

"And sir, if the same situation presented itself, I would have to kill him again."

—*Sigue-Sigue Sputnik gang member accused of murder*

## SOME RECENT INQUIRIES INTO THE STRUCTURE-FUNCTION OF CONFLICT GANGS IN THE MANILA CITY JAIL

FRANKLIN G. ASHBURN\*

### I. *Introduction*

This study of conflict gangs in the Manila City Jail is a serendipitous outgrowth of a larger investigation concerning role perceptions of officers of the Manila Police Department presently being conducted by the author. The purpose of this paper is twofold; (1) To present a concise, descriptive analysis of the structure-function of four conflict gangs presently incarcerated in the Manila City Jail, namely: the Sigue Sigue Sputnik Gang, the OXO Gang, the Bahala Na Gang, and the Sigue Sigue Commando Gang, and (2) to focus attention on a problem of increasing social importance, not only to a developing country such as the Philippines, but to many other countries as well. This is the problem of a rising incidence of crime and conflict among youth which seems to be symptomatic of deeper social ills.

The difference between "delinquency" and "conflict behavior" should be noted at the outset for many people erroneously equate the two. "Conflict behavior" is much more visible and often involves loss of life and considerable property damage. It is "conflict behavior" that attracts public attention, while "delinquency," per se, is a more general term that may include many forms of behavior which are not easily recognized as "delinquent."

### II. *The Investigation*

The inmates of the Manila City Jail are segregated into the following six major groups:

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\*The author of this paper is a Fulbright-Hays Grantee in the Department of Sociology, University of the Philippines and the opinions and conclusions expressed are his own. They do not in any way reflect the approval or endorsement of any agency of the government of the United States.

- (1) The female group comprising the smallest number of inmates.
- (2) The so-called "neutral" group comprising the largest number of inmates and who are so designated because they have no known gang affiliation.
- (3) Members of the Sigue Sigue Sputnik Gang.
- (4) Members of the OXO Gang.
- (5) Members of the Bahala Na Gang.
- (6) Members of the Sigue Sigue Commando Gang.

The gangs are segregated from the "neutrals" and from each other for at least two main reasons: (1) Because they are rivals and in conflict even in jail, the physical separation makes for better administrative control and internal safety, and (2) segregation prevents recruitment of new gang members from the ranks of the uninitiated.\*

The subjects in this study were a random sample of fifteen members from each of the four gangs in jail with four exceptions: the "mayor" or elected leader of each gang was included in the sample total of sixty.

The procedure followed was that of depth interviewing of each of the sixty subjects using a three-part structured "interview outline" designed to allow for additional questions by the interviewer at any point. The 87-item "interview outline" was constructed in English and translated into Tagalog.\*\* Interviewing was conducted in Tagalog or Visayan dialect, according to the subject's linguistic orientation, with the help of an inmate interpreter.\*\*\*

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\*The Warden claims that the Manila City Jail was built to house 600 inmates. It constantly houses an excess of 1400 inmates and as Manila grows, so does the inmate population.

\*\*The author is indebted to Professor Tomas N. Aguirre, Officer-In-Charge, Department of Oriental Languages and Linguistics, University of the Philippines, for rendering the Tagalog translation and advising on the Visayan dialects.

\*\*\*Certain technical difficulties were involved in this procedure. The subtleties of language were such that some English terms and concepts used in the "interview outline" were not literally translatable into Tagalog or Visayan dialects. Considerable ability on the part of the translator was required to make the transition from one language to another so that true meanings were not lost or distorted in the process. The author was extremely fortunate in obtaining the services of a college graduate inmate interpreter who was equally adept at English, Tagalog, Ilongo, and Cebuano. To a great extent the success of the entire communication process involved in this study was due to his unique ability to not only translate and interpret, but to understand the research process as well as the conflict gang milieu of which he was a part. Unfortunately, he must remain anonymous.

Pre-testing of the "interview outline" and data collection was conducted over a three-month period beginning in September, 1964. The members of one gang at a time were interviewed, beginning with the Sigie Sigie Sputniks, followed by the Bahala Na's, Sigie Sigie Commandos, and OXO's, in that order. This process was completed gradually, over a relatively long period of time, in order that the investigator could get the "feel" of the entire environment and the conditions under which the inmates live. In addition, the hour of the day and the day of the week scheduled for interviewing were varied so that many times the investigator found himself in jail late at night or on Sunday. The importance of following such procedures in institutional studies of this type cannot be over-emphasized.

Establishing rapport with the conflict gang inmate did not prove to be as difficult a task as originally anticipated. All inmates willingly gave their names (although they were not required to do so) and freely talked about their backgrounds and the crimes they had committed. Whether this was due to the nationality of the investigator, status achieved as a result of being selected to be interviewed, the nature of the study itself as being a short respite from the dull monotony of jail life, some unknown factor, or a combination of all of these, could not readily be ascertained.

### III. *The Findings*

#### A. General Statistical Analysis

One of the questions basic to this investigation was: Does the composition of the gangs in the Manila City Jail remain constant over a given period of time?

TABLE I indicates the mean number of total inmates and conflict gang inmates in the Manila City Jail for the September 3 to December 3, 1964 period of time. It is readily seen that the gang population constituted an increasing proportion of the total jail population during these three months. The Sigie Sigie Sputniks and the OXO's were the two largest conflict gangs in jail with the OXO's indicating a steady increase in numbers during this time. The Sigie Sigie Commandos also increased but on a smaller scale while the Bahala Na's and the Sigie Sigie Sputniks show no consistent pattern.

TABLE I

Mean Number of Total Inmates and Conflict Gang Inmates in the Manila City Jail for the Period from September 3 to December 3, 1964.

Gang	Mean Number of Inmates by Month			Totals for Three Month Period
	September	October	November	
Sigue Sigue Sputnik	289	213	229	731
OXO	186	261	280	727
Bahala Na	83	58	70	211
Sigue Sigue Commando	68	81	90	239
Mean Total Number of Conflict Gang Inmates	626	613	669	1,908
Mean Total Number of Inmates	1,655	1,632	1,667	4,954
Per Cent of Total Inmate Population Represented by the Gangs	36.0%	37.5%	40.1%	38.5%

The "hunch" of the investigator at the beginning of the study was that conflict gangs in the jail constitute group memberships which are unstable, impermanent and constantly shifting. As the study progressed, members of the gangs were constantly going and coming from jail (due to short-term sentences), some members erased the tattooed insignias of their affiliation\* and moved over into the "neutral" side of the compound and, in spite of physical segregation, new members were recruited. At least six conflict gang members who had been interviewed, completed their sentences and were released. Four of these individuals got into additional legal difficulty and made the headlines of the local newspapers, one was killed, and the sixth is presently the object of a city-wide police search.\*\*

Statistical verification of this "hunch" was obtained by means of chi-square computation of the data in TABLE I. The two nominal scale variables of gang affiliation and mean number of gang inmates in jail each month were cross-classified and a chi-square of 40.083 with 6 degrees of freedom was obtained which is significant at the .05 level of confidence. Essentially, this means that a chi-square of 40.083 or larger would be obtained by chance

\*The tattooed insignia of gang affiliation is known in gang parlance as the "TATAK." The significance of the "TATAK" will be discussed later in this paper.

\*\*The latter was recaptured by the police at gun-point on December 22, 1964.

alone in only five cases out of one hundred. Thus, it can be concluded that the conflict gang population in the Manila City Jail varied significantly over the three-month period of the study.

Some additional general statistical findings of the study may be of some interest at this point.

*Age:* The mean age of the subjects was 23.8 years which indicates that many of them lived the "formative" years of their lives during the disrupting crisis of World War II. They comprise the so-called "war baby" population group. Three subjects could not remember their exact dates of birth and gave the interviewer approximate ages.\*\*\* The youngest subject was 14 years and 11 months of age and the oldest was 41 years and 1 month.\*

*Family Background:* Twenty-five or 41.6% of the sixty gang members interviewed were married and several had children. This is interesting in the light of the fact that forty-three or 71.6% were themselves the products of "broken homes." A "broken home" is herein defined as that home in which the father or the mother or both have died, or where there has been a separation of parents, or where the subject was separated from the nuclear family\*\*\* prior to the age of sixteen years. The mean number of siblings in the families of the sixty subjects, including the subjects themselves was 5.6.

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\*\*\* Upon questioning other gang members on this point, the investigator found that this was not an uncommon trait in the jail population.

\* Many of the young inmates are detained in the city jail awaiting disposition of their cases. However, it is the practice of some of the younger gang members to over-state their age to at least 16 years so as to avoid being sent to Welfareville or other juvenile center until the age of majority when they might possibly be returned to the jail to serve time for the original offense. By stating their age as sixteen, they avoid the "long sentence," serve a short time in jail, and return to the free world. Since verification of birth in many cases is difficult to obtain, the authorities many times have to take the word of the accused. How widespread this practice actually is difficult to determine. The law covering minor delinquents can be found in Article 80 of *The Revised Penal Code* (1961) by R. C. Aquino, pp. 664-674.

\*\* The term "nuclear family" presents some theoretical difficulties in this context, particularly with regard to the differences in definition of the concept. For the purposes of this study, the "nuclear family" was defined as *any kinship group* that performs the primary group functions usually associated with the biological father and mother and siblings. Thus, a gang member whose mother and father died or were separated but who was "raised up" by an "aunt" and "uncle" and this was the only family he ever knew, would *not* be included in the author's westernized "broken home" category. This definition gives a more liberal interpretation of the term "broken home."

*Socio-Economic Background (based on income)*: TABLE II indicates the socio-economic background of the sixty gang members in terms of their father's estimated income and their own income at the time of arrest for the offense for which they were then incarcerated. It is apparent from this data that most of the gang members interviewed as well as their fathers before them were *not* from the upper level income brackets. The dual social evils of poverty and criminality are reflected by these responses.

TABLE II

Socio-Economic Background Based on Estimate of Father's Income and Gang Member's Income at Time of Most Recent Offense

Estimated Father's Income	Response Frequency	% of Total	Gang Member's Income at Time of Most Recent Offense	Response Frequency	% of Total
Unknown	20	33.3	Jobless	14	23.3
150 Pesos per month or less	17	28.3	150 Pesos per Month or less	25	41.7
151-250 Pesos per month	14	28.3	151-250 Pesos per month	18	30.0
251-300 Pesos per month	4	6.6	251-300 Pesos per month	1	1.6
301 Pesos or more per month	5	8.3	301 Pesos or more per month	2	3.2
(Highest income reported was 7,500 pesos per month. Occupation: Architect)			(Highest income reported was 625 pesos per month. "Occupation": Snatching)		

*Recidivism*: Of the sixty gang members, fifty-five or 91.6% had been arrested previously and most of these had a record of several offences. TABLE III indicates the frequency of offenses for which the gang members were serving time in jail at the time the interviews were conducted. For convenience, the author has arbitrarily divided the offenses into two groups or types:

(1) *Violent Offenses* (defined as those offenses involving some type of physical harm to another person), and (2) *Non-Violent Offenses* (defined as those offenses where no actual physical harm was indicated.) It should be pointed out that the true picture of conflict and gang violence is inadequately represented in TABLE III because many of the offenses in the non-violent category were committed by gang members who had previous records of violent offenses for which they had served time. Even so, the greater

proportion of crimes committed fall in the "violent" offenses category.

TABLE III

Frequency Distribution and Percentage Totals of "Present Offense" Crimes Committed by Sixty Conflict Gang Members in The Manila City Jail

<i>Violent Frequency Offenses</i>	<i>% of Total Offenses</i>	<i>Non-Violent Frequency Offenses</i>	<i>% of Total Offenses</i>		
Murder Frustrated	15	25	Robbery-Snatching	9	15
Murder	3	5	Theft	7	11.7
Robbery with Frustrated	7	11.7	Vagrancy	4	6.6
Murder or Homicide Frustrated			Concealing Deadly	2	3.3
Homicide	7	11.7	Weapon		
Assault with Slight	3	5	Drunkenness	1	1.6
Physical Injuries			Estafa (swindling)	2	3.3
Total Violent Offenses	35	58.4	Total Non-Violent Offenses	25	41.5

*Attitudes Toward Law and Law Enforcement:* The question arises: What is the attitude of the conflict gang members toward the law and the police who are charged with the responsibility of its enforcements? Here some interesting results were obtained.

First, a Thurstone weighted scale of Attitudes Toward the Law was administered verbally.<sup>1</sup> This scale had a range of possible scores from zero (0) to eleven (11) with zero representing an attitude of extreme disrespect and eleven representing an attitude of great respect for the law, with a score of six (6) being the neutral mid-point value. The mean score of the sixty conflict gang members was computed to be 6.45 which falls in the neutral category designated as Moderate Respect for law.

<sup>1</sup>Katz, D. *Instructions for Using the Scale Attitude Toward The Law*. Scale #27, Form A, (L.L. Thurstone, ed.) University of Chicago Press. Chicago. 1931.

The other findings in this area can perhaps be best presented graphically in *TABLES IV, V, VI*, below. These tables show the frequency of response and percentage totals to each of three questions as follows: *TABLE IV*: Who is the most dreaded enemy of you and your gang?; *TABLE V*: Would you want your son to be a Manila Policeman?; *TABLE VI*: What do you think of the "average" Manila Policeman?

*TABLE IV*

Response Frequency and Percentages for the Question: Who is the Most Dreaded Enemy of You and Your Gang?

<i>Categories of Response</i>	<i>Response Frequency</i>	<i>% of Total Responses</i>
Other Gangs	42	70
The Police	4	6.6
Vague Answer or did not indicate	14	23.3
Totals	60	99.9

*TABLE V*

Response Frequency and Percentages for the Question: Would You Want Your Son to be a Manila Policeman?

<i>Categories of Response</i>	<i>Response Frequency</i>	<i>% of Total Responses</i>
Want son to be a Manila Policeman	28	46.6
Did not want son to be a Manila Policeman	22	36.6
Son will decide	4	6.6
No answer or would not say	6	10.0
Totals	60	99.8

*TABLE VI*

Response Frequency and Percentages for the Question: What do you think of 'the average" Manila Policeman?

<i>Categories of Response</i>	<i>Response Frequency</i>	<i>% of Total Responses</i>
Arrests for Crimes not committed	42	70
Give the Third Degree	8	13.3
All good, none bad	9	15
No comment at all	1	1.6
Totals	60	99.9



The significance of TABLES IV, V, VI lies in the fact that they not only indicate to some degree the attitudes of conflict gang members toward the police and law, but they also reveal the targets of their hostility. For example, over 80% of the respondents — 50 by actual count, accused the Manila Police Department of arresting without cause or with “third degree” methods, or both. Many of these gang members qualified their statements with comments indicating that the police “were only doing their job”, while nine (9) members said that the Manila Police were “all good” and made no unfavorable comments at all. From TABLE V we see that almost half of the gang members interviewed would like their sons to be Manila City Policemen if given the opportunity. One explanation for this might be that the policeman’s job is viewed as a position of status and prestige and steady income by members of lower socio-economic groups which seems to be the position of most of the gang members interviewed. Finally, we see from TABLE IV that in only four (4) cases out of sixty is the Manila Policeman thought of as an enemy at all, whereas, the rival gang in forty-two (42) cases was considered the “mortal enemy—much worse than the police”. Such data clearly reveal the direction of hostility and aggression on the part of these conflict gang members.

The gangs have every reason to resent the repressive actions of the police, for as we shall see later in this paper, the “TATAK” involves them in a vicious circle which could result in “acting out” behavior against the authority of the police. This, however, does not appear to be the case since the battle lines seem to be drawn between conflicting groups on the basis of cultural and linguistic differences.

#### B. Analysis of Individual Gang Structure

*The Sigue Sigue Sputnik Gang:* Perhaps the most structured and best organized conflict gang in the Manila City Jail at the time of this study was the Sigue Sigue Sputnik group. The motto of this gang reveals the conflict nature of the organization: “He who comes to destroy us, will himself be destroyed.” This is a direct reference to the “Province Mates” such as the Visayan OXO group whom the Sputniks feel have “invaded” the Tagalog territory of Manila.

There was a definite consensus among the Sputniks as to the origin and meaning of the name of the gang. The name comes from the Russian orbital satellite of the same name and is signi-

ficant because of its "spying" or "all-knowing" capabilities. The Sputniks pride themselves on their knowledge of what is going on both inside and outside of the jail at all times — "among friends, enemies, and the police." In addition, the claim was made that the Sputnik organization is not confined to the Manila area alone, but that it was well-known throughout the entire Philippines. There was a pride among the Sputniks regarding the "TATAK" that borders on "blood brother" ties. The "TATAK" is usually tattooed on the buttocks of each member and the ones examined by the investigator were found to be works of art. Talent does not go unnoticed in confinement for the Sputniks had one member who was designated as the official artist and he enjoyed a high status position in the group.

The Sigue Sigue Sputniks in confinement have an elaborate system of "KAUTUSAN" or "regulations" which have come down from the "Big House" (Muntinlupa Prison) and to which the members must subscribe while in jail. These "regulations" are known as the "Ten Commandments" of the Sputniks and are as follows:\*

1. Thou shalt not "squeal".
2. Thou shalt not kill fellow members.
3. Thou shalt not organize another gang.
4. Thou shalt not be selfish.
5. Thou shalt not steal from fellow members.
6. Thou shalt not own your own knife. If you own a knife, the leader must keep it.\*\*
7. Thou shalt not tell fairy tales to fellow members.
8. Obey your leader.
9. Love and honor your mark. (TATAK)
10. Be careful.

Violations of these group norms are handled in a rather sophisticated manner — allowances are made for mitigating circum-

\*The Ten Commandments of the Sigue-Sigue Sputniks were presented to the author under conditions of great ritualism and solemnity. First a "feeler" was sent to ask if he would be interested in a copy of the rules of the gang. When the affirmative answer was given, the "feeler" indicated that the leader would have to make the final decision. Two days later, the then leader (he has since been replaced by popular vote) came with three other "high brass" of the gang to present the "sacred" KAUTUSAN of the Sputniks. He read the above rules to the author one by one with a little explanation for each rule, while the "high brass" stood solemnly by, nodding in agreement or adding clarifying comments.

\*\*It is against institutional regulations for *any* inmate to possess a knife or weapons of any kind.

tances and each case is tried before a jury\*\*\* with a judge, prosecuting attorney and defense attorney. There is no set punishment for any given offense until the case has been tried before judge and jury. One exception to this rule is in cases involving "squealing" and here the "law" is: "no mercy for the squealer". Apparently there are few cases of this type, but the gang members were unanimous in stating that the "squealer" is a marked man (as he is in any gang-land sub-culture) and sooner or later he will die at the hand of the gang.

Although the role definitions of individual Sputnik members were indeed diffuse, even for the leaders, there was one main role that all must play. Every member must at all times "be friendly" with every other member of the gang — a kind of forced "practising pakikisama". Each must help his fellow member whenever asked to do so, regardless of the situation or the circumstances. There seems to be an intricate value system in operation here which centers around loyalty and which includes at least four concepts indigenous to the Philippine culture: *Pakikisama* (friendship); *Napasubo* (a situation from which one cannot retreat once he is involved); *Hiya* (shame) and *Utang Na Loob* (gratitude).\*

*The OXO Gang*: The other large conflict gang in confinement was the *OXO* gang which was formed in the National Penitentiary at Muntinlupa in 1956 in response to "maltreatment by the Tagalogs". It was among the *OXO*'s that the bitter rivalry along dialect and cultural lines emerged. According to the members interviewed, the Tagalogs (and this refers to the *Sigue Sigue* Sputniks both in jail and out) look upon them (*OXO*'s are predominantly Visayans) as members of a lower social class and as being "stupid". Thus, the Visayans had to organize to "protect themselves from maltreatment."

No special requirements for joining the gang were indicated and it was constantly emphasized that one joined of his own volition — no one forces a person to become a member. The bond of loyalty is sealed when the new member takes the *OXO TATAK* in the

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\*\*\*The legal systems under which the "legitimate" Philippine society operates, of course, has no jury and allows for very few "mitigating circumstances". Thus, the gang culture seems to reflect a more deterministic rather than "free will" orientation regarding violations of group norms.

\*For a more detailed treatment of Philippine values see: Bulatao, J. "The Manileno's Mainsprings" in *Four Readings in Philippine Values* (Frank Lynch, Ed.) *IPC Papers* #2. 2nd Rev. Ed. Ateneo de Manila University Press, Quezon City, 1964.

form of a tattoo usually placed on the right side of the torso between the armpit and the waist. When asked about leadership in the gang, the OXO members replied that no single one of them was better than any other member and each TATAK has the number "1" as part of the design as a reminder of the "all are equal" principle. It is this value of equality which makes them different from the other gangs, according to the OXO's interviewed. The "Visayan blood" seems to be an additional binding factor and although others (including an occasional Tagalog) may join, the "outsider" is usually subjected to a special test of loyalty designated by the leader.

The origin and meaning of the term "OXO" is questionable for there seems to be very little agreement or consensus among members on this point. Some say it is the symbol of the "skull and cross bones" which means "death to the enemy"; other claim that it came from the Tagalog term 'oo' meaning "yes, yes" with an "X" in the center signifying that they, the Visayans, were opposed to anything to which the Tagalogs said "yes"; still other members seemed to have no idea at all as to the origin and meaning of the term "OXO".

All OXO members interviewed stressed the point that the members have "decent jobs" and are hard workers. The trouble comes when the "Manila Boys" (defined as "pure Tagalogs") will not let them live and work in peace. Then they must defend their honor, pride, and "turf".\*

Requirements for leadership as well as the role and function of individual gang members was vague with again the exception that group loyalty and an almost obsessive concern with "friendship" and brotherhood being very apparent. The "regulations" are passed by word of mouth and there seemed to be no elaborate or sophisticated ritual of trial and punishment for transgressors of group norms.

*Bahala Na Gang*: The literal translation of the title of this gang ("come what may") is an indication of its orientation. Of the four gangs, the Bahala Na's seemed to be the ones with the least organization and bound by the least number of rules, other than that of loyalty. Almost "psychopathic" in orientation, these gang members constantly referred to "thrill killings" or raiding rival "just for the hell of it." The conflict extends beyond the limits of the

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\*One of the main "Battlegrounds" is in the North Port Area of Tondo between Pier #2 and Pier #10.

rival gangs and violence may be directed toward the nearest person, whoever he might be. No explanation could be given for this behavior except that "life was hopeless" and that it really did not matter what one did if "fate" was against you. The Philippine value of "fatalism" was nowhere more apparent in the jail than with the Bahala Na members interviewed.

*The Sigie Sigie Commando Gang*: As far as could be determined in this investigation, a majority of the Sigie Sigie Commando members come from the Province of Pampanga where, since the late 1940's and early 1950's there has been a great deal of Police Constabulary (P.C.) and Hukbalahap activity.\* The Commandos freshen to the conflict environment. When they come to Manila, they meet head-on the solid front known as the "Manila Boys"—the same situation that is presented to the Visayan OXO's — and again the battle lines are drawn. Thus, the OXO's and the Commandos are often friends against the common *urban* enemy, the Sigie Sigie Sputniks, even though they speak different tongues. This was the situation in the Manila City Jail at the time of this study—the Tagalog speaking Commandos and Visayan OXO's had a "peace treaty" and joined forces against the "Sputniks".

The Commando insignia of the "wildcat" was taken directly from the P.C. Ranger's official emblem, while the whole concept of the gang was derived from the motion picture entitled: "*The Commandos*." There was virtually unanimous agreement on this point by the members interviewed and it represents a rather clear-cut example of the influence of mass media on the activities of a conflict gang. The main regulation of the group was: "All for one and one for all"—one that emphasizes loyalty and implies hostility in the face of insecurity. The other regulations were not in any formal written form, and there were no special requirements for membership except loyalty.

### C. Common Gang Characteristics and Functions

*Significance of the "TATAK"*: As mentioned earlier in this paper, the "TATAK" has special meaning to the conflict gang member. First of all, the individual is not an official member until the symbol of the gang is tatoed on his person where it remains a permanent indication of dedication and loyalty to the group. A gang member is identified by his "TATAK" and this is particularly important when one gang "visits" its brother gang in another area.

\* A more detailed analysis of this movement is contained in *A Short History of the Filipino People* by T.A. Agoncillo and O.M. Alfonso, University of the Philippines, 1963. pp. 509 ff.

The "TATAK" serves a second function which keeps the individual gang member in a constant "napasubo" situation. It identifies him to the police. The gang members interviewed constantly referred to the "third degree" and "frame up" tactics employed by the police against those who have the "TATAK" indicating gang affiliation.\* They claim that they are forced to admit to crimes they have not committed so that even a gang member who has decided to "go straight" is prevented from doing so by the "TATAK" which keeps him in the gang milieu.

The "TATAK", of course, can be "erased" by obliteration, but loyalty runs deep in the conflict gang culture and a great deal of *hiya*, if not personal danger is involved if a member takes this first step toward disaffiliation from the gang.\*\* In the jail environment, obliteration of the "TATAK" is considered serious business, particularly if the individual concerned is a member of the gang's "high brass." For his own physical safety, he is removed to the neutral compound where he becomes somewhat of a social outcast and is subjected to an anomic condition. The gang no longer wants him, the jail authorities are not convinced of his motives for taking this step, and his new co-inhabitants of the neutral compound do not accept him.

*Taking the "Rap" of the Other*: Early during the pre-test phase of this investigation, it was noted that many of the gang members had long records of offenses and were not new to the confines of the Manila City Jail. This led to speculation as to whether or not the gang inmates represented a "select" group from among the gangs "on the outside," i.e.; do the gangs ever designate a non-guilty member to accept the consequences of confessing to a crime committed by another? Results of this line of questioning indicated that this was a characteristic common to all four gangs in varying degrees. It does not seem to be a frequent occurrence, but it does happen under certain circumstances. "Taking the rap of the

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\*A police Lieutenant of a near-to-Manila-Municipality once asked the author if the "7-UP treatment" was practiced in the U.S. When the reply was negative, the following practice was described: The victim is placed in a reclining position on his back with a handkerchief over his face. A bottle of 7-UP soft drink is then shaken and squirted slowly up the nose. The victim soon responds to questions under these conditions. In jail, three different gang members, unsolicited, described the exact procedure. This lends some validity to the claim that "third degree" tactics are employed by the police in the greater Manila area.

\*\*"Erasing" the "TATAK" takes considerable time (usually over an hour) and is extremely painful. It is of interest to note that the Warden of the Manila City Jail does not know of a single instance of an OXO Gang member "erasing" his mark of affiliation.

other" assumes at least two forms as follows: (1) When it has been decided that a rival gang member must be killed, a "lottery" is conducted using sticks of varying lengths. The two members drawing the shortest sticks perform the actual deed and the member drawing the longest stick, "takes the rap." The deed is done, the weapon is turned over to the selected "killer" who then turns himself and the weapon in to the police and confesses to the crime. Not only is the "heat" taken off the gang in this manner, but it provides the "guilty party" with an "out" at a later date. When the case comes to trial, the "guilty party" in all honesty can withdraw his confession and claim that he did not, in fact, commit the crime. As one might expect, many of the gang members interviewed claimed that they were innocent of the crimes for which they were charged. (2) A second form of "taking the rap" occurs when the actual guilty party is a leader and his services are needed outside of the jail — the gang, in effect, cannot afford to have him sent to jail. Another member may volunteer to confess to the crime. A pattern of "punishment sharing" also emerges in this connection whereby a known "police character" will "take the rap" for a person who is relatively unknown to the police. Conversely, a person with few offenses on his record may "take the rap" for a "well-known" police character in order to protect him from a longer jail sentence. Not only is property and money shared by conflict gang members, but punishment in certain cases is also shared on an equal basis. The prevalence of this phenomenon was difficult to ascertain, but the indications were that it is more frequent among the clannish, "blood bound" Visayan OXO's and least frequent among the loosely organized Bahala Na's with the "situation" being the deciding factor.

*Drinking*: Drinking seemed to be a well-established part of the activities of all four gangs in this study and apparently serves at least two main functions: First, various segments, one might say "chapters" of each gang, spend a lot of time visiting each other in various geographical locations. The "host Chapter" is expected to provide alcoholic beverages while all members have a social gathering in which exploits, news and "fairy tales" are exchanged. Secondly, alcohol serves as a rationalization for aggressive criminal behavior. Many gang members indicated that their crimes were committed while they were "under the influence." Interestingly enough, these individuals expected to be found "Not Guilty" *because of the alcohol* which they felt relieved them of *personal* responsibility for their actions.

*Sex*: One of the unusual findings of this investigation was that sex as a gang activity was mentioned only once during the course of the interviewing. Thus, sex activities seemed to be regarded as an individual rather than a gang phenomenon and therefore assumes a role of minor importance. On the other hand individual gang members knew a great deal about prostitution (male and female) and its availability in the Manila area.

*Narcotics*: The use of narcotics did not emerge as a well organized pattern of gang activity in this study, although some evidence of sporadic and scattered use of drugs was found among gangs on the outside. Opium smoking and heroin are the forms generally used with Chinese sources and Filipino peddlers, according to the individuals interviewed.

*The Concept of Pakikisama*: The one characteristic stressed most frequently and vehemently by all the gang members interviewed was that of deep-rooted friendship and smooth interpersonal relations between all members—otherwise known as “pakikisama.” “Pakikisama” was perhaps the greatest single common characteristic found among the four gangs of this study. A gang member was found to be duty-bound to help a fellow member whenever called upon to do so, without question and regardless of the circumstances and conditions under which the request for help is made. This, in turn, sets up a condition of “Utang Na Loob” (debt of gratitude) which obligates the requesting member to repay the favor at the earliest opportunity. This value system is self-perpetuating, particularly when one is never really sure when his debt of gratitude has been fulfilled. In this manner, it functions in a manner similar to the “Compadrazco” system in “legitimate” Philippine society.\* Furthermore, when a gang member has been killed or injured, his family is taken care of by the gang.

#### IV. *Conclusions and Summary*

The study of conflict gang phenomenon is not new. Still the classic work in the field is Thrasher's *The Gang*,<sup>2</sup> an analysis which dates back to the “roaring twenties” era in the American annals of crime and delinquency. There have been many approaches to

\*The “Compadrazco” mechanism is explained in greater detail in *The Dynamics of Power in a Philippine Municipality* by Mary R. Hollnsteiner. Unpublished MA Thesis, Department of Sociology, University of the Philippines, Quezon City, 1960.

<sup>2</sup>Thrasher, Frederick M. *The Gang*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1927.)



the problem since then, Cohen<sup>3</sup>, Whyte<sup>4</sup>, Wirth<sup>5</sup>, and Kobrin<sup>6</sup> to mention only a few.

The theoretical basis for the present study can be taken from Lewis Yablonsky's formulation of the gang as a "near group." According to Yablonsky, human collectivities can be viewed on a continuum of organizational characteristics. At one extreme we find a highly organized, cohesive, functioning collection of individuals as members of a sociological group. At the other extreme we find a mob of individuals characterized by autonomy, disturbed leadership, motivated by emotion and in some cases representing a destructive collectivity within the social system. This second extreme is the "near group" and is characterized by several factors, some of which are: (1) diffuse role definitions for individuals, (2) limited cohesion, (3) impermanence, (4) minimal consensus of group norms, (5) shifting membership, (6) disturbed leadership, and (7) limited definition of membership expectations. These factors seem to characterize the "normal" structure of the "near-group," the functions of which not only vary greatly and shift considerably from time to time, but its *primary* function is usually unclear.<sup>7</sup>

Although the four conflict gangs and sixty members in this study very closely resemble the theoretical concept of the gang as a "near group," the primary functions of these groups always seem to be clear — *Pakikisama* and mutual protection in an insecure environment. The majority of the members interviewed came from that segment of the population referred to as the "war baby" group of the second World War. The "formative" years were characterized by broken homes and disaster situations. Out of this unstable, insecure, and anomic environment emerged the conflict gangs with limited cohesion, shifting group membership, diffuse role expectations and minimal consensus of group norms. This is the picture reflected by the individuals and groups in this study.

<sup>3</sup> Cohen, Albert K. *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955).

<sup>4</sup> Whyte, William F. "Corner Boys: A Study of Clique Behavior." *The American Journal of Sociology*. 46. March, 1941.

<sup>5</sup> Wirth, Louis. "Culture Conflict and Misconduct." *Social Forces*. 9: 489-492, June 1931.

<sup>6</sup> Kobrin, Solomon. "The Conflict of Values in Delinquent Areas." *American Sociological Review*. 16: 653-661. October, 1951.

<sup>7</sup> Yablonsky, Lewis. "The Delinquent Gang as a Near-Group." *Social Problems*. Fall. 1959. 7: 108-117.

That they represent "conflict" gangs there can be little doubt, for the statistical evidence indicated direction, type, and target of aggression and hostility.

Individual gang characteristics were delineated and varying degrees of organizational structure were found. The structure-functions common to all four gangs were described, namely: the function of the "TATAK" or identifying symbol, the process of "taking the rap" for another, drinking, sex, and narcotic activities, and the concept of "pakikisama."

From the results of this investigation, at least three conclusions can be drawn:

First, *the emergence of conflict gangs, such as those represented in this study, should be a normal expectation in a developing society such as the Philippines.* When a nation becomes industrialized, people from the rural and provincial areas are naturally attracted to the centers of industrialization and commerce. During the industrial revolution in the United States and Great Britain such a phenomenon occurred and, incidentally, along with it came a rising crime rate. Manila presently affords such an attraction. When groups of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are placed in positions of close interaction, friction and conflict will usually develop as a part of the accommodation and assimilation process.

Secondly, *where inter-group conflict does exist, certain defense mechanisms and methods of individual protection can be expected to emerge.* One of the slightly surprising findings of this study was the fact that these four conflict gangs exhibited some traits and values which are highly respected in "legitimate" society such as helping those in need, particularly when some disaster has occurred. There was even some evidence that the gangs extended the "helping hand" *outside* of the limited confines of the gang on occasion. This should not be surprising when one examines the structure-function of Philippine society where great emphasis is placed on the importance of the "Compadre System"—so great, in fact, that no individual is without "kinfolks" in time of need, be they either of the consanguine extended family or ritual kinship variety. The conclusion to be drawn here is that *the conflict gang, whose members have few or no solid family ties has, in fact, assumed the functions of the ritual kinship similar to the Compadrazco functions in "legitimate" society.* There is a second, rather disturbing thought which accompanies this conclu-

sion: can a developing country such as the Philippines afford to have such a system in operation whereby loyalty ties transcend and are opposed to the goals of industrialization?

Thirdly, *a decision must be made regarding the purpose of imprisonment for those who have broken the law.* The alternatives are punishment or rehabilitation. Punishment costs little to perform but perpetuates an increasingly explosive social situation while rehabilitation takes time, money and professional ability. Considering the fact that the majority of those in confinement today will eventually be returned to the free world, it would seem that the rehabilitation process should be seriously considered. To merely punish and return simply means that a better criminal has been produced. Rehabilitation, on the other hand, presupposes changed attitudes which in turn prepare the individual for a useful place in society.

Finally, it appears to this writer that the conflict gang member who says he would "kill again if the same situation presented itself" and the veteran police patrolman charged with the responsibility of preventing his escape from jail who complains "no one sees me, no one hears me, no one knows me, and no one understands", are both expressing the same need. Both are attempting to achieve a sense of *personal identity* in the insecure environment of a changing social system. This search for *personal identity* and *new value system* may well be symptomatic of deeper social ills accompanying the social change now taking place in the Philippines.