



參加街頭童黨的推力和拉力
The Push and Pull Factors of Joining Juvenile Gangs

青少年問題研究系列(一)
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Summary Report

1. Objectives of the Study

- 1.1 To explore the factors which attract young people to join juvenile gangs.
- 1.2 To explore the factors which make young people leave juvenile gangs.
- 1.3 To understand the feelings of past and present gang members about gang activities.
- 1.4 To understand the perceptions of past and present gang members on their needs and aspirations and the extent to which the gang, the family, school and can satisfy these.

2. Method

There were two groups of target population, these were past and current juvenile gang members. Sampling was obtained by purposive sampling method, with the subjects chosen by the outreaching social workers of the Federation in their service areas (Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung, Hung Hom and Tokwawan). A total of 147 gang members and 42 ex-gang members were interviewed.

3. Respondents' Profile

- 3.1 89.9% of the gang members were male and 10.2% were female; 90.5% of the ex-gang members were male and 9.5% were female.
- 3.2 Most of the gang members were 14 years old, (the average was 15.5), most of the ex-gang members were aged 18 (the average was 17.4).
- 3.3 As for their occupations, 52.4% of the gang members were students, those who had full-time jobs constituted 11.6% and school drop-outs 5.4%. As for ex-gang members, students, full-time workers and school drop-outs constituted 17.1%, 58.5% and 2.4% respectively.

4. How Gang Members Entered the Gangs

- 4.1 45.6%, 3.3% and 21.1% of the current gang members had joined a gang more than two years ago, one year to two years ago, and less than one year ago respectively.

4.2 48.0% of them had become acquainted with a gang through friends and schoolmates, 29.5% had become acquainted through playing alongside with other gang members for a certain length of time.

4.3 The three most popular places for getting to know other gang members were schools (30.1%), TV games centres (23.1%) and playgrounds and empty spaces in housing estates (18.2%). Among those who were studying, 37.8% of the initial contacts took place in schools, while, among over 40% of those who were unemployed or school drop-outs, made initial contact in TV games centres.

5. The Factors which Attracted the Young People into the Gangs

5.1 The most frequent reasons given for joining a gang were that gang members were easy to get along with and had similar hobbies and interests (79.6%), to make more friends (65.3%) and to participate in new and exciting activities (36.1%). Only 12.9% joined the gangs for protection and 5.5% for materialistic or monetary reasons.

5.2 26.5% recalled that there were some immediate incidence when they joined a gang. 44.2% of them recalled that when they joined a gang they were being bullied, were looking for new mates, had dropped out from school, felt neglected by their family, or had experienced a family problem.

6. The Behavioural Patterns of the Gangs and Their Perceptions of Their Neighbourhood

6.1 50.1% of the respondents met other gang members each day; the average length of their meetings ranged from more than three hours for those still studying, to seven hours for the unemployed and the school drop-outs. Their meeting places were TV games centres, billiard-rooms and playgrounds.

6.2 While with other gang members, they would exhibit certain delinquent behaviour including using vulgar language (94.6%), gambling (78.3%), unlawful acts, such as collecting protection fees or blackmailing (24.7%) and theft (17.0%).

6.3 More than 70% of the respondents judged their delinquent behaviour as "right" or "neither right nor wrong", while only 23.1% deemed such behaviours "not right".

6.4 As for their perception of the neighbours' response, about 20% of the respondents perceived their neighbours' attitudes as friendly or supportive. 43.4% perceived their neighbours' attitudes as indifferent, while the rest perceived their neighbours' attitudes as hostile and unfriendly.

7. Power and Relationship Inside the Gangs

7.1 60.0% of the respondents observed that there were different degrees of status and authority among the gang members. Only 25.5% of the respondents observed that there were, at times, power struggles among the members; only 16.3% of the respondents wished to achieve high status.

7.2 59.8% of the respondents felt that the relationship among gang members was harmonious; only 4.1% reported that the relationship was poor.

7.3 54.1% of the respondents respected and obeyed gang members who were easy to get along with, who cared about the respondent or who understood the the respondent's situation.

8. Feelings about Gang Activities and Behaviour

8.1 The respondents were asked to state whether they themselves or their gangs had taken part in a list of 27 activities, of which nine were ordinary social activities and eighteen were delinquent activities to different degrees.

8.2 The five activities most respondents and their gangs participated in were entertainment (98.6%), recreational activities (97.2%), cigarette smoking and drinking alcohol (92.4%), activities organized by social workers (80.0%), sharing their thoughts and worries (79.5%). The activities least participated in were unlawful acts such as dangerous drug trafficking (11.7%), driving without a license (11.7%), indecent assault (20.0), theft (21.4%), and blackmail (32.4%).

8.3 The five most enjoyed activities were mostly ordinary social activities: birthday parties (88.0%), recreational activities (87.9%), activities organized by social workers (87.8%), entertainment (77.6%), and 'chatting up' the opposite sex (72.3%).

8.4 The five most disliked activities were trafficking in dangerous drugs (58.8%), theft (40.0%), blackmailing (37.5%), bullying (28.8%), and gang fighting (27.6%).

- 8.5 As for worrying about the negative impact of gang activities, 57.8% worried about being labeled as delinquent youth and 52.4% worried about being arrested by the police.

9. Needs and Aspirations of Gang Members

9.1 Ten items on the needs and aspirations of adolescence were listed on the questionnaire for the ranking by the respondents. The frequencies for ranking as important and very important were as follows: companionship (82.2%), advice and assistance in unforeseen difficulties (81.2%), self-actualization (76.0%), being understood and sharing joy and sadness (71.9%), learning useful knowledge and skills (65.0%), developing one's potential (54.8%), comfortable and rich material life (49.0%), one's status and position being respected (46.6%), one's ability being appreciated (45.2%), and the power and authority to make others do one's bidding (26.0%).

9.2 As to what extent the gangs could satisfy these needs and aspirations, the three ranked highest were as follows: 69.3% deemed that the need for companionship could be highly satisfied in the gangs, 62.7% and 39.5% of the respondents deemed that advice and assistance in unforeseen difficulties and the need for being understood and sharing joy and sadness respectively could be highly satisfied in the gangs.

9.3 Given another chance to start again, 54.5% would wish to achieve better academic results. As for future aspirations, 37.9% wished to earn more money, 20.7% wished to find a job with good prospect and 18.6% wished to start a trade or business.

10. The Perception of the Family, School and Work Among the Gang Members

10.1 74.7% lived with both parents. 53.7% and 66.3% claimed to have good a relationship with their fathers and mothers respectively. Only 13.3% and 10.7% claimed to have poor relationship with their fathers and mothers respectively. Furthermore, 35.6% claimed that their family atmosphere was harmonious, while 24.6% claimed the contrary. However, only 38.2% would discuss difficulties with members of the family.

10.2 Only 17.9% of those studying or who had dropped out from school were interested in the school curriculum, 48.4% reported low academic performance and 9.5% reported high academic performance. For those who were still attending school, 42.0% stayed

involuntarily (e.g forced by parents) while 41.8% had thought of quitting school in the next academic year; and the most common reasons were that they could not follow the teaching schedule and they had lost interest in studying.

10.3 For those who were working, 56.2% felt that their supervisors were supportive, and only 12.5% had negative feelings towards their supervisors. Moreover, 53.2% claimed that they could get along with their colleagues and only 6.2% could not. When in difficulty, only 42.2% would discuss this with their colleagues.

10.4 Comparing family, school and work, comfortable and rich material life style could be more satisfied by family (37.4%), companionship could be more satisfied by school (51.9%), acquiring useful knowledge and skills could be more satisfied by school and work (40.5% and 39.4%). Self-actualization could be more satisfied in work (36.3%).

11. Why and How Gang Members Left the Gangs

11.1 The main factors within the gangs causing young people to leave were that they no longer found satisfaction in the gang (38.4%), they worried about prosecution and arrest (31.0%), and they were hurt or feared their life would be endangered (21.4%).

11.2 Other factors outside the gangs were that they felt they had become mature and more thoughtful (61.9%), they did not want to disappoint their family (31.0%), and they had concentrated on work and study (30.9%).

11.3 The most common difficulties they experienced when leaving a gang were their attachment to the gangs and the difficulty of adjusting to the environment. The methods they employed to tackle these difficulties were to stay away from the meeting places of the gangs (52.4%), to depend on their own will power and self-control (50.0%) and to seek advice from social workers (45.2%).

12. The Needs and Aspirations and the Perception of the Family, School, Work and Peers of the Ex-gang Members

12.1 Most of the respondents perceived advice and assistance in unforeseen difficulty (71.4%), learning useful knowledge and skills (70.8%), being understood and sharing joy and sadness (66.6%), companionship (64.3%) and self-actualization (64.3%) as important to them.

12.2 If the four i.e. family, school, work and peers, in general work could provide more satisfaction, especially in areas of learning useful knowledge and skills, self-actualization, developing potentials and ability being appreciated. However, companionship could be more satisfied by school and peers, while the family could support a comfortable and rich material life.

13. Recommendations

13.1 **Young people's motives for joining juvenile gangs should be taken seriously.** The study reveals that most of the young people joined the gangs for fun, socializing and companionship. The authorities concerned should therefore play a more active role in satisfying these needs, so that young people will not be attracted by juvenile gangs. The design and facilities of the youth services should increase their appeal for the young and cater to their changing needs and interests. Since most of the gang members gather at the TV games centres, billiard-rooms and playgrounds, outreaching social workers should continue to play an active role in contacting them. Apart from providing guidance and counselling, social workers should motivate them to participate in the activities of the youth centre as well as activities organized by government departments and voluntary organizations.

13.2 **Juvenile gangs should continue to be the primary targets** of the outreaching social work service. Since juvenile gangs are influenced by the triad sub-culture and their members have exhibited certain delinquent behaviour, guidance and counselling should be provided, so that they can reconstruct a healthy social circles and healthy values. The flexibility and dynamics of the outreaching operation, mean that the social workers can actively, contact and build up a positive working relationship with gang members, so that they will accept their guidance. Furthermore, outreaching social workers can locate appropriate community resources and strengthen the community network to increase opportunities for delinquents to re-integrate into society. The authorities concerned should extend the outreaching social service to the new towns where there is a large youth population, community facilities are insufficient and the juvenile crime rates are high.

13.3 Society should provide more opportunities for gang members to start a new life. The study has revealed that many young people would wish to pursue their studies, to settle down to a stable job or to make better use of their leisure time, if they had a chance to start again. However, they would find that the society does not provide enough choices for them. It is recommended that (1) there should be more practical schools to cater for those who do not fit in with the mainstream educational system. There is an urgent need to accelerate the construction of practical schools which the Report No. 4 of the Education Commission has recommended. These schools should be provided with more resources and develop subjects in such a way that they are not labeled special schools for problem students. (2) Extended youth services should be experimented with to assist those who wish to leave the gangs and adjust to a new environment. The services should aim to provide social skills training, work attitude training, job orientation and counselling, tutorials for students, and social activities for a transitional period of six months. (3) The vocational training centres should be more flexible in order to admit those who have not attained Form Three standard and provide more short term courses at different periods.

13.4 School life should be more attractive to students. School plays a very important role in monitoring the balanced development of its students including the building of a healthy personality and values. More attention should be paid to those whose academic performance and achievement are low, because this group of students is more vulnerable to gang influence. Schools should cooperate with other youth service units to provide different extra-curricular activities to cater for the different needs of the students.

13.5 Cooperation among police, school and family should be strengthened. The three parties should increase contacts with each other and exchange information about the juvenile gangs within the district. Ad hoc working groups within the districts with members from the police, schools, youth work units, parent groups and local organizations should be formed to deal with special gang problems when the need arises.