though and he's still jumping in and out of bed with girls. Everyone knows him by that name...he even calls himself that. I'll bet he's almost forgot his real name.¹⁷⁵

Brian confirms the practical relevance of nicknames commenting,

Everyone has a street name. Mine's Moose...Moose Jr. People use nicknames. It's useful especially when cops are involved. If you pull a scam with someone and it doesn't work, no one can turn you in. It's a way of protecting yourself against rats.

When mentioning other group members, the names used refer specifically to individual street youth. Nevertheless, they also signify their social regularities in personal behaviour which can affect ranking within the group. They point to the forms of conduct, carriage, attitudes, gestures, grooming, clothing and delinquent acts exhibited by members of the same peer group. Although different names may be used in different localities these general patterns are often the

¹⁷⁵Names adopted voluntarily often reveal an indissoluble tie between name and self image. Anselm L. Strauss. "Language and Identity," in J. Manis, B. Meltzer. (eds.) Symbolic Interaction. 2nd Edition. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1974). p. 380.

same.¹⁷⁶ I am suggesting there are probably "Jumpers," "Blow Queens," "Sleaze Balls" and "Ozzys" in other different groups. The nicknames may be different but the characteristics are somewhat similar. Nicknames applied to specific members of this "street kid" group reflect a more general trend in groups to differentiate insiders from individuals who are marginal to adolescent street groupings.

As well as a difference in the argot that is used, there are often differences in speech patterns¹⁷⁷ and in sentence structure. Jamie elaborates on the importance of the use of argot in the following statements:

Everything is fuck this and fuck¹⁷⁸ that and it's like...hey man you got a smoke? You learn to pick up the way of talking as well as the vocabulary.

When studying a subculture, the investigation of members' speech patterns also provide insights into "who belongs."

¹⁷⁶Herman Schwendinger and Julia R. Siegel Schwendinger. Adolescent Subcultures and Delinquency. Research Edition. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), p. 38.

¹⁷⁷These specific speech patterns were noted by a reporter who followed the trial relating to the gang murder of Michael Farmer, cited in The Violent Gang. Murray Kempton of The New York Post writes, "As he mumbled his name, there was a sudden shock of recognition of how exactly alike these children are...these children even talk the same way...It is a voice without ethnic origin. Children named Lago, O'Kelly and Pardon have the same precise inflection...It makes no difference whether their parents be Irish or Spanish; they do not talk like their parents. It is as though they did not learn to talk from parent or teacher, but from other children; as though they had no homes, but only streets..." p. 180.

¹⁷⁸Profanity constitutes an integral part of the language of the majority of "street kids'" social world. Swearing occupies an acceptable place in their universe of discourse.

The repetition of the word "man" at the end of every sentence is evident in some conversations with certain individuals. Frequent use of swear words is a particularly common pattern amongst both males and females within this street group. These adolescents are however, quick to judge with whom they are speaking and alter their speech patterns accordingly. In my presence many of the boys refrained from swearing when they were directly speaking to me, yet they would swear frequently when talking to other members in my presence.

Use of Objects to Signify Group Identity

Certain objects develop a symbolic meaning for a particular group. Hebdige in his book Subculture: The Meaning of Style indicates: "Objects- a safety pin, a pointed shoe, a motor cycle...take on a symbolic dimension, becoming a form of stigmata, tokens of a self imposed exile."¹⁷⁹ Michael Brake elaborates;

Objects and artifacts (both of a symbolic and a concrete form) are re-ordered and placed in new contexts so as to communicate fresh acts of meaning. Where there is a re assemblage of styles into a new subcultural style, the assemblage must not look as though it is carrying the same message as the previously existing one. A new style is created by appropriating objects from an existing market of artifacts and using them in a form of collage which recreates group identity and promotes recognition for members.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹D. Hebdige. Subculture: The Meaning of Style. (New York: Methuen and Co., 1979). p. 2.

¹⁸⁰Michael Brake. The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures: Sex and Drugs and Rock'n'Roll? (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980). p. 15.

Tattoos are one identifiable symbol of inclusion in the "street kid" group. The presence of tattoos seems to signify a sense of belonging. When asked about their tattoos respondents remark, "it shows you belong," or that "you are one of us." The tattoo of a cross has special significance to a number of "street kids." Variations on its significance were recounted to me. Pam explains,

If you have two lines making the cross this means you have been in jail. One marking on the left part of the cross means you have been in this specific Detention Centre.

Bill states,

I had this tattoo [the cross] done while I was in the detention centre. [a closed custody facility for young offenders.] It means you've been in trouble with the law. The lines above it [three of them] are the number of years you've been getting into trouble.

Richie states simply, "It's a time cross. It shows you've done jail time...you've paid your dues."

Sante adds,

"It's a time cross. The three lines above it is the number of years I've been in trouble with the law. When the three above are filled in you start the lines underneath...when you've got six lines that means six years...then you're no longer a kid. You get tried in adult court.

Objects such as the cross tattoo are used to signify not only group membership but one's commitment to a certain lifestyle and rank on the social scale. This cross signifies membership with a group of individuals share a similar experience and so an individual has this tattoo he or she will be more readily accepted by other "street kids." Julie comments,

If they have this cross then you know they have been in a similar situation to you. You can also tell they're not posers...that they have paid their dues and have a right to belong.

This tattoo and others are usually "home made." The designs are their own or those of friends. They do the work themselves or on each other rather than going to a tattoo parlour.

As in other subcultures, these "street kids" adopt and adapt material objects- goods and possessions and reorganize them into a somewhat distinctive style that expresses the collectivity of their being-as-a-group.¹⁸¹ For respondents in this study a plain, denim jacket is ripped and defaced with musical graffiti or the inscription of their favourite musical bands. This recreates a style distinct from the one signified traditionally. Patches or emblems are often sewn to the backs of the jackets. These jackets are common among "street kids." It is important to note that the styling varies on each jacket. The jackets worn by group members are not identical, as in other groups or gangs.¹⁸² The Heavy Metal

¹⁸¹"Subcultures, Culture and Class," J. Clarke et al. in S. Hall, T. Jefferson. Resistance Through Rituals. p. 47.

¹⁸²A. Campbell outlines the "uniform" worn by one of the gangs: "Once accepted the girl gains her patches: first the bottom line which reads LADY NYC, then the top line- SANDMAN. As they receive each patch, the girls sew it onto their sleeveless denim jackets-their colours. In the summer, they wear their colours over T shirts; in the winter, over sweat shirts or jackets." The Girls in the Gang. (New York: Basil Blackwell), p. 89.

bands 'Guns and Roses' and Ozzy Osborne were particularly common amongst group members that I studied.

Many of the respondents denied wearing a specific 'uniform' which signified their membership in the group yet when they were asked to describe what a typical "street kid" looked like the responses were remarkably similar. It seems that there is in fact, a distinct way of dressing which signifies inclusion in the group. Many members do not seem to be aware of the fact that they are dressing a particular way. Many group members share clothing with each other. This fact would also explain some of the similarities in their dress. April comments,

A street kid can pick out a street kid a mile away. It's really easy. You look at the person and you know. The way we dress...the denim jackets, the black T-shirts, the hair that looks like it hasn't been brushed all day...the girls usually have lots of black mascara on, smoking cigarettes...wearing running shoes. It's a pretty standard way of dressing for us.

Nick reiterates this point commenting,

They're usually wearing Guns and Roses T-shirts, ...usually have the same clothes on, wear lots of black and denim with lots of writing all over it. You see them all the time...day after day.

While there is not a rigid uniform adopted by "street kids" there is an overall "look" which signifies membership in this particular street group. Most "street kids" tend to be scruffy looking.¹⁸³ On a practical level this may simply

¹⁸³Michael Brake. The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980). p. 77.

reflect the conditions under which most of them live. While living on the streets and in the shelters, they have few permanent belongings. Any clothes they acquire may soon be stolen. Brake refers to this type of appearance as "studied scruffiness." As A. Carter in her paper "Note for a Theory of Sixties Style" suggests,

Clothes are so many things at once. Our social shells; the system of signals with which we broadcast our intentions...clothes are our weapons, our challenges, our visible insults...¹⁸⁴

Whether they are conscious of this or not, the appearance of "street kids" often contributes to their being identified as members of this group.

Activities and Accounts

Stealing

In all adolescent groups participation in the activities of the group is a requirement for membership.¹⁸⁵ This encourages group cohesion. Certain activities are socially sanctioned by "street kids." Stealing is one of them. It would appear that acceptance of such criminality is learned in social contexts, where it is regarded as an

¹⁸⁴A. Carter. "Notes for a Theory of Sixties Style," in New Society. December 14th 1967, cited in Michael Brake. The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 14.

¹⁸⁵Cohen suggests, "...there are certain kinds of action and belief which function, as truly and effectively as do uniforms, insignia and membership cards, as signs of membership." A. Cohen. Delinquent Boys. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955), p. 57

acceptable mode of behaviour for both males and females.¹⁸⁶

Julie confirms this idea in the following statements:

Every street kid I know steals. Some do B. and E.'s...others steal small things like smokes and shit like that. People get known as being really good at one thing. Like last summer if someone needed new clothes they would come to me cause I'm really good at stealing clothes. When I needed a change of clothes I'd steal them and I was good. The store clerk could be standing two feet away from me and I'd get away with it. I wasn't going to walk around in dirty clothes.

During an interview John spent 20 minutes explaining the art of committing a successful Break and Enter.

Committing a good B. and E. takes planning...You have to case the place. It helps to know the people and to study their routines so you know when they usually go out...You also have to know what are good items to steal and get in and out quickly. We allow 15 minutes tops in the place...Usually we are in and out in 5 minutes...it's an art.

Many "street kids" admit they steal cigarettes, clothes, food and liquor from stores. Mike comments,

It's easy. Two or three of us will walk in and split up...two of us go one way and the third kinda hangs around the shelves. The two of us'll start joking around causing trouble, knocking stuff off the shelves. It distracts the guy at the counter, then the one guy'll stuff whatever under his jacket and walk out.

Shelley describes how she "shops" for clothes. She explains,

What you've gotta do is...say you want a pair of jeans-you get the size that's gonna fit you and you take a size in that's bigger. You fold those over top of the pair you want and tell the sales girl you're gonna try on this pair of jeans. When you get in there you stuff the jeans under your sweat shirt...(you always wear a baggy sweatshirt,...)and

¹⁸⁶N. Naffine. Female Crime. (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987). p. 40.

walk out, tell the girl the jeans didn't fit and leave. It works every time.

Richie states,

I get C.D.'s [Compact Discs] and pawn them off at the C.D. shop...I get ten bucks a C.D...some \$12.00...some \$15.00...depends on what shape they're in.

Stealing appears to be something that comes easily to these adolescents. When questioned about the morality of their actions however, both justifications and excuses are offered. John and Sharon suggest, "I only steal from retail outlets and rich houses." This would constitute a denial of injury to persons and is recognized as a form of justification for untoward behaviour.

Andy and Paul describe how there was a period during which they developed an attitude condoning or justifying such activities. They learn to discount feelings that are not in keeping with their actions. As part of this process they use various techniques of neutralization to alleviate feelings of guilt or remorse. Andy confesses,

It used to bug me at first. The way you end up looking at things is, when you first get into it...it's like your conscience bothers you a bit, but eventually it gets to a point where it's all a means to an end.

Paul recalls how he felt the first time he assaulted a stranger:

When we'd first go out...the first time I helped roll this guy, I felt sick afterwards. At the time I was all...like you know...pumped up...Everything was ..."yea right, lets do it." After we'd kicked the shit out of him we took off. I was scared we'd get caught. Then we bought some beer and partied.

Others who participated in this activity over a period of time show no remorse when describing how they "rolled a fag" in the parking lot behind City Hall and made off with his money.

Francis comments,

He was a fag. He deserved what he got...a kick in the head, man...there was blood...it's fun...it's the easy way to make money...we did him in good.

Jason adds:

He was just a lousy fucking fag. Who cares? Besides what's he gonna do about it? [laughing]...call the cops? He got what he deserved.

These comments are useful in reflecting how "street kids" feel about stealing from strangers. These comments clearly illustrate the various accounts used to neutralize any feelings of guilt or remorse surrounding any untoward behaviour. Francis and Jason's comments also reveal their personal views regarding homosexuality and in turn inadvertently reflect their own perceptions¹⁸⁷ and definition of masculinity. These statements also reflect a belief in appropriate and inappropriate targets for this type of deviant activity.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷Discrimination in the form of violence against homosexuals is not only culturally legitimate in terms of street values, but is also perceived by some males on the streets as societally endorsed. L. Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 236.

¹⁸⁸Reiss's contention is congruent with my findings. He suggests, "the deviation of the queers from the boy's norms of masculine behaviour places the fellator in the lowest possible status, even beneath contempt." Albert Reiss, Jr. "The Social Integration of Queers and Peers," Social Problems. Vol. 9, No. 2 (Fall, 1961), pp. 102-119.

For street youth in this study stealing as an activity is generally a given. It is from whom, that the variations in acceptability appear. Dale makes a distinction between two categories of thieves. He remarks, "there are guys who'll rip off anybody and then there are guys who see people who have more money than they do and use that to their advantage." Drawing on the discussions I had with each "street kid," I developed a scale that showed the different levels of respectability of each theft related endeavour. (See Appendix D.) As the different levels indicate, the least personal crime is seen as the most acceptable. The most personal is seen as the least accepted. Matza and Sykes corroborate this finding. They wrote, "juvenile delinquents often draw a sharp line between those who can be victimized and those who cannot."¹⁸⁹ The fact that such behaviour tends to be directed against either disvalued social groups or anonymous victims suggests that the "wrongfulness" of such behaviour is more widely recognized by these delinquent youth than the literature indicates,¹⁹⁰ or the respondents themselves admit. Jake declares,

Stealing from your Mom is the lowest of the low.
I'd never do that. If I ever caught anyone doing
that I beat on them.

¹⁸⁹G. Sykes, D. Matza. "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency," in American Sociological Review. p. 665.

¹⁹⁰Ibid. p. 665.

Commenting on stealing from friends, Julie makes this point,

Stealing from someone else in the group just isn't done. If you did you wouldn't be in the group very long. You're breaking trust and loyalty. Those are both very important to the group's very being. Someone who steals from the group is right down there with someone who rats.

There appears to be a strong proscription against stealing from relatives and group members, although this type of behaviour occurs frequently.

Those individuals who do steal from their parents justify their actions in several ways. Nancy confesses,

I used to steal money from my Old Lady's purse and write checks and forge her signature to get money...I'd cash them at the Cash checking store downtown. I'd do it during the day when no one was around to see me. If I told everyone they'd think I was such a bitch, I mean, I am a bitch...you're probably thinking that right now...how could anyone steal from their own folks...I'm pretty screwed up. I haven't got the guts to steal from a store. I'm afraid of getting caught. Julie takes stuff all the time. She's pretty cool. Everyone likes her.

Among the individuals with whom I spoke, the common consensus was that stealing from parents or group members constitutes unacceptable behaviour. When such action is committed, an account is employed to neutralize any guilt. Shelley claims,

I stole a lot of money from my parents. They'd have money set aside in this canister and I'd go help myself. I figured I needed the money more than they did.

Shelley's justification involves a denial of injury and suggests that she was deserving of the money. Since her parents had money lying around, they had more than she did.

She felt therefore entitled to it.¹⁹¹ Paul also admitted stealing from his parents. He justifies his actions indicating, "It's all a means to an end. Besides...I figure they owe me." Sykes and Matza write,

Certain social groups are not to be viewed as "fair game" in the performance of supposedly approved delinquent acts while others warrant a variety of attacks. In general, the potentiality for victimization would seem to be a function of the social distance between the juvenile delinquent and others and thus we find implicit maxims in the world of delinquents such as, "don't steal from friends."¹⁹²

The abhorrence individuals have for stealing from the group makes sense in light of my contention regarding the group's role in "street kids'" lives. Stealing from group members ranks just above stealing from parents, brothers or sisters. On closer examination of the group function this feeling becomes clearly understandable. Respondents in this group of street youth develop a closeness with other group members which constitutes a substitute family.¹⁹³ When an individual steals from another group member he is essentially stealing from "family."

¹⁹¹Scott and Lyman refer to this as "oversupplied with valued things of the world." In this case it was money. M. Scott, M. Lyman. "Accounts" in American Sociological Review. Vol. 33, December 1968. Reprinted in J. Manis, B. Meltzer. (eds.) Symbolic Interaction. p. 412.

¹⁹²G. Sykes, D. Matza. "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency," in American Sociological Review. p.

¹⁹³This analogy has been made by a number of agencies and confirmed through my research findings. At a recent forum on "Street kids" in Toronto on October 24th 1988, a representative from Covenant House also put forward this idea.

When respondents talk of stealing from group members or from families they usually give some justification or excuse for the action. There is a discrepancy between what they say they believe and what they do. I asked several respondents to explain this contradiction. The following are excerpts from two separate conversations,

Nick: They're thieves and liars.

Jo-Ann: Why do they bother to say it in the first place then?

Nick: They only stole from a couple of people.

Jo-Ann: Those individuals they stole from were group members and they have told me a number of times they don't steal from friends in the group.

Nick: Well there's a difference between buddy and friend. You don't rip off a friend. A friend you tell stuff to...you're completely honest with. A buddy is someone you hang with, drink beer with, smoke up with. Most of the guys who've been ripped off by other guys in the group are buddies, not friends. It's sometimes hard to tell the difference...Just because you're in the group doesn't automatically make you a friend.

Shelley clarifies this point:

I used to put on this facade and make like I was best friends with people and people I didn't like and people that were cruel to me and make like I was buddies with them and never wanting to say I don't like you because everyone else liked them...I'd do stuff just cause I didn't want them around...start rumours...rip them off...

Melanie accounts for the contradiction between enunciated beliefs and contradictory actions declaring:

It's basically an unwritten law...Don't steal from someone else in the group. This holds to an extent. Everything on the streets is to an extent. If you do it, it's an easy way to get your head kicked in...especially if they're bigger than you or if the person's friends are bigger than you. Exceptions come into it when you don't give a shit and you don't need to...like when you've got the power...the clout behind you.

As Melanie indicates, there are situations where societal laws or rules are subject in their applicability to "time, place, persons and social circumstances."¹⁹⁴ In this respect the social world of "street kids" mirrors that of the larger contemporary society. Williams describes this phenomenon as a normative system in society marked by flexibility.¹⁹⁵ This is the manner in which youth in this group understand their subculture and how they dismiss apparent discrepancies.

Alcohol and Drug Use

The "street kids" I interviewed and observed, profess to be heavily involved in the consumption of alcohol and drugs. By "doing" drugs or drinking, adolescents on the street fit in more easily with others. Like other groups, acceptance of the "group norms" is essential to one's continued association with that group.

Although many of the adolescents with whom I spoke and observed have drug and alcohol problems, only two boys identified substance abuse as the motivating factor that caused them to turn to the streets and become involved in this subculture. Miller in her study corroborates this pattern.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴G. Sykes, D. Matza. "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency," in American Sociological Review. p. 666

¹⁹⁵Robin Williams Jr. American Society. (New York: Knopf, 1951). p. 51.

¹⁹⁶E. Miller. Street Woman. p. 108.

She states, "the overwhelming majority of women with serious substance abuse problems developed them after they were already immersed in the fast life."¹⁹⁷ A social worker at one of the out reach programs in the city supports this idea:

These kids are socialized into drug use, alcohol abuse and prostitution. Kids don't go to the streets looking for drugs. They arrive there for other reasons and once they are there they turn to drugs to relieve the boredom.

Drug use and the consumption of alcohol are activities which the majority of individuals professed to be involved in and approve of yet there are occasions when drug use appears to be condemned by various group members. Brian comments,

Bill's an asshole...I don't hang around with him any more...He's an acid freak and a major heat scorer.

I have also noted incidents where individuals have appeared intoxicated or "stoned" and have been dismissed by the others present. The following conversation is an excerpt from one set of field notes:

Jo-Ann: There's Bill.

Brian and Chuck: Yea. So?

Jo-Ann: Aren't you going to call him over?

Chuck: Why? You got something to say to him?

Jo-Ann: No, not really. I thought you were waiting for him. Brian and Chuck look disinterestedly around.

Brian turns to me and explains: He's out of it right now-best just leave him. He's trouble and we don't need it...he does coke, acid, heroin, anything he can get his hands on...the way he was walking you could tell he's on something. He's probably got cops tailing him...Chuck's got an eight ball with him and doesn't want to get busted. We don't need no heat scorer around.

¹⁹⁷Ibid. p. 109.

Those individuals who are heavily involved in excessive drug use may be ostracized from the group. While drug use is accepted, drug addicts are perceived as being "really messed up" and "trouble" for the others. Association with these individuals tends to be limited. They are deemed to be "untrustworthy," "unreliable" and they are frequently picked up by the police because they are often careless and reckless in their illegal activities. They are also thought to be more likely to "rat" on others or "sell others out" to get "a fix."¹⁹⁸

It is not only the level of involvement in drugs but also the type of drugs which can result in ostracism by the group. As Randy states,

We stay away from kids on glue. After two months [using the drug] you are a burn out...it's a common thing...you start to slow down...other kids drop you because they don't do it.¹⁹⁹

Three of the respondents I interviewed were serious "glue bags." Two individuals hang around together and associate frequently with the third individual. Allen and John admit,

We keep pretty much to ourselves on the streets...it's safer that way...We call ourselves the Glue Brothers.

¹⁹⁸L. Yablonsky corroborates my findings indicating, "The delinquent gang doesn't want him [the drug addict] because the addicted personality is unreliable and may hinder [others] rather than help..." The Violent Gang. p. 148.

¹⁹⁹Similarly there are often sanctions against group members who use specific drugs. One youth suggests, "Anybody does crack around us we beat them, man. We sell it to you if you want. But we know it fucks you up." J. Barber. "The Swarm," Toronto. The Globe and Mail. August, 1989. p. 31.

On closer examination, behaviour that initially appears contradictory is often rationalized situationally by respondents.

"Codes of Conduct on the Street"

As I pursued my research I found that certain of the unwritten rules were especially important. These codes govern acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour for "street kids." The theme of loyalty to other group members came up repeatedly in my interviews.²⁰⁰ The following comments by Jamie, Mike, Darren, Brian and Nancy respectively, represent a sampling of statements made regarding this subject.

Jamie: "Even if someone is mad at someone else, when there is a problem, that's forgotten. You have to stick together."

Mike: "It's like being brothers, you don't rat on your brother."

Darren: "Mike's there for me and he knows I'm there for him."

Brian: "Bill's my buddy. I'd lie for him and he'd do the same for me."

Nancy: "When you're on the streets you look out for each other. It's tough out there and if you can't count on others [in the group] to be there for you, then what have you got?"

This rhetoric of street loyalty and comraderie is not in keeping with the fact that there are many fights amongst individuals in the group and there is a high degree of violence. During my field research I noted that individuals

²⁰⁰F. Thrasher notes, "Loyalty is a universal requirement in the gang and squealing is probably the worst infraction of the code." The Gang. p. 288.

could be friends one day, bitter enemies the next. Chuck received a black eye from his best friend. Two boys beat up Dale after he had let them stay over at his friend's place. Denise beat up one of the girls who was a good friend and had "chummed" with.

To explain the contradiction between the ideal of camaraderie and the existence of these internal disputes, the idea of a love-hate dichotomy emerged in several conversations. Respondents' comments are usually linked to their own contradictory experiences and conceptions of family relations. It becomes apparent that some individuals, despite their best intentions, have difficulty establishing and maintaining strong, steady, interpersonal non conflicting relationships. These patterns of interaction mirror the relationships within their own particular families. This becomes evident in the following statements. Pattie observes,

Even when fights break out in the group...it's like in any family...people argue...even beat up each other. Some days your brother might do something that really pisses you off...but when you need him he's there for you.

Brian makes the same point:

I fight with my brother and he beats the shit out of me sometimes when he's stoned...there are times when I wish he would die...but he's family. If anyone says anything about him I'll punch their face in. I hate him for some of things he does, like taking my drugs, borrowing money and never paying me back...and hitting me and stuff, and I get really mad and won't talk to him but I always forgive him for stuff...It's kinda like that on the streets too. That's the only way I can describe it.

Tom comments,

It's [the group] like a family. We may piss each other off but we stick together...like when the cops come looking for me, others [in the group] will say "No we haven't seen him." When I come along later they'll warn me.

One of the most common explanations cited for internal disputes is "being ripped off" by others. Jeff elaborates,

People sometimes like to fuck other people around. They bum money off you...and can't pay it back cause they're too fucking screwed up...That causes fights.

Similarly when an individual does not repay his debts, the individual to whom the money is owed may beat the other person up. Violence appears to be an accepted method of resolving disputes and maintaining order. Chuck elaborates,

I gave this guy a couple chances and he kept screwing me around...making up excuses why he didn't have the money and I got fed up and taught him a lesson. A few stitches in the head...he got off easy.

Another adolescent had his nose broken when he failed to repay his drug debts promptly.

Many of the respondents claim fights amongst group members are the result of alleged betrayals by others in the group. In private interviews several individuals have expressed their belief that street loyalty is a somewhat romanticised notion. Darlene remarks,

People say there is [street loyalty] but there's none. You watch out for number one because no one else will.

Jason claims,

When I do a B. and E. I go alone. That way if I get caught, I go down. That way I know no one else can rat on me...'cause most of them will.

Mark suggests,

Alot of these guys...they'd fuck a rock pile if they knew there was a snake in it...If they want a guy's girlfriend, they go after her, even though he's betraying a good friend and group member to do it.

Still others suggest there are different degrees of loyalty and variations amongst individuals to whom such loyalty would be extended. They suggest group members do provide mutual aid and "protection" for one another on certain occasions, and under certain circumstances. As the following extracts from conversations with Pattie, Chuck and Shelley show, "street kids'" actions are often qualified situationally. Pattie states,

There's loyalty...it's difficult to explain. It's like there's always the weaker people and the stronger people. For some reason or other it just seems that somebody in the group looks out for me...like when someone is calling me names or ripping me off for money or one guy is really screwing me around, there's always someone to look out for me and in the other sense when one of the others is really down on their luck I'll be the strong one and help them pull through. It's only really in time of real need that we come through for one another. The rest of the time it's like every one for themselves.

Chuck recounts a time when he "helped out" another member of the street crowd by providing him with a place to live. Chuck claims,

Mark was living in a fucking abandoned church...man. He had no place to go so I let him stay at my friend's place. That place was a real hole. I'm not proud of it or anything but it was better than nothing. I did him a favour.

Shelley recounts an incident when another girl in the group came to her defense. She recalls,

I can remember a time a guy threw a snowball and hit me in the face and this girl I was hanging out with walked right up to this guy and picked up a handful of snow and hit him right in the face with it and said "Don't you ever do that again."

The following account by Kelly elaborates on this notion of mutual aid extended towards others in the group. Kelly emphasizes,

You look out for other group members. One time I was walking down the street pretty late at night and these two guys started following me. I got really nervous because it was really late and there was no one around that area that would help me. I literally ran to where I knew all my friends were hanging out and they started to chase these guys. They caught up with one of them and beat him. The guys are good like that. They really look out for others.

Having discussed this incident with Jamie and Todd I was able to ascertain their explanation for such action. Todd claims,

Well for one thing you never hit a woman or let one get hurt. On the streets if a girl has a problem with a guy bugging her she'll come and tell one of the guys and he'll deal with it for her...if she's one of us. And for another thing we don't know any reason those guys have for bugging her. It wasn't like she even knew them or anything.

Jamie adds, "Yea, she'd never seen those guys before. They were hassling her so we hassled them...that's only fair." Thus it becomes evident the boys perceived the other males as outside their social realm and as the aggressors, rather than as victims of their assault. The fact that they stole a wallet from one of the men and then beat them both up, was not a factor that they considered in their evaluation of the situation. They tend to deny that there has been any victimization. Even though they accept responsibility for

their deviant behaviour the responsibility for their subsequent actions are justified in light of the particular circumstances. Sykes and Matza suggest that delinquents tend to see themselves as avengers, and the victim is transformed into the wrong doer.²⁰¹ As their accounts suggest, reasons for acting in Kelly's behalf were not completely altruistic. In another instance Christine recalls how others protect the female members who are "working." She explains,

When you get into a car to turn a trick, others [group members] in another car follow us and take down the licence plate number and the make of the car...if anything goes wrong then they are there.

Kelly reiterates this method of protecting group members. She informs me that,

When we get a room at the motel a couple of guys [from the group] will wait just outside the door. It's pretty good...just knowing they are there and all I have to do is just yell and they'll be there to help out.

It would appear that group members provide mutual aid and protection and a degree of loyalty on certain occasions and under specific circumstances.

Summary

The use of a specific argot, speech patterns, nicknames and the adoption of specific objects and dress code, contribute to the cohesiveness of this group. They create a distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders" and provide

²⁰¹G. Sykes, D. Matza. "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency. p. 667.

social meaning to members of the subculture. The unwritten codes of conduct governing the behaviour of these social actors are intended to allow this subcultural group to function in an orderly fashion. Examination of specific activities including stealing and the consumption of drugs and alcohol, highlight instances in which discrepancies occur. Contradictions between expressed beliefs and behaviour are also revealed through an examination of street maxims expounding "street loyalty" and comraderie amongst group members.

The data describe the behaviour patterns of "street kids." They show how the inconsistencies mirror those within the respondents' childhood homes. Street relations are explained in terms of a love-hate dichotomy. These emotions were also characteristic of their previous family interactions.

Cohen suggests the delinquent subculture represents a collective effort on the part of youth to resolve adjustment problems in the home.²⁰² I believe in many ways the present family "street kids" have constructed, mirrors their childhood home lives.²⁰³ Problems that were present in their earlier

²⁰²Albert Cohen, Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955), pp. 49-73.

²⁰³Just as L. Yablonsky contends the violent gang emerges from an asocial community within the slums and is "a bizarre replica of the community that spawned it," The Violent Gang. p. 172. I contend this particular street subculture emerges as a result of the family situation and is in many ways a distinct replica of it.

family environments continue on the streets within this "subcultural family." Further direct evidence of this is noted in the following chapter which focuses on the development of gender identity of these respondents.

Chapter Five

The Social Construction of Masculinity and Femininity

Outline

Respondents participate in "street kid" subculture in order to escape sexual, physical and emotional abuse in their previous childhood homes. My observations and interviews with "street kids" reveal that this victimization continues once they are on the streets.²⁰⁴ The ways in which this cycle is perpetuated, and the possible reasons for this phenomenon, are explored in this chapter.

Reasons for this pattern of behaviour lie, to some extent, in their conceptualization of appropriate gender roles. Of particular interest are those elements that indicate the presence of social-psychological forces that explain group and the individuals who comprise it.²⁰⁵ Socialization of adolescents takes place within this street

²⁰⁴R.E. Helfer suggests, "Any child who experiences or witnesses child abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation or spouse abuse throughout his/her childhood is learning a bizarre form of interpersonal interactions, especially between those who like each other." Ray E. Helfer. "Foreword" in Pallone and Malkene. Helping Parents who Abuse their Children. p. vii. in B. Raychaba. To Be On Our Own. p. 40. This may partially explain the subsequent interaction exhibited by the majority of respondents in this study.

²⁰⁵Eleanor Miller. Street Woman. p. 148.

subculture along gender lines. There is a set view of what constitutes masculinity. Masculine attributes include toughness which is linked to physical strength and is often expressed by fighting and violence, and through sexual prowess, as evidenced by sexual conquests. Females view their own femininity on the basis of their ability to attract and maintain a relationship with a male. Many female respondents have very low self images and tend to judge their own worth, in terms of the rankings of the men with whom they are associating.

Discussion of Masculinity and Femininity

This study showed that the respondents' conceptions of masculinity and femininity are based on contemporary stereotypes. The distinctive ways in which the development of masculinity and femininity are constructed affect not only the role that each sex plays within this group, but on a broader level also contributes significantly to the apparent, seeming "invisibility" of girls within many adolescent subcultures.²⁰⁶ While friendship cliques within the "street kid" group may form along gender lines, the structure of the group as a whole includes males and females together. One relies on the other through interaction. Both males and

²⁰⁶A. McRobbie and J. Garber suggest that females develop complementary counter cultures or subcultures distinct from the boys. "Girls and Subcultures," in S. Hall, T. Jefferson. (eds.) Resistance Through Rituals. p. 219. Evidence from my research would not substantiate this contention.

females are present within this "street kid" subculture and their subsequent interaction shapes the context and nature of the group. The construction of masculinity and femininity affect their roles in significant, distinct ways.

It is important to note 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are terms that refer to society's construction of people with gender and are different from the terms 'male' and 'female' which refer to the biological sex differences.²⁰⁷ Some theorists including Kagan,²⁰⁸ Goslin,²⁰⁹ and Katz,²¹⁰ suggest the acquisition of sex role behaviour is the single most potent and long-lasting aspect of the socialization process.

Masculinity amongst "Street Kids"

Michael Kaufman's article on the construction of masculinity effectively points out there is an internalization of the norms of masculinity by men. Masculinity is something that is socially constructed, not present at birth, and as Kaufman suggests, "many of the characteristics associated with

²⁰⁷Michael Kaufman. "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence" in Beyond Patriarchy. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 3.

²⁰⁸J. Kagan. "Acquisition and Significance of Sex Typing and Sex Role Identity" in M.L. Hoffman and L.W. Hoffman. (eds.) Review of Child Development Research. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1964), pp. 136-167.

²⁰⁹D. Goslin. Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research. (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968.)

²¹⁰Phyllis Katz. "The Development of Female Identity" in C.B. Kopp, M. Kirkpatrick (eds.) Becoming Female. (New York: Plenum Press, 1979), p. 4.

masculinity are valuable human traits—strength, daring, courage, rationality, intellect sexual desire...It is the distortion of these traits that are oppressive and destructive."²¹¹

Within "street kid" subculture²¹² strength and toughness are both characteristics associated with masculinity. The male emphasis on toughness is frequently displayed in their activities. Thus violence and fighting on the streets, can be seen in the context of masculinity,²¹³ and as such part of their accepted routine.

²¹¹Michael Kaufman. "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence." p. 3.

²¹²Walter Miller notes, "A concern over homosexuality runs like a persistent thread through lower class culture..." W. Miller. "Lower-Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency," The Journal of Social Issues. Vol. 14. No. 3 (1958), p. 9.

²¹³L. Visano suggests, "Violence is valued instrumentally...in demonstrating one's affiliation to the street and in proving one's masculinity." This Idle Trade. p. 234. Paul Willis in his study of motor bike boys also notes masculinity and violence are related in this subculture. Profane Culture. p. 19. Skinheads also link violence and a masculine self conception, according to research by John Clarke. He suggests, "This involves an identification of masculinity with physical toughness..." and links this toughness to physical violence in the form of "queer bashing." "The Skinheads and the Magical Recovery of Community" in Resistance Through Rituals. p. 101.

Respondents in this study spoke a great deal about their hatred of homosexuals and "rolling fags."²¹⁴ Shawn states,

I hate fags, man. They come on to me. They're really direct about it...I just want to punch their lights out.

Even when these adolescents do beat up homosexuals and accept responsibility for their deviant actions and admit it involves an injury, often the moral indignation of self and others is neutralized by an insistence that the injury was not wrong in light of the circumstances. The injuries incurred by homosexuals are not viewed as injuries, but rather as punishments or the results of justified retaliation.²¹⁵

Several boys studied demonstrated a compulsive concern with masculinity. They frequently accused other male "street kids" and members of the general public of being homosexuals. During my field research I noticed several incidents which support this contention. While walking down the street or on the city bus, one of the boys would say, "Look at that faggot.

²¹⁴Toughness in the British skinhead culture is linked to such activities as "Paki-bashing" and "queer bashing." J. Clarke. "The Skinheads and the Magical Recovery of Community," Resistance Through Rituals. pp. 101-102. Clarke suggests, "queer bashing may be read as a reaction against the erosion of traditional available stereotypes of masculinity especially by the hippies." Ibid. p. 102.

²¹⁵Gresham Sykes, David Matza. "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency," in American Sociological Review. Vol. 22. No. 5. (October 1957), p. 668.

Let's go roll him."²¹⁶ At first I thought this may partly have been said in order to see my reaction. These comments however, continued over months of field research. I suspect these individuals may have problems with their own sexuality and sense of masculinity. Several of these individuals claim homosexuals have made sexual advances towards them both now, and when they were young children. By displacing their thoughts to the actions of others and showing disdain for those others, their sense of masculinity can remain unquestioned by the others. This demonstrates not only their view of others but also reflects their way of bolstering themselves and making a distinction between "us and them."

²¹⁷ In this particular street group, overt displays and claims of heterosexual masculinity are common place.²¹⁸ Masculinity

²¹⁶ Casting labels on others can be seen as "projections of possible felt internal homosexual problems." L. Yablonsky. The Violent Gang. p. 200.

²¹⁷ While I have no concrete evidence to support this supposition Yablonsky notes a similar type of individual in his study. He describes the particular youth as a shoulder flexor, stating "he was usually punching or wrestling with someone...and his favourite and repeated pattern was to point to another boy (any other boy) and comment, 'that faggot eats it.'" The author also recounts a chance meeting with this boy several years after his research. He describes the encounter: "I heard a shrill feminine voice calling my name. I turned around to find that a very 'swishy' homosexual was the one calling to me. At first I didn't recognize [the boy] but, sure enough, there he was...he had become a forty-second street homosexual." The Violent Gang. p.60.

²¹⁸ William Whyte. Street Corner Society. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955). E. Liebow. Tally's Corner. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967). M. Harris. The Dilly Boys. (London: Groom Helm, 1973). L. Visano. This Idle Trade. (Concord: Vita Sana, 1987), also note the existence of

is an important element of identity for the boys and as such any threat to it causes serious concern. One of the major inconsistencies amongst male "street kids" was between this masculine identity and the involvement of some males, in homosexual acts of prostitution.

Involvement in Prostitution

In private interviews a small number of boys admitted to being involved in homosexual acts of prostitution. They named a few acquaintances who were also involved in such acts. During the period I was conducting observational field research several of the boys identified as having participated in homosexual acts, emphasized excessive aggression in their conversations and physical brutality when interacting with the other "street kids."²¹⁹

A number of accounts and disclaimers were employed to justify their actions and avoid threats to their masculine identity. The male respondents who admit to being involved in acts of prostitution, deny any responsibility for initiating the transactions. They present themselves as victims "of their situation." This account attempts to justify their actions. Jason admits,

displays of heterosexual masculinity in street corner groupings.

²¹⁹When I questioned their excessively aggressive behaviour they responded, "I've gotta make them tough" or "They need to be toughened up...turned into men."

I'm not gay...but I've been into prostitution. I've basically slept with other guys for drugs, money...a place to sleep.²²⁰ It changes how you feel about yourself. I feel ashamed that I've had to do it. There are a lot of prostitutes in this city...some of the street kids, they'll sleep with somebody just so they can sleep over at their place cause they've got no other place to go. Nobody really talks about it. I can't speak for anybody else...I have. I've usually been so stoned I didn't realize what I was doing.

Jeff's reasoning is as follows:

Some are doing it [turning tricks with men] just for the money and they're stoned out of their heads while doing it. Some of them are bisexual...me...I will go places with guys...sometimes sleep with them if I need the money. On the streets you pick and choose who you go with so it's o.k.

A further defense against an accusation is that will and knowledge were impaired under certain conditions. In this case drugs and alcohol were often involved. Using this kind of justification often allows one to deny personal responsibility.²²¹ By giving this kind of account for such action, members may lessen the threat they feel to their own masculine self identity. The following accounts by Shawn,

²²⁰The Senate Committee of the Judiciary, Subcommittee to investigate Juvenile Delinquency states, "It is clear that many of the children...paid by adults to perform sexual acts are homeless for all practical purposes. They resort to these activities because they have few alternatives for survival." Hearings on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation, 1st Session, May 1977, p. 2. cited in Mark, D. Janus., Arlene McCormack., Ann Burgess-Wolbert., Carol Hartman. Adolescent Runaways: Causes and Consequences. (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1987), p. 7.

²²¹Marvin B. Scott., Stanford M. Lyman. "Accounts," American Sociological Review. Vol. 33. in Jerome Manis., Bernard Meltzer. (eds.) Symbolic Interactions. 2nd Edition. pp. 407-408.

Jeff and Andy respectively, describe how they first got into "turning tricks" with other males. The apparent discrepancy between their perception of masculinity and their participation in homosexual acts are accounted for through the use of various accounts. Shawn states,

I had no place to go. I knew about a buddy I sold drugs to and I went over to his place and said, "look I've got no place to crash." He said, "you can crash here." So I stayed and then he started hitting on me. I knew if I didn't I wouldn't be able to stay. I had no place to go the next night so I got into it and then he'd bring other friends over and it went from there. ↙

Jeff's introduction to prostitution had similar beginnings.

He says,

I was staying at this place in the East end, room and board and that's where it happened. I met all these guys...one was a faggot and heavy into drugs. I lived with him...I was doing o.k...living on pogie and then he kicked me out.

Andy comments,

One of my roommates turned out to be gay...basically I was introduced to him for that reason...what I eventually ended up doing was setting him up with people I knew to pay off my rent. I ended up moving out...I couldn't put up with all that garbage.

There are, of course, some difficulties coming to terms with one's sense of masculinity and one's participation in homosexual acts. Paul describes this sense of confusion:

It screws up your head. I thought I was fucking trash. I thought I was garbage that I would do it. Another three months and I'm gonna go and be tested for A.I.D.S. [Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome.]

Several responses to the inconsistencies between enunciated beliefs and subsequent actions were noted. A number of these

respondents openly admitted to participating in acts of violence against homosexuals, commonly referred to as gay bashing. They had little difficulty reconciling these two apparently contradictory actions. Paul commented,

I do it to be accepted by the other kids in the group. That way they won't know about me.

It becomes apparent that certain individuals shape their responses by taking into consideration differential expectations of those with whom they interact.²²² Their behaviour then can be understood and attributed to strong homophobic tendencies. Violence appears to be viewed as a means of preserving their self identity as non homosexual and reinforcing their self conceptions as "masculine."²²³

Shawn suggests males respond to possible threats to their masculine self identity through substance abuse and excessive, aggressive behaviour. He states,

Guys deal with it by beating up on gays; sometimes even girls. They try and act really tough. A lot of guys get really pumped up on drugs and booze and then act real tough. Most of them are very insecure...they push things too far...like acting tough...it's too fake...it's not real.

Paul reflects,

²²²L. Visano. suggests this may account for discrepancies between information provided in private interviews and discourse regarding incidents, while in the company of group members. This Idle Trade. p. 170. A. Reiss, Jr. also notes the impact of individuals' behaviour and use of accounts in the presence of others. "The Social Integration of Queers and Peers," p. 118.

²²³Albert Reiss, Jr. "The Social Integration of Queers and Peers." p. 111.

Mostly the people who do that, [gay bash]...they feel intimidated by the gays...because they're insecure about themselves as males. I know a fair amount of people in the gay community...being I usually get drunk for free around these guys. A lot of these guys are passivists. The one's they [gaybashers] go after are like 5'8", 120 lbs. all soaking wet. Some gays I know, if they were taken on, could make history of any five guys downtown. They [gaybashers] just pick out the weak. They can't deal with the fact that they're turning tricks...that they might be bisexual.

For those who harbour great personal doubts or strongly negative self images, or who cannot cope with a daily feeling of powerlessness, violence against homosexuals or women may help them affirm their masculine self identity. Relationships with other females are often affected as these males attempt to resolve the discrepancy between their masculine self identity and homosexual actions. Paul elaborates,

Some of the guys I know who turn tricks with other guys are the most screwed up in their relationships with girls. They go for easy lays and treat women like dirt. A lot of guys beat up their women to establish that hey I'm a man...I'm masculine again.²²⁴

Femininity amongst "Street Kids"

Like masculinity, femininity is also socially constructed. In much of the literature the qualities


²²⁴Kaufman suggests, "In the psyche of the individual man it might be his denial of social powerlessness through an act of aggression. In total these acts of violence are like a ritualized acting out of our social relations of power; the dominant and the weaker, the powerful and the powerless, the active and the passive, the masculine and the feminine." M. Kaufman. "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence." p. 1.

typically associated with femininity include passivity and a nurturing nature. Within "street kid" subculture, femininity, sexuality and physical attributes are closely linked by the female respondents. April's comments provide useful insights into the connections between these elements. She states,

I've always thought femininity has to do with physical looks. If a girl is soft spoken and she has long hair and nails then she's feminine. Sometimes I feel really unfeminine being on the streets and all. I mean look at me...my hair's a mess, I bite my nails, I've got scars from fighting and I've only got the clothes you see on me. I make up for it by sleeping with guys. I figure if they want to have sex with me I must be attractive enough to interest them. If I've slept with a lot of guys I must be o.k. 'cause all these guys want me.

Several girls indicate that they view their behaviour, which often includes blatant promiscuity and open sexual conduct, as the norm. They say that it is based on the behaviour exhibited by their mothers, step mothers and/or older sisters.²²⁵ Nancy states, " I want to be just like my big sister Denise...she's so cool." Denise whom Nancy wishes to emulate, admits to having sexual intercourse with a number of other males in the group.

The need for money, drugs, and a place to stay are frequently cited as a rationalization for their behaviour. Heather states,

I'll sleep with a guy to share his drugs...go home with someone who'll supply my booze all night...in a second or sleep with anyone just so I don't have to be by myself and be alone... 

²²⁵These role models provide early socialization.

One of the most important reasons, however, seems to be an inability to differentiate between love and sex.²²⁶ This is not surprising given the respondents' family backgrounds of sexual abuse by relatives. The following excerpt effectively illustrates this point. Denise was repeatedly raped by her step father for a number of years before he left the household. She recalls,

It was difficult...on the one hand I was glad the bastard was finally gone. I hated him for all the pain...but he was my Dad and there were times when, well...like when he wasn't drunk...that he looked after me. One time I wiped out on the gravel and he picked out the little stones and cleaned up the scrapes...It's hard to explain...it's like he was two people...you could just never tell which person he was gonna be on a any given day...it was hell.

The following comments by April, Denise, Shelley and Holly illustrate further, the association these girls make between love and sexual intercourse. April comments,

Love...sex...it's the same thing. By sleeping with a lot of guys I expected to find one who'd really care about me.

Denise states, "Sex to me is love." Shelley elaborates stating, I've always felt in order for me to be loveable I have to be physically loved. I mean that two ways...the physical act of sex is love and I guess this goes along with it...to be considered physically attractive.

Holly suggests,

²²⁶B. Raychaba's findings are congruent with mine. He states, "Given their experiences, female victims of sexual abuse may display a tendency to lean towards promiscuity since they sometimes find it difficult to differentiate between love and sex." To Be On Our Own. p. 30.

It's kind of a no win situation. I mean you have sex with the guy because of this need to be built up...like...he really wants me 'cause I'm special, and yet after he's had you, you're considered trash and end up feeling that way.

Transition to Prostitution

Females are often "used" by a number of adolescent males on the streets before turning to prostitution. When they initially appear on the streets they frequently turn to the males for affection. Sharon remarks, "I thought if I let him do that [have sexual intercourse], he'd like me." When asked why she ended the various relationships with males in the group Denise responded saying,

Bill was a jerk. He'd say he liked me, but treated me like crap. I thought Chuck'd be better to me. When I found out he wasn't, I started liking someone else.

By the time the girls have "been through" a number of relationships with these boys, the transition to prostitution is not a difficult one.²²⁷ April comments,

When I first hit the streets I always said "no I'm too good for that. I'll never sell myself like that," but that's exactly what I did for so long...I finally smartened up and started getting paid for it.

April, Brenda, and Darlene respectively, articulate on this point in the following statements:

²²⁷"Particularly the girls find that in the name of free love their most casual boy-girl attraction is expected to be consummated in sexual experience, very often deviate and degrading...from this to actual prostitution is a very short step." M. Janus et al. Adolescent Runaways: Causes and Consequences. (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1987), p. 4.

April: There's no difference between sleeping with these guys and getting paid for it...like, I mean I've done it for dope. I knew if I hung out with this guy I'd come out with a whole whack of drugs and some place to shack up. It's the same thing...when you're sleeping around...at first, it's just loneliness and then it's self esteem that takes you to doing that [prostitution]. When you're doing it anyways...you just don't see anything wrong with getting paid for it...when people will abuse you anyways...when people will get you wasted and take advantage of you anyways...when they'll...you know...take you out and buy something pretty, then take you home and ..you know...get kinky as all crazy...you might as well be getting paid for it 'cause you hurt just as bad in the morning ...you know..that's the way I see it.

Brenda reflects,

Every time you get goofed around by one of the guys it makes you a bit more bitter inside. You hate yourself. You take a little more bullshitcrap It chips away at your self worth and you'll take a bit more from the next guy. They all look like a prince in the beginning. You think this is the guy.

As Darlene suggests,

At least turning tricks you're getting paid for doing it.

The rationalizations given by these girls reflect the reality of their situations.²²⁸ Females who are under the age of sixteen and "on the run," cannot be legally employed. Such rhetoric can also be viewed in terms of not only propelling themselves or others to action but also remedying any further

²²⁸Those who leave home for extended periods almost immediately face the basic problem of survival, and to survive means to fulfill the most elementary needs of food, shelter, and travel, on a daily basis. Burdened with the status of an "illegal alien," without protection and without rights, these individuals are often obliged to turn to deviant behaviour. D. Miller et al. Runaways - Illegal Aliens in Their Own Land. (New York: Praeger, 1980). p. 116.

possible damages to self-images which may be consequent upon such activities.²²⁹

Several girls profess to participate in acts of prostitution without labelling themselves as "bad" or "immoral." Justification or rationalization for their actions are commonly rooted in the need to survive²³⁰:

Kelly: It's not a matter of right and wrong..its a matter of getting money to eat. If that's what you have to do to get money, then it's pretty simple...that is what you do. I'm still a good person. I look out for my friends.

Almost every instance of prostitution engaged in by these girls is legally definable as a crime. The distinction between societal and situational deviance is evident. Representatives of the criminal justice system with whom these females have frequent interactions, have no trouble defining their behaviour in this way. Looked at from the point of view of the girls themselves however, prostitution is work that someone who has not shared their precarious lives has defined as in violation of the law. This is not to imply that they themselves do not, in large measure share those definitions. It is however to suggest that prostitution for the majority

²²⁹Laurie Taylor. "Vocabularies, Rhetorics and Grammar Problems in the Sociology of Motivation," in D. Downes., P. Rock. (eds.) Deviant Interpretations. (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 155.

²³⁰This survival ethic expounded by many males and females in this "street kid" subculture is used to justify activities aimed at securing short term material gains. M. Harris. The Dilly Boys. (London: Groom Helm, 1973). p. 21. J. Rechy. The Sexual Outlaw. (New York: Grove Press, 1977), p. 40-41. L. Visano. This Idle Trade. (Concord: Vita Sana, 1987), p. 33.

of them is simply illegal work in which underclass people often engage.²³¹ Some girls successfully separate participation in these activities from their self identity.

Not all the girls are able to reconcile their actions with their sense of self identity and personal worth. Tricia candidly expresses disgust with the whole concept of "selling herself" in the following excerpt:

I hated the idea of guys feeling like they owned me... and feeling like they could do what they want because they were paying me. I used to get really high before I went out to work and it helped 'cause you were numb...but I stopped getting stoned and drunk. One night I was with this guy, right...and I was stoned and he gave me all kinds of bills and so I was really good to him and spent extra time on him and I got back and later found out he had given me 'Canadian Tire' money.

Christine claims,

I don't care about anything. I go with guys who are seventeen or seventy if they've got the cash. It makes no difference to me.²³²

The respondents images of their own femininity affect their relations with other females in the group. The following remarks illustrate this point. Shelley comments,

My sense of self worth is based on how other people think of me. I guess that's why I'm so sensitive about people spreading rumours about me. If I find

²³¹Eleanor M. Miller. Street Woman. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), p. 10.

²³²It has been suggested that victims of sexual abuse attempt to disassociate the person from the sexual activity. Patrick B. Holland. "Sexual Abuse of Children," (paper submitted to Child and Family Services of London and Middlesex, November 1983), p. 16, cited in Brian Raychaba. To Be On Our Own. p. 83. Evidence of this statement is suggested in the respondent's comments.

out who does it I kick their head in...'cause people might believe those rumours and I'd really feel like shit if other people were thinking bad stuff about me...I'd feel worse about myself.

April comments,

I'm always comparing myself to other girls...if I think there's a girl who's more attractive than me, I hate myself and her. If she steals my boyfriend I'm gonna beat the crap out of her the first chance I get...if I don't have a reason I'll find one.

Many females distrust other women as a group. I noticed during my field research that there was very little long lasting camaraderie amongst the girls. Comments from April, Brenda and Denise illustrate and confirm this observation.

April indicates,

I don't really like other girls...well really, I think they don't like me. They have something out for me. It's just vibrations...just a feeling I get. Girls intimidate me. I always seem to get screwed around. I guess I play a large role in that. I always seem to have something bad to say about them like, "she thinks she's great"...or "she's a hosebag"...or "she's spun out." That causes trouble.

Brenda explains her distrust of women,

I have a real attitude towards other girls. They're great at gossiping, stabbing you in the back, taking your boyfriend...taking your favourite blue jeans. Girls have really goofed me around a lot. This one girl she told my friend I said she was a slut and I never said that but my friend doesn't believe me.

Denise mentions,

I have a problem with other girls. I can take a compliment from a guy...I guess 'cause I know what he's after...but if a girl gives me a compliment I think what are her motives? What does she want? Girls will hang around me to get to the guys I'm hanging around...and make like buddy-buddy. Then when they've got what they want, they turn on you.

Female respondents frequently mention that when they have befriended a lone girl and accepted her into the group, she has betrayed their confidence and "turned on them." The following account illustrates this situation. Brenda states,

I introduced Holly to other members of the group. She slept with every one of the male members of the group including my boyfriend, in a one week period. Denise and I are going to get her for that...I went out on a limb and brought this girl into the group, and she disgraced not herself, but me, by acting like a slut and taking my boyfriend. Now everyone else in the group thinks that I'm sleazy too. It's guilt by association.

Unacceptable social behaviour is the cause of many problems amongst female group members. Darlene states,

One girl calls another girl a bitch or a slut or something like that, for sleeping with their boyfriend. Then she'll pick a fight with her.

Sharon comments,

I've had girls make passes at my boyfriends...embarrass me purposely...talk about things I've done, that were embarrassing at the time and embarrassing relived...talk about things I've said to people...I don't find any humour in it.

Interaction Between the Sexes

"Street kids'" conceptions of their own masculinity and femininity are important when considering interaction between the sexes within the group. The males adopt a conservative, stereotypical masculine role with females and exhibit a front of bravado.²³³ This is not something which is

²³³When walking down the street with one of the boys from the group, a stranger whistled at me as we passed by. Brian looked agitated and said, "if you were my girlfriend, I'd

easily articulated rather, it is considered 'normal'. They profess to react in certain ways because it is "expected that men must act that way." Each of the sexes has certain expectations not only for themselves but for the opposite sex as well. Often unrealistic expectations negatively affected their interactions. Relationships tend to be short, intense and often volatile. An amount of social distancing by males, from females in the group, was noted during periods of participant observation. This sense of "otherness" was articulated in the way in which the males referred to the females.²³⁴

An actor's social character and his or her relationship to roles are always evolving as the result of interaction with others.²³⁵ Interaction between the sexes appears to be based on a set of preconceived notions about the worth of females as a sex as well as being based on an individual's merits. Women are thought to be the weaker, less intelligent sex. These beliefs are shown in men's attitudes towards females. It is also evident in interactions between

punch that guy out for whistling at you." When questioned about such a response he explained: "By doing that he's belittling me...He's not showing any respect for me and the fact you're mine." This masculine bravado often becomes chauvinistic in relation to females.

²³⁴References to women were often crude and sexist. In casual conversations, girls in the group and girlfriends were referred to as "whores," "sluts," "loose women," "pigs," "tramps," "wenches," "old Lady's" "war pigs," "butches," and "dykes."

²³⁵L. Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 6

males and females. Males tend to want to view females in a stereotypical way as the weaker sex to be watched over and allowed only to participate in activities they deem appropriate. Girls were frequently recipients of jokes regarding male superiority and crude sexual innuendos. At the drop-in centre, during a game of table tennis one boy commented in front of all the others, "girls are only good for one thing..." The other four boys present laughed and nodded in general agreement. Though stated in jest, the underlying belief in the validity of his statement was clearly evident from the response of the others. The general feeling among the boys was that boys were competent and the girls were useless.

Heather admits,

Guys say, "You're just a woman. Just shut up and sit there." I've been called a dizzy blonde so often, by so many of the guys, I've begun to believe it's true.²³⁶

April is very perceptive in her analysis of the situation:

It's tough being a girl and being on the streets. The guys who are on the streets with you, have poor self images themselves. By putting the girls down, they say to themselves, "well all these people put me down-here's a girl on the streets. I'll put her down so I won't feel quite so bad about myself." So the guys you're turning to try and build yourself up are the same one's who end up pushing you even further down...It's crazy.

The females are not completely willing to accept the roles assigned to them by their male counterparts. Linda

²³⁶Male and female participants in this subcultural group tended to have extremely low self images.

recalls an incident where she fights to be accepted on her own terms,

You have to prove yourself to the guys...that you can be as good as they are. I was in jail and me and some guys were playing basketball. The guys wouldn't pass me the ball. I had to fight for it. I literally dropped this guy who told me to go do "girl stuff."

The majority of males in this "street kid" group seem to feel that females are there to be used for self serving sexual gratification and are viewed as sexual objects by the males. A relationship is considered a form of sexual outlet. Henry comments, "guys think a relationship is a fuck and that's it." The pattern of promiscuous sexual behaviour commonly exhibited by females in this group is viewed by the majority of male respondents as a way of justifying their behaviour towards girls, and interaction with them. The following disclaimers and accounts attempt to justify their stance and dismiss their culpability in contributing to this pattern of interaction. Todd declares,

They [the girls in the group] are treated like the loose women they are. I don't mean to sound like an asshole but you look at it...You've got to admit, they're loose, 'cause they've slept around...like Denise. I know for a fact...I know at least fifteen guys she's slept with...she's slept with pretty well every guy in the group and even a couple of wanna be's.

Mark reiterates this view, commenting,

The guys see that [the girls] they're all over this guy and a new guy comes over and they're all over him. April...she's been sitting with me on the bench and she's had her arm around me and when this other guy she knows comes by, she'll jump up and run over and give him a hug...a lot of guys want more

than that and a lot of guys'll take it further than that. As I see it, it's more or less telling them you're a certain way.

When discussing the treatment of girls on the street Mark pointedly remarks, "They're treated like a piece of meat." He continues by stating, "That's because the majority of them act like sluts." Chuck reaffirms this sentiment stating, "I might screw around with a girl on the streets but I would not care about her. I go out with nice girls." Chuck defines nice girls as girls who live at home with their parents. This double standard of sexual morality is not a new concept and it is present in larger contemporary society.

Young girls "hitting the streets" are viewed by the males in the same way as females who have been "on the streets" for a longer period of time. The preconceived ideas held by males about these females, affects the way in which the girls in the group are treated. Chuck puts into words the general consensus that exists among the males in the group. Chuck states, "Whores and sluts live on the streets. If you aren't one, then you soon will be one." During one period of participant observation I noted that one of the males in the group was harassing a new girl who had just run away from her foster home and had begun hanging around. He stated, "You might be able to live on the streets, but you'll make your living on your back, so why not get used to it now?"

Quite often the girls allow the boys' derogatory comments to go unchallenged. I have been present when the

boys have directed rude, sexist comments at the girls and they have merely laughed. The boys are somewhat selective in choosing the girls to whom this type of verbal abuse is directed. Usually girls on the street were the recipients of the majority of comments. There are occasions when the girls do not accept this verbal abuse from the males. Such an instance is recounted by April:

There have been several times guys have hit a raw cord...O.K...A guy called me a cocksucker at a party and I walked up and hit him in the face with a beer bottle...I just drilled him, and he hit me back, and I hit him right back again. I take a lot of shit from guys but it's like he hits that one cord and I'll be all over him.

Other girls are tough, dominant and willing to join in fights. Several of the girls with whom I spoke exhibit group solidarity and actively participate in group fights as well as fighting in their own self interest. This type of behaviour however appears to be an exception rather than the general pattern. Those females who are assertive are often seen as undesirable by the males and even by other females. Girls themselves refer to tough, self sufficient, girls as "butches."

A number of females exhibit aggression in their interactions with other females and males. Linda suggests the threat of violence is often employed as a way of avoiding further problems. Linda notes,

We are more aggressive maybe than typical girls...you learn pretty quickly. It's tough on the streets and you've gotta adjust to make it...or

you'll be walked all over.²³⁷ It has to do with intimidation...sometimes you've got to be intimidating to survive, without becoming too butch.

Physical altercations were not uncommon. Julie suggests,

You gotta fight sometimes so people won't pick on you. If you don't you'll end up taking a lot of shit from everybody 'cause everybody'll think you're an easy mark and walk all over you.

It would appear that the threat of physical violence which these females left in the childhood home, is amplified within this street "family." Violence within the "street kid" subculture can be seen in the wider context of the prevalent social orders of today.²³⁸ Within contemporary society, violence has been institutionalized as an acceptable means of solving conflicts.

While some females can be violent, most girls appear to be on the receiving end of the spectrum. Those girls who have suffered sexual abuse in their home, tend to have a greater susceptibility to repeated victimization on the streets. Violence directed towards girls "on the streets" is a harsh reality within the context of this subculture. Boys in the group claim they "would never hit a girl" and some suggested they would "beat up anyone who laid a hand on a girl." Despite these claims, several girls admit they have been beaten up and raped by males at parties or by their

²³⁷The girls in Anne Campbell's study also subscribe to the "jungle view of the streets, that only the strong survive." The Girls in the Gang. pp. 264-265.

²³⁸M. Kaufman. "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence." p. 5.

boyfriends. One girl stated the boy she was dating dragged her to the ground by her hair and in the process ripped a handful of it out. Andrea claims,

My last boyfriend beat me up. I let this guy hit me. Ever since I was in that relationship where I got badly beaten I've made sure I've had at least one or two guys who were tough and would kill you for fifty bucks...and made sure I was a sweetheart in their back pockets. That way if anything happens I'll always have someone to turn to.

The boy Andrea referred to was one of the respondents who told me he would never hit a girl. When I confronted him with this discrepancy, he responded with the following justification:

She was trying to screw around with my head...playing head games. If she's gonna act like a fucking pig, she's gonna get treated like dirt. She slept with my best buddy while I was going out with her...girls like her don't count...I told you I'd never hit a girl and I wouldn't...but she doesn't count, she was just a cunt.

This account reflects his attempt to justify his behaviour by making a distinction between the type of individual who can and cannot be victimized.²³⁹ Andrea did not fall into his definition of a "girl" and thus to physically abuse her was not considered unacceptable.

Similarly Sharon recounts an incident when she told her "boyfriend" she might be pregnant:

He beat me up and kicked me in the stomach. When I do get hit..when things start getting violent like that...the whole world starts spinning...going in slow motion. Something happens in my head. I hear myself speaking and it's all slow motion.

²³⁹G. Sykes, D. Matza. "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency." p. 665.

After this incident she returned to him and continues to be periodically brutalized. April admits she has been assaulted by her boyfriends on numerous occasions. She states,

I've been beaten up for saying I'm pregnant. The one time I actually was. A lot of girls say they're pregnant to have somebody to latch on to. I know of girls on the streets who try to get pregnant so they'll have a guy to look after them.

Sharon adds,

It's a form of power. Like say you say "I'm pregnant." and he says "get rid of it" you can say "No way." At least you'll be able to support yourself on mother's allowance and you'll have someone to love you 'cause babies always love and need their Moms...or if the guy says "Don't you dare get an abortion" you can use that to threaten him...You say, "I'm gonna have one if I want one." It's a sense of power-of being in control...at least for a while.

It would appear that some females regard pregnancy as an attempt to gain control over one aspect of their lives. The males' reactions are not, however, predictable. In a number of instances the males reject the girls and deny any responsibility or react with violence against the female. Bill recounts the incident which occurred when Sharon told her boyfriend she might be pregnant:

When she told him she was pregnant he was really mad and yelled at her. She started crying and tried to put her arms around him. He kinda pushed her away and she went to grab his arm and he turned and kneed her right in the stomach...real hard...he kicked while she was on the ground and she started crying harder and he told her to shut her face and she kept crying and he kicked her again.

This type of abuse is not restricted to the girls on the streets.²⁴⁰ "Studies show that 11 percent to 52 percent of all assaults occur in the family."²⁴¹ The causes for the existence of such abuse and reasons for continuing cycles of violence within the family, are complex issues which extend beyond the scope of this thesis. I do contend some girls tolerance of such behaviour towards them may be the result of their early socialization and may be linked in part to their concept of their own femininity, and role as a female within the family. In the respondents' childhood families this type of behaviour was often accepted. Within the "street family" their relationships are frequently patterned after what they have learned during their earlier socialization in their families. Shelley admits,

This guy [her last boyfriend] turned out to be a carbon copy of my father. He was abusive...hitting me and talking to me like I was nothing...telling me he hated the way I dressed..the way I talked...he'd constantly make fun of me in front of the others.

Pam comments,

I used to justify being hit. I'd say he beats me up because he was beaten as a kid and he used to see

²⁴⁰Estimates suggest 24,000 women in Canada are battered wives...and that over ten percent of the homicide victims in Canada are women murdered by their husbands. S.G. Cole. "Home Sweet Home," in M. Fitzgerald, C. Guberman, M. Wolfe. (eds.) Still Ain't Satisfied: Canadian Feminism Today. (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1982), p. 56.

²⁴¹ Eleanor Miller. Street Woman. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), p. 35

his Dad and step-mom fight like that and I would justify it...that makes it o.k. for him to hit me.

Brenda admits,

I accept a lot of ^{crap} shit from guys. They walk all over me. I guess I figured that's the way it is. That's life.

In a revealing conversation Kelly remarks,

Once you get to a certain point...I've seen so many girls that drink...drug and sleep their way around on the streets...getting abused badly by the other guys. Those are the girls who are hurting the most. The girls who end up taking the most abuse...they've just given up on themselves I guess.

As S. G. Cole in her article "Home Sweet Home" suggests, "One out of four battered women experienced violence as a child. Far from being convinced that family life is lacking, she assumes that violence is a part of the family package deal."²⁴²

This victimization continues once these girls are on the streets and integrated into the "street family."

Summary

From the data in this chapter it becomes apparent that "street kid" subculture allows the continuation of the victimization experienced by members in their childhood families. Sexual abuse within this "street family" is present in the exploitation of females and males in prostitution. Within the group itself, the abuse of females through rape,

²⁴² S.G. Cole. "Home Sweet Home" in Still Ain't Satisfied: Canadian Feminism Today. (eds.) M. Fitzgerald, C. Guberman, M. Wolfe. p.

and the exploitation of them by the males, is further evidence of this parallel.

Physical abuse in the form of violence and assault are exhibited. Males frequently fight amongst themselves and brutalize female members. Females also assault one another.

Emotional abuse is also evident and is reflected in betrayals by others in the group, and through such actions as stealing one another's girlfriends or boyfriends or violating one another's trust. In the relationships between males and females within the group this mistrust is clearly exhibited. Girls are treated as objects by the boys and females' need for affection and attention, used by males to their own advantage.

The evidence from the data suggests the reality of the social world they have constructed and explains some of the inconsistencies regarding the sexes and specific "accepted" gender roles. I do not suggest all respondents adopt these views unconditionally or accept gender roles that are assigned to them by others. Those who do not conform, however, are seen by others in the group at best, as misguided, and at worst as abhorrent. It is necessary then, to look at the over all implications of these findings.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

This thesis establishes a link between street life and individuals' previous home lives and details the process which aids the transition between the two cultures. By recounting some of the social conditions which have led to involvement in street life and the social interactions which comprise their day-to-day lives once on the street, the existence of these parallels is shown. The motives for leaving the family include a combination of factors such as disorder, physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Each respondent's background history is personal, but it is not unique. Common elements of abuse including rape and incest, neglect and disruptions in the home, are found amongst the overwhelming majority of adolescents in this study.

"Street kid" subculture represents an attempt to reconstruct socially cohesive elements lacking in the childhood home life. It is, however, characterized by many of the same dysfunctional elements. Physical violence amongst group members is not uncommon. Sexual and emotional abuse are also prevalent. These factors are outlined in detail within the body of this thesis. It would appear then, adolescents

coming from these types of homes form a replica of the family that spawned them, on the streets.

Eisenstadt suggests, "Youth groups only develop in those societies where the family is inadequate for the socialization of young people."²⁴³ I suggest in a number of instances their home lives may provide a type of 'presocialization' into the adolescent street subculture. Some of the attitudes and views of these individuals may be developed to some extent while still in the traditional home. Once "on the streets" these views, attitudes and outlooks become further inculcated.

While this "street kid" subculture contributes to the survival of its participants, it is also a major source of their continued victimization. This study provides evidence to support my hypothesis linking victimization in the childhood family with the continuing abuse in this deviant adolescent street group. It also contributes to the understanding of the cycles of abuse in families. It points to the complexities of the situation and possible factors which contribute to its perpetuation.

By looking closely at their lives, participation in deviant activities may be placed in a clearer perspective. Their behaviour appears to be emerging from a particular way of life, based on a set of preconceived ideas about social

²⁴³S. N. Eisenstadt. From Generation to Generation. (Collier-MacMillan, 1964), p. 15. in Fred Milson. Youth in a Changing Society. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

relations. There has been relatively little analytic concern with how females fit into "street kid" subculture. I see this study as posing a serious challenge to studies such as those by Cohen or Fyvel, in which women are seen as marginal to street subcultures. The description of the social organization and interaction within this group suggests that one cannot explain patterns of behaviour of males, without examining both male and female roles and the nature of the interaction between the sexes.

I contend that one of the reasons for the continuing cycle of abuse experienced by the majority of respondents in this study, lies in their conceptualization of appropriate gender roles. This thesis, then, may be seen as complementing some earlier work on females and subcultures. It is one more step in the direction of what should be a cumulative effort on the part of social scientists to describe and analyze females' and males' gender roles within particular subcultures. These roles are direct reflections of patterns of established gender roles in the larger society. The tradition of micro-sociology reflects larger societal concerns relating to patriarchy and gender discrimination.²⁴⁴

While "street kid" subculture is distinct in many ways from mainstream culture, it does share elements of the larger

²⁴⁴Visano suggests, "Homophobia, patriarchy, gender- and aged based discrimination can be effectively pursued within the traditions of micro-sociology." L. Visano. This Idle Trade. (Concord: Vita Sana, 1987), p. 319

parent culture.²⁴⁵ I suggest in several significant ways, "street kid" subculture is a small scale version of society, complete with many of the same problems. What the members of this street family have created is not a new structure, but the old one in a different milieu. "Street kid" subculture is not a counter culture but a microcosm of contemporary society. It is a distorted mirror image in which abuse, disorder, and violence remain major issues, but are found within this street subculture.

The existence of "street kid" subculture as a social phenomenon can be related to deeper, more general disruptions in the social fabric itself. "Street kid" subculture draws on parent culture, and in the process, can be seen as illuminating many of the patterns and problems of certain groups in the larger society. Cohen, in his work on gangs, has suggested that gangs do indeed invert the middle class value system.²⁴⁶ They do not however explicitly exist to challenge the status quo. In my own research on "street kids" I found that crimes are not committed for their own sake. They are not symbols of revolt or gestures of alienation. The breaking of laws by these adolescents, is often a part of

²⁴⁵M. Brake. Comparative youth Culture. p. 4.

²⁴⁶Cohen suggests, "The delinquent subculture takes its norms from the larger culture but turns them upside down. The delinquent's conduct is right, by the standards of his subculture, precisely because it is wrong by the norms of the larger culture." A. K. Cohen. Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955), p. 28.

their way of life and means of survival. As I have suggested, acts of theft for the majority of adolescents in this study was acceptable. It was from whom that the variances in degree of acceptability occur. "Street kid" subculture does not produce potential revolutionaries.²⁴⁷ On the contrary, their views in some matters are often quite conservative and stereotypical.²⁴⁸ Evidence of this can be seen in their ideas about male-female interactions.²⁴⁹ The double standard of morality which exists in relation to females is a blatant example.

"Street Kids" presently constitute a social problem. There is an important difference between a social problem and a public issue. A social problem is recognized by some, but not necessarily a large segment of the population whereas a public issue is recognized by a broad section of society, particularly policy-making elements.²⁵⁰ As the number of "street kids" in this city continues to grow and the severity

²⁴⁷Brake suggests, "Most youth subcultures unless they have an articulated political element are not in any sense oppositional—they may be rebellious, they may celebrate and dramatise specific styles and values but their rebellion seldom reaches an articulated opposition." M. Brake. Comparative Youth Culture. (London: Routledge and Kegan paul, 1985), p. 6.

²⁴⁸A. Campbell. The Girls in the Gang. p. 237.

²⁴⁹In understanding the fundamentally conservative structure and values of the gang, the position of girls becomes more explicable. A. Campbell. The Girls in the Gang. p. 242.

²⁵⁰D. Finkelhor. Sexually Victimized Children. (New York: The Free Press, 1979), p. 7

of their situations increase, I expect this problem will escalate into a public issue, as it has already in some major cities. A change in outlook will have certain implications for social policy. Issues surrounding service agencies mandate of family reunification, issues of unemployment and lack of affordable housing and shelters will become highlighted. This is necessary before changes can occur.

I have suggested that a cycle of victimization prevails. The majority of youths who have been victimized in the home, often become victimizers themselves. This has serious implications for society as a whole. Widespread public acknowledgement of this cycle of abuse will eventually alter the status of this issue. Much of the sociological analysis of violence in our society, implies violence is learned by witnessing and experiencing social violence.²⁵¹ The implications from this study group are evident. The possibility that these adolescents will themselves be future child and wife abusers cannot be ruled out.

Another major area of concern in relation to this particular target population includes homelessness. As Visano suggests, Within the last two decades, changes have occurred in housing trends. Most notably, there continues to be a movement towards gentrification or "deconversion." The downtown core is prepared for further redevelopment, and the

²⁵¹Such experiences of transmitted violence are a reality, as the analysis of wife battering indicates-for many batterers were themselves abused as children. M. Kaufman. p. 6.

construction of high cost rental housing. Inexpensive rooming houses and boarding homes are rapidly disappearing in this, and many other cities' older neighbourhoods. In addition to deconversion, increased apartment rents threaten to deplete an already critical shortage of affordable housing.²⁵² As a result of these conditions the number of homeless in general, and "street kids" in particular, is increasing.

Recently the sexual patterns of "street kids" have become of particular interest to public health workers and the general public because of the alarm over the contraction and transmission of AIDS.²⁵³ This target population is considered to be at high risk since a number of these adolescents are sexually promiscuous and are intravenous drug users. It is estimated that 50, 000 or more Canadians are now infected with the Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (H.I.V). Since the infection was first reported in Canada in 1982, over 1,400 people have developed AIDS, the most severe stage of the infection and over 700 of these people have died.²⁵⁴

²⁵² L. Visano. This Idle Trade. p. 80.

²⁵³"Forty of the eighty five provincially financed social service agencies serving children in Metro Toronto were questioned on how they would react to the discovery that a young client was infected with the A.I.D.S. virus." This provides an indication of a possible future concern given the lifestyle of many street youth. June Callwood. "Fear and confusion mark coming face to face with AIDS patients," The Globe and Mail. July, 1989.

²⁵⁴"AIDS: The New Facts of Life," Health and Welfare Canada. (Canadian Public Health Association, February, 1988), p. 3.

Information on "street kids" social relations and sexual patterns may provide public health workers with some of the underlying reasons for this type of behaviour and a more accurate picture of their sexual habits. With such an understanding it may be possible to develop effective programs which can relay important information to these individuals.

From this research a number of avenues of further investigation become apparent. It is vital to analyze group structure, activities,²⁵⁵ as well as individual group members' perceptions of their views and behaviour. The discourse which surrounds these adolescents' experiences and activities, is an integral part of this subculture. Perceptions of the structure of their lives provided by the members of this group offer an exceptional opportunity to explore this particular population. The structure of the subculture reveals many of the underlying attitudes held by members in the subculture. By examining the activities of members within this "street kid" group, it becomes possible to understand the

²⁵⁵Cohen suggests, "It would be desirable to continue and expand research on delinquent groups as social systems, that is, research whose object is the structure, the processes, the history and the subculture of the group as such rather than the delinquent individual...Such research should investigate systematically the origin and dissolution of these groups, their status systems, their spirit and ideologies, their systems for control and maintenance of morale and their attitudes toward interaction with other agencies and groups in the wider community." A.K. Cohen. Delinquent Boys. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955), pp. 173-174

discrepancies between their proported beliefs and contradictory actions.²⁵⁶

Much of the existing theory is based on the research of Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin and Miller, and focuses on the distinctions that are made between the value systems of various subcultures linking them to certain social classes. I am not suggesting that these are not important areas of study however, analysis of the structural components within subcultural groups also provide valuable, universal insights. By studying the development of certain attitudes and professed values and the process involved in the transmission of these elements, a clearer understanding of "street kid" subculture can possibly be explicated. An example is the "presentist" attitude of many respondents. There is little long term planning²⁵⁷ and survival is on a day-to-day basis.

Two lines of investigation seem to be critical at this stage. I have attempted to stimulate a critical evaluation of thinking about "street kids" and their way of life. Presently, little sociological research on "street kids" exists. There is a need for more ethnographic, empirical research in Canada to be able to confirm the extent to which

²⁵⁶As William Whyte suggests, "The general pattern of life is important, but it can be constructed only through observing the individuals whose actions make up that pattern." William Whyte. Street Corner Society. p. xix.

²⁵⁷Cohen refers to this as "short-run hedonism." A.K. Cohen. The Delinquent Boys. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955), p.30.

trends exhibited by "street kids" in this study, can be generalized. The Canadian context differs from the American one. It is important to have Canadian research since studies conducted in the United States and Britain have a different emphasis and different factors influencing their emergence and direction. For example, Yablonsky in his study of New York gangs suggests that much of the dislocation and alienation experienced by these adolescents stems from racial discrimination experienced as immigrants in America. The Black and Puerto Rican slums of the East and the Mexican American "barrios" of the Southwest and California cities are prime American examples.²⁵⁸ Ethnicity is not a major factor in the group I studied.

Living conditions, including life in slums and project buildings, combined with economic factors have been cited as attributing to high rates of deviancy amongst adolescents in the United States. Several U.S. cities over the last couple of decades have had high rates of unemployment of young Black and Hispanic males. Lack of employment plays a role in the perpetuation of "street kids'" predicaments but not in the same way. Many female adolescents are too young to be legally employed. In some cities in the United States there is a lack of any jobs even for those who are legally employable.

²⁵⁸M. W. Klein. Street Gangs and Street Workers. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 59

Second, there is a need for greater exploration and understanding of why individuals living on the streets violate the rules by which they profess to live. Cohen suggests, "For the understanding of delinquency...we must discover the significant respects in which this behaviour may vary, describe our delinquents in terms of these dimensions of variation, and construct our theories to fit the richness and particularity of the data."²⁵⁹ As more information is gathered regarding the intricacies surrounding "street kids" motivations for expounding such street maxims, their blatant violation of these maxims, and group members' attempts through their discourse to explain such discrepancies, it may become possible to further illuminate "street kid" subculture in particular, and adolescent subcultures in general.

²⁵⁹A.K. Cohen. Delinquent Boys. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955), p. 173

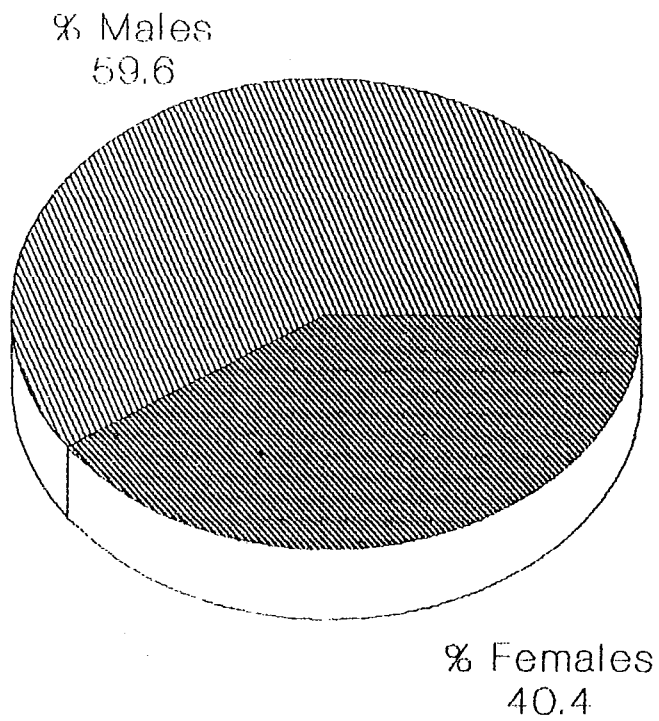
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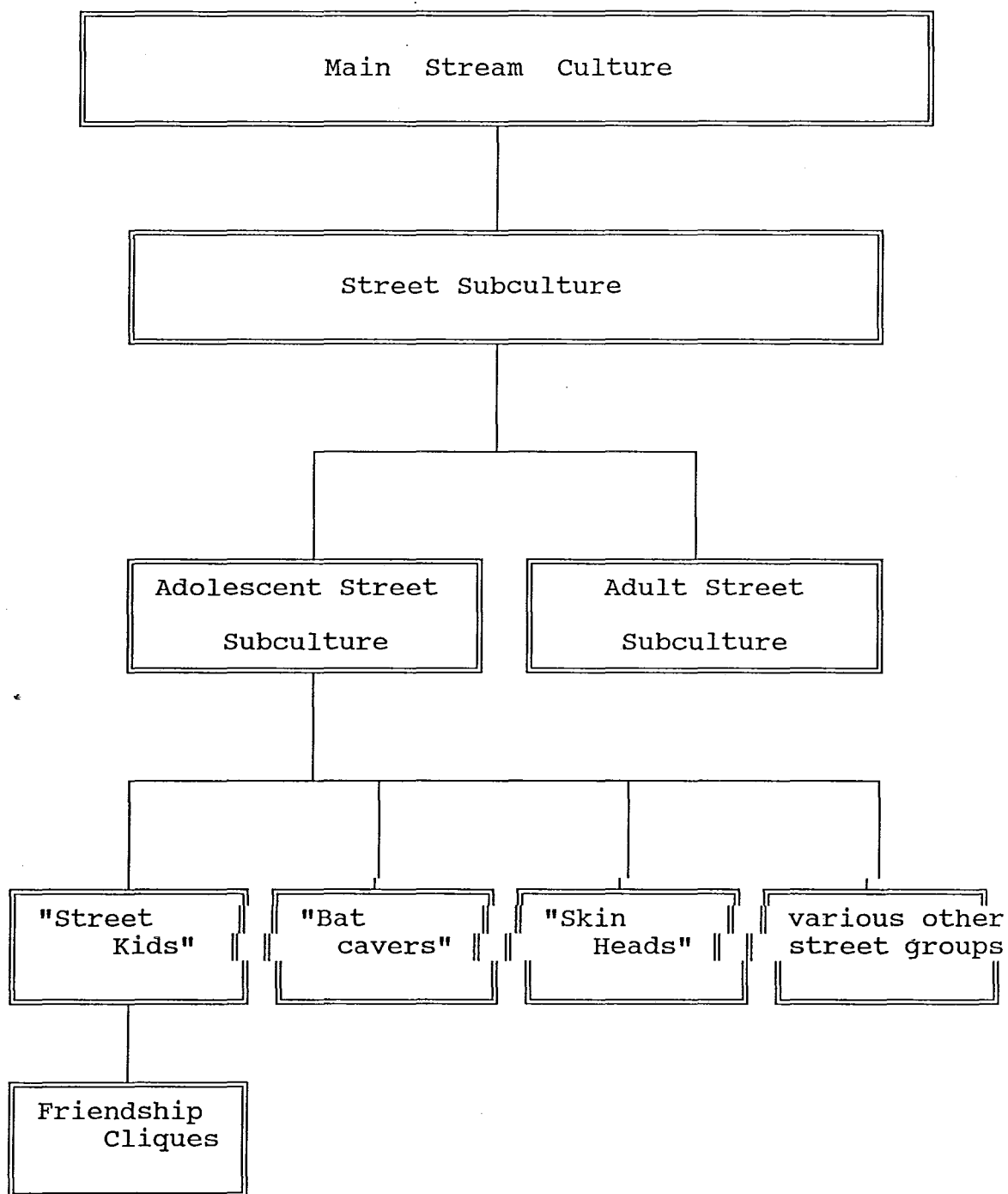
Appendix A - Table 1

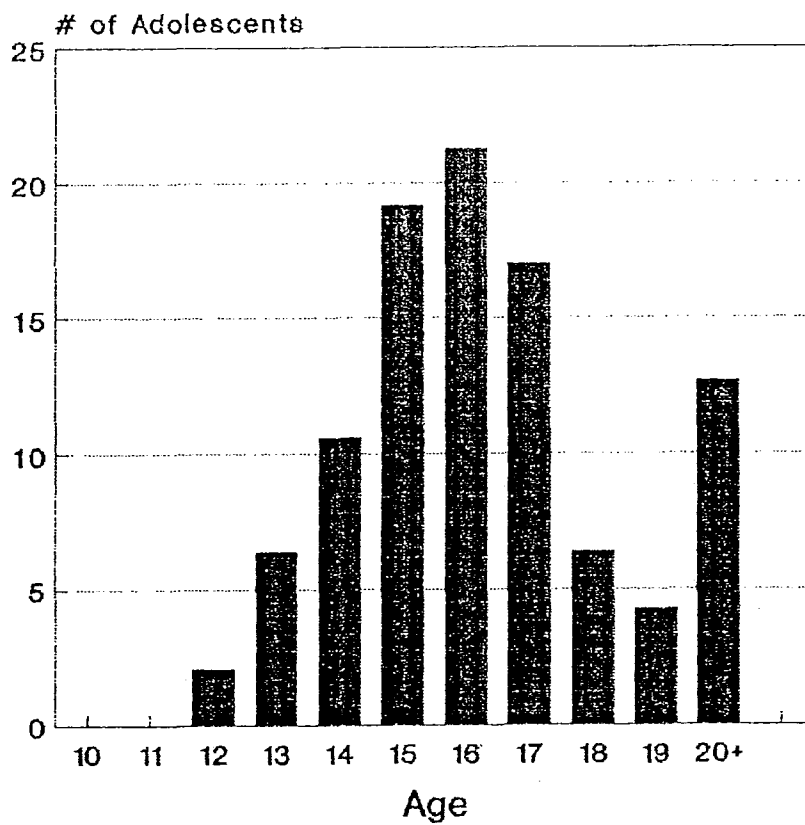
Graph of Male / Female Respondents

28 Males
19 Females

47 Total



Appendix A - Table 2Situating "Street Kids" in the Subcultural Framework

Appendix A - Table 3Age of Respondents in this Study

Appendix BList of Potential Interview Questions

- (1) Begin with Brief personal background. Indicate age, schooling, where respondent was born, raised, involvement in any agencies, group homes, other institutions, etc.
- (2) Why and how did you become involved in street life?
- (3) Describe how you felt your first few days actually on the streets. Any difficulties encountered?
- (4) Did you know any other "kids" on the streets initially? If so, How did you know them?
- (5) Where were/are you staying?
- (6) Explain the "set up" of groups on the streets as you see and understand it.
- (7) Are there groups of "kids"?
- (8) How do you know who belongs to a certain group?
- (9) Why did you choose to become involved in a group?
- (10) Describe the structure of the friendship cliques within the "street kid" group.
- (11) Are certain individuals more respected than others? What gains/loses respect?
- (12) Are there certain objects that denote acceptance into the group?
- (13) How did you have to prove you could be trusted by others?
- (14) Were you tested in some way? (Initiation)
- (15) How do you know to trust someone new on the streets?
- (16) Do you have a nickname? Why do you use a nickname? How did it originate?

- (17) How do you know who to watch out for?
- (18) How do you know what things you should and should not do on the streets?
- (19) How do you know where to get (a) food? (b) money? (c) drugs?
- (20) What do you do when you are caught by the police for.... (selling drugs, turning tricks, being in possession of drugs, assaults, etc.)
- (21) How do you feel about stealing (a) generally? (b) from parents? (c) from other group members?
- (22) Discussion of prostitution. (i)males (ii) females.
- (i) Why turn tricks with other men?
How do you reconcile your own sense of masculinity with this activity?
Gay bashing / turning tricks. How do you reconcile these actions?
Does this activity affect your relationship with girls?
Does this activity affect relationships with other male group members?
- (ii) Why?
How did you get into turning tricks?
Does this activity affect outlook of self?
How does this affect relationships with guys?
- (23) Discussion of friendships, relationships, concept of loyalty within the group.
Do you find friendships on the street to be close?
Would you look out for others in the group if they were in trouble? To what extent?
- (24) What are reasons for fights amongst "street kids?"
- (25) Is having a reputation important?
- (26) Discussion of violence on the streets.
Violence within the group. (i) against girls (ii) against guys.
- (27) Discussion of individuals views of masculinity and femininity.
How do you view females in the group?
Treatment of females on the streets.
How are they perceived?

Where do you "fit in" in the group?

(28) Referral - Do you know anyone else from the group / on the streets, who would be willing to talk with me? Will you provide an introduction?

Any combination of these questions were used to lead into discussions with respondents being interviewed. Other questions were asked spontaneously which related to the responses given by the individual.

Questions were sometimes worded differently and only questions which were relevant to the respondent were discussed at any length. For instance if one of the boys in the study professed to know nothing about male prostitution then I would not dwell on the topic.

These questions were used as a means of initiating and directing conversation. Frequently respondents would be asked a particular question and in their answer they would respond to the next four or five listed questions without prompting. Similarly when some respondents discussed their backgrounds at length they covered many of the questions on this list.

Appendix CGlossary of Terms

A.W.O.L.: Absent With Out Leave.

B and E: Break and Enter. This involves breaking into homes and stealing.

Blade: Knife.

Bumming smokes: The act of getting someone else to give that individual a cigarette.

Burned: The act of being cheated or "ripped off" by someone.

Burn out: An individual who loses some of their mental capacity as the result of extended, often abusive drug use.

Butch: A female who in appearances and actions is tough and masculine looking.

C.C.: Closed Custody.

Cid: Slang term for the illicit drug acid.

Cop Shop: Police Department's Headquarters located in the downtown city core.

Dick: Slang term for a police officer.

Diddlers: A pedophile. An older man who sexually abuses young children.

Dope: Slang term for illegal drugs.

Easy roll: An individual who, by their looks or actions is a likely target to be robbed and beaten.

Eight Ball: Slang term for a combination of drugs.

Gay bashing: The act of physically assaulting a homosexual.

Geek: A derogatory term used to describe someone.

Granny bashing: The act of physically assaulting a senior citizen.

Getting high: Intoxication.

Goof: A derogatory term used in reference to someone who is not to be respected or trusted. (Its use can cause a physical altercation between the individual using it and the person to whom it is directed.)

Happening situation/scene: The centre of some sort of action.

Has been's: Individuals who have been involved in "street kid" subculture.

Head in the glue bag: Someone who is in the habit of glue sniffing.

Heat scorer: An individual who attracts police attention.

Loogin: Slang term for someone who is crazy.

Narc: A police officer with the narcotics division.

Oil: Hash oil. An illicit drug.

Old Lady: Term used to refer to one's girlfriend or mother.

Pig: A derogatory term for a girl who has sex with several guys in the group and thus develops a "bad" reputation. Pig is also a term used to refer to a police officer.

Porch Monkey: A derogatory term used to refer to a black person. Often used as an insult to antagonize.

Poser: Someone who pretends to be someone they are not.

Pot: Slang term for marijuana.

Rat: A derogatory label for a person who informs the police about the actions of another individual.

Regulars: Term used to refer to group members who are presently actively involved in the activities of the group.

Rolling someone: The act of assaulting an individual and confiscating their money and valuable possessions.

Scam: A scheme. Usually illegal.

Scamming someone: Trying to take advantage of some one else.

Slashing: A form of attempting suicide in which an individual slits their wrists.

Sleeper hold: A physical action used by one person against another individual which causes the victim to loose momentary consciousness.

Solid: Trustworthy. A person who "minds their own business" and does not bother others.

Stoolie: A stool pigeon. A label applied to someone who provides information to the police.

Turning Tricks: Prostitution.

U.C.: Under Cover police officer.

Wanna be's: Prospective group members. Individuals who want to become part of a group, but who have not yet been accepted.

War pig: A derogatory term used to refer to a female who has slept with several males in a short period of time.

Wasted: Intoxicated.

Weed: Marijuana.

Wench: a female.

Wimp: Term used to describe a physically weak individual. Also used to refer to someone who has gained little respect from others. Application of this term indicates someone is low on the social scale.

Wired: Intoxicated.

Working the street: A euphemism for the act of prostitution.

Wussie: Someone who is afraid to try something. It is often used to challenge the person's sense of self worth.

Appendix ETable of Respondents in this Study.

Identifying Names in the study. (in alphabetical order.)

Male Respondents *

Allen
Andy
Bill
Brian
Chris
Chuck
Dale
Darren
Dave
Francis
Henry
Jake
Jamie
Jason
Jeff
John
Mark
Mike
Nick
Paul
Randy
Richie
Rob
Sante
Shawn
Todd
Tom
Warren

Female Respondents *

Andrea
April
Brenda
Christine
Darlene
Denise
Heather
Holly
Julie
Kelly
Linda
Melanie
Nancy
Pam
Pattie
Penny
Sharon
Shelley
Tricia

* These names are pseudonyms. All names have been changed to protect the identity of the informants.

After Word on the Research Experience

I feel I should comment on some of my experiences while conducting this research. Access, particularly to deviant adolescents, can pose problems for the researcher. Their behaviour is often stigmatized and frequently illegal. Problems in gaining access and developing rapport can be exaggerated when certain of the researcher's ascribed characteristics differ markedly from those of the subjects.²⁶⁰ The fact I am a youthful looking individual had both its advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, I was able to appear inconspicuous when conducting field research. There were other times when looking like a teenager had its drawbacks. For example, one evening I was standing with two female respondents, aged fifteen and seventeen. We were deep in conversation when a sixteen year old boy to whom I had not been introduced, sauntered up beside me, threw me to the ground, and then proceeded to ask me out on a date. He thought that I was also sixteen years old. My appearance made these kinds of misperceptions possible, and it was necessary

²⁶⁰W. Gordon West. "Access to Adolescent Deviants and Deviance," in W. Shaffir et al. (eds.) Fieldwork Experience: Qualitative Approaches to Social Research. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), p. 31.

on occasion, to remind some respondents of my researcher role.

There were points during this field research when I felt uncomfortable with particular situations, yet in no way did I ever feel directly threatened. Particular group members went out of their way to ensure my safety. Any concerns I had, related to the unpredictability of individuals under the influence of drugs and alcohol. I remember feeling particularly uneasy when I was in a situation where I did not know the majority of the individuals present at a house party, and when those I did know became 'stoned' and 'inebriated.' On those rare occasions, I was to look out for myself.²⁶¹

The majority of individuals who provided introductions felt personally responsible for me and thus, "looked out for me," and "kept an eye on me." One particular time, early in my research, I was at a flop house in the midst of an ongoing party and left to go to the washroom. When I returned, I was reprimanded by the 16 year old whom had accompanied me to this place. In an authoritarian manner he told me, "Don't be taking off like that...you're just asking for trouble...and I don't need no shit." When I told him I had only left to find a washroom, his tone evened and he explained further: "People here don't know you... If one of the guys hits on you... say he rapes you or something, it becomes my beef.

²⁶¹According to Shaffir et al., "Feelings of discomfort and anxiety are present, in varying degrees, especially during data collection." W. Shaffir, R. Stubbins, A. Turowetz. "Learning the Ropes," in Fieldwork Experience. p. 114.

I'll have to right any wrong that happens to you 'cause I brought you." In those terms I became an extension of him. Any negative action against me involved him and he would be obligated to get even. Fortunately, during this research it was never necessary to do so.

The adolescents with whom I had regular contact, were considerate and purposely avoided putting me in potentially awkward positions. Probably for their own protection as well, they were careful not to conduct drug transactions directly in front of me and left me behind when heading off to "roll someone" or commit a "break and enter". In addition, these "kids" did not bring drugs into my car when I gave them a ride somewhere. Similarly, when we were walking together they resisted the urge to commit acts of theft, vandalism and mischief, even though these activities were ongoing topics of conversations. I recall one evening we were "wasting time" walking around the streets and the two boys who were my companions saw opportunities to "have fun." A stranger would walk past us and the one said to the other "let's go roll that guy." They would see a parked car and one of them would undoubtedly suggest going for a ride. They would see a corner store and want to go "rip off" some food or rob the store.

They generally understood when I turned down a ride in a stolen car and chose not to participate in drug use. I do not really think they expected me to, and offered only out of politeness. I believe if I had participated, I would have

seriously jeopardized the credibility of my role as researcher.

There have been moments when I have been shocked by the levels of brutality that they inflict on one another, and that they accept as part of their everyday lives. When one individual beat up another group member over a "bad drug deal," the boy receiving the beating had a black eye, bruised ribs and required six stitches in his forehead. Two other individuals who had their money "ripped off," set out in steel toe boots, a baseball bat, and hunting knife in hand, looking for the supposed thief. On yet another occasion one girl beat up another girl because she had "stolen" her boyfriend. This girl had permanent loss of vision in one eye as the result of this attack.

Other times I have felt depressed by the dinginess and squalor of their surroundings. During the late summer a number of respondents I studied, slept in an abandoned church downtown.²⁶² It was boarded up, had no heating or running water. The "kids" urinated and defecated in a room directly adjacent to where they slept. The small campfires that they built, provided the only lighting. During the course of my field research I had occasion to visit several flop houses. The following impressions are taken from my field notes:

To get to this apartment involved walking up a flight of rickety stairs. The stairwell was not lit and the walls were crumbling. Once inside the

²⁶²This building has since been torn down.

apartment it was even more dingy, filthy and cramped. I sat in the kitchen talking to Pattie (15) and Brian. (16) I noticed the fridge was bare when Brian opened the fridge door and couldn't find milk for my tea. There were dirty dishes cluttered in the sink, at least eight cases of empty beer bottles stacked in the corner and the table was littered with empty beer bottles, broken glass, cigarette butts and empty packages. Cockroaches were scurrying around on the counters and the stove. Neither of the kids seemed to take notice.

We talked for an hour. Before I left (1:45 a.m.) I walked into the main living room. The only light illuminated from the T.V. which was still on, with the volume turned down. I recognized Bill on the floor in front of the T.V. with a blanket clutched up around him. He was staring at the T.V. and looked up as I walked in. I said "hi," gave him a hug and spoke quietly with him for a few minutes. There was another boy, Todd sleeping upright in an armchair in the one corner and another two boys asleep, hanging off a chesterfield, both vying for the same blanket. I nearly tripped over a very young girl curled in the corner on the floor. She was shivering. Pattie got her a jacket and laid it over her. The girl woke up momentarily, looked startled and curled up with the jacket. I left. Walking down the stairs I felt horribly depressed and very tired.²⁶³

I often felt emotionally drained and physically tired after having been around the "kids" for any length of time. As I look back, I attribute this to the emotional energy they demanded. The interviews were often intense; I was always listening, concentrating on what they said, providing cues that I was listening intently, absorbing what they had to say; letting them know I believed them and what they had to say was important. Listening to their accounts of abusive home situations and the brutalization they experienced once on the

²⁶³Field notes. October 1988. This building was condemned November 1988 and the tenants were evicted.

streets often left me numb. Later I would reflect on what they had said, and my numbness would turn to anger.

It made me angry that such brutalization occurred and continues and that so many people can remain oblivious to it. Particularly during the actual data collection there was a period of weeks that I brooded over the plight of these kids; their family situations, their present problems, their bleak, limited, future prospects. My husband's understanding of my preoccupation with the "kids" is a testament to his patience and love. I am grateful to have had his support and my parents during that time. I was also fortunate to have become friends with the co-ordinator of the drop-in centre where I volunteered. I frequently turned to her, knowing she would understand. She shared my concern for them and never tired of our long conversations.

I have mentioned being uncomfortable, uneasy, and depressed while doing this research. I want to conclude by saying that despite the drawbacks, I found it incredibly rewarding. While it was frustrating to see these "kids" struggling unsuccessfully to put their lives together; being victimized and becoming victimizers themselves, I rejoiced in their successes, however small. When Brian got his first legitimate job, I was thrilled for him. Randy wanted to quit drinking. When he did I was proud of him, even though he fell back into the habit after three weeks.

For all their toughness, self sufficiency and

"worldliness" I was touched by seeing glimpses of the "children" in them. A number of incidents come to mind. The look of excitement on one girl's face when she saw the end result of a "makeover" we had done, was rewarding in itself. I spent over half an hour curling her hair and applying her makeup for her. She had always remained aloof and uninvolved.

I sometimes spent extra time with certain individuals. I have invited a very select few into my home for supper. These occasions usually turned into cooking lessons for them! Although they have not always told me directly, I have been able to tell they enjoyed themselves and looked forward to being invited over again. One boy with whom my husband and I spent a great deal of time, would always leave something (whether it be a jacket, tape, or brush) and when I would remind him about it he responded, "I'll pick it up next time I'm over, o.k.?" On another occasion I had several "kids" over to help decorate gingerbread cookies for Christmas. It was very moving to see these "hardened street kids" busily decorating gingerbread cookies in my living room and listening to Christmas music!

I found this research extremely worthwhile, both personally and intellectually. The memories of the friendships that I have fostered with some of these adolescents as a result of this research will be with me for a long time. I often find myself wondering where certain individuals are now and how they are managing. I can only

hope in some small way my presence and interest in them as people, had some positive affect on their sense of self worth, and in their lives.

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