families commission
kōmihana ā whānau / pasifika

pacific families now and in the future:
pasifika youth in south auckland

DR CAMILLE NAKHID, AUT UNIVERSITY
TUPETOA RONJI TANIELU & EFESO COLLINS, CATALYST SOLUTIONS

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The Families Commission was established under the Families Commission Act 2003 and commenced operations on 1 July 2004. Under the Crown Entities Act 2004, the Commission is designated as an autonomous Crown entity.

A key role of the Commission is to promote research on issues that will give the Commission and the public a better understanding of family life. In 2006 the Families Commission consulted with Pacific families. Following those meetings, research was commissioned on Pacific Families Now and in the Future. The research was designed to provide information about the characteristics of New Zealand Pacific families and the challenges they face.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pasifika[1] youth make a significant impact on the demographic profile of South Auckland and are a major focus of the many projections regarding population, employment and education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The place of family and community is regarded as an important influence on the future of Pasifika youth yet how these youth view the place of Pasifika families in the future is not adequately covered in the research literature. As more Pasifika youth are thought to be joining gangs, there are also concerns as to whether the gangs have replaced the family for Pasifika youth and whether the street has become home to these youth.

The aim of this study was to interview Pasifika youth[2] from the suburbs of Māngere and Ōtara – including those who were involved in gangs and those who had never been involved in gangs or had transitioned out of gang life – in an effort to obtain information on:

> how Pasifika youth[3] understood family and how they perceived family in relation to the future

> the perspectives of young Pasifika people on gangs, community, culture and leadership

> why some Pasifika youth did not join gangs; why some Pasifika youth were joining gangs; and the support systems Pasifika youth had, and used, to remain out of gangs

> the views and experiences of exiting gang life for Pasifika ex-gang members and the mechanisms that had assisted them to transition out of gang life

> whether the family and the home were being replaced by the gang and the street for Pasifika youth involved in gangs.

The study used a qualitative design involving semi-structured interviews with groups, focus groups and individuals. Data were collected from four group interviews with 12 Pasifika youth (12–17 years) and nine Pasifika youth (18–24 years) who had never been involved in gangs; four focus group interviews with 26 Pasifika young people aged between 14–35 years who were actively involved in gangs; and individual interviews with five ex-gang members between 28–31 years. All of the participants were born and/or raised in Māngere or Ōtara and were still living in one of these suburbs. The participants came from a range of Pacific Island backgrounds including Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Niuean, Tokelauan and the Cook Islands.

The participants were recruited from churches and educational programmes, the streets and neighbourhoods, local youth community organisations, the personal contacts of youth workers and researchers and from the suggestions of the Voice Project's Advisory Group.

Data from the interviews were analysed thematically. The main themes were family, gangs, community, home, culture, leadership and the future.

Family for the younger non-gang Pasifika group (12–17 years) meant their immediate family and those with whom they had regular contact. For the older non-gang Pasifika group (18–24 years), family included the immediate family as well as those with whom they had relationships or could go to for help. For the gangs and ex-gang members, family meant their 'blood' family. This family took priority over their gang family.

The participants commented positively about South Auckland as their home and as a community. Most were proud to be associated with the suburbs of Ōtara and Māngere and said they would return there to live if they ever left. The participants noted that community resources such as the availability and quality of facilities needed to be improved. They also identified features of day-to-day life that they would prefer were not a part of their community, including the poverty and the gangs.

Several of the participants acknowledged the work of community organisations and believed that more youth workers were needed to address the phenomenon of gangs and to work with youth to present alternatives to gang life.

The participants said they were proud of their culture and identified a number of symbols that they felt represented their culture. They believed that living in South Auckland had made them more accepting of other ethnic groups. None of the gangs interviewed said they were divided along ethnic lines.

The younger non-gang Pasifika group named their parents, pastors, teachers and local community leaders as the people they regarded as leaders. To the older non-gang Pasifika group, leaders were those who had the power to make decisions. Many of the gang

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1 This is based on the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs' definition of 'Pasifika' (see glossary).

2 These age ranges are based on the Ministry of Youth Development's youth age definition which ranges from 12–24 years old.

3 When discussing the findings, participants – Pasifika youth or young Pasifika people – refer to all the participants interviewed in the study unless specifically stated otherwise, eg young Māngere group, older Ōtara group, gang members and ex-gang members.

members believed in the leadership ability of their own gang leaders.

The younger non-gang Pasifika group talked about the future in terms of those factors over which they believed they had some influence, for example, education, achievement of qualifications, buying a house and money to pay bills. The older non-gang Pasifika group discussed the future in terms of the direction they wanted their future to take.

Most of the gang members said they wanted a future that would enable them to have access to the opportunities, jobs and possessions that other people had.

Although the participants acknowledged that gangs gave young people the opportunity to be part of a social network which was inclusive and accepting of young people, they also saw gangs as a negative influence because of their criminal activities and lack of positive potential for the future. Many of the gang members and ex-gang members said they had become involved in gangs because of their own family involvement with them. Several of the gang members talked about the disrespect shown to them by the police. The gangs and ex-gang members said that organisations like the schools and churches were places of recruitment for young people wanting to become involved in gangs.

The ex-gang members said that family and friends were essential to assisting gang members to transition out of gangs. They acknowledged that leaving the gangs meant leaving behind the friendships that had been made and a lifestyle that had become a part of them.

Most of the participants believed that money and resources should be spent on keeping Pasifika youth out of gangs.

Key findings emerging from the interviews were:

> Family had a significant influence on Pasifika youth involvement in gangs.

> Most Pasifika youth involved in gangs did not appear to want to replace their family or their home with the gang or the street.

> Pasifika youth in South Auckland had a strong affection for their suburb and its residents.

> Many Pasifika youth had established close relationships with youth organisations and youth workers in their area.

> Many Pasifika youth were engaging positively with available community resources.

> Gangs were aware of the effect their presence had on how their community was perceived.

> Perceptions of gangs for Pasifika youth who were not involved in gangs depended on their knowledge of and relationship with gangs.

> Gangs involving Pasifika youth did not appear to be divided along ethnic lines.

> The culture and practices of institutions such as the church, schools and the police often conflicted with those of Pasifika youth, particularly those involved in gangs.

Key recommendations:

> Provide youth workers and adequate resources to give recreational opportunities to Pasifika youth who are not involved in gangs.

> Set up workshops and programmes to facilitate discussions around issues relevant to and affecting Pasifika youth.

> Make academic and career advisors available in areas accessible to Pasifika youth and their families.

> Make the system of positive mentoring of gang families and parents of gang members more widely available.

> Take advantage of the services of ex-gang members who wish to assist in helping young members to transition out of gang life.

> Enhance the relationships between Pasifika youth and institutions such as the police, schools and the church through training programmes, recruitment, curriculum delivery and methods of engagement.

Suggested areas for further research with Pasifika youth:

> The reasons for the strongly positive feelings that Pasifika youth living in South Auckland have towards their community.

> The factors contributing to the resilience shown by Pasifika youth who have not become involved in gang life despite being exposed to the same factors and circumstances as those who have become gang members.

- The awareness and perceptions of family members involved in gangs to the alternatives to gang lifestyle.
- The characteristics of organisations such as schools and churches in relation to their potential as places of recruitment into gang life.
- How community organisations or governmental institutions can assist with directing youth towards goals that will increase their opportunities for the future.
- Determining how institutions such as schools, churches and the police could more appropriately take into account the cultural backgrounds of young Pasifika people and their communities to achieve better outcomes for Pasifika youth and their communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research objectives and background

1.1.1 Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore the views of young Pasifika people from the South Auckland suburbs of Māngere and Ōtara. The study sought to understand their views on family, community, gangs and the future and to explore their perceptions of culture and leadership. As a result of the serious concerns expressed by those involved in the 2006 Families Commission fono that increasing numbers of Pasifika youth were thought to be replacing their family associations with membership in the gangs, the study also sought to determine whether there existed a relationship between 'family and home' and 'the gang and street' for those Pasifika youth who found themselves alienated from mainstream society.

1.1.2 Background

1.1.2.1 Demographic profile of Counties Manukau

Counties Manukau has a young age structure, a high proportion of Pasifika peoples and areas of high economic deprivation. At the time of the 2006 Census, 67 percent of Pacific peoples (177,933 people) lived in the Auckland region. Manukau City's Pacific population was 27.8 percent compared with 6.9 percent for New Zealand. The Pacific peoples populations for Ōtara and Māngere were 78.9 percent and 49.18 percent respectively. Counties Manukau has 12 percent of the country's total population under the age of 24, and 39 percent of its population is under 24 years. The 2006 Census showed that the median age of Manukau City was 31.2 years compared with 35.9 years for New Zealand. Twenty-six point two percent of Manukau City's population was under 15 years of age compared with 21.5 percent for New Zealand. In Ōtara and Māngere, 34.2 percent and 28.53 percent of the population respectively was under 15 years of age compared with 21.5 percent for New Zealand (www.stats.govt.nz).

Counties Manukau has some of the poorest living areas in New Zealand. Suburbs such as Māngere and Ōtara have a higher level of "economic deprivation, poverty, transience, housing overcrowding and unemployment" compared with the rest of New Zealand (MSD, 2006, p. 6). Seventy-four percent of the people in Ōtara and 70 percent of the people in Māngere live in some of New Zealand's most deprived areas (NZDep06 decile 9 and decile 10). The 2006 Census showed that the median income for Ōtara and Māngere for those 15 years and over was $16,450 and $21,800 respectively compared with $24,200 for Manukau City and $24,400 for New Zealand. Unemployment for those over 15 years of age was 7.1 percent in Manukau City compared with 5.1 percent for New Zealand (www.stats.govt.nz).

1.1.2.2 Pasifika youth and gang activity in South Auckland

Over the past few years, the profile of young Pasifika people and the activities of youth gangs, particularly in South Auckland, have been the subject of widespread media publicity and government attention. Prominent among these incidents have been the deaths of Iulio Naea Kilepoa in the suburb of Māngere in October 2005, murdered by a 19-year-old Ōtara man who was a member of a predominantly Pasifika gang; Riki Mafi, a 17-year-old male beaten to death in September 2006 by a 26-year-old Manukau man and members of a Pasifika-dominated gang; Manaola Kaumeafaiva, a 14-year-old male murdered by a 16-year-old Pasifika youth in October 2006 outside a youth event at his school; and Augustine Borrel, a 17-year-old male from Papatoetoe, stabbed to death in September 2007 by an 18-year-old male from South Auckland.

More recent incidents include the arrest in May 2008 of 60 members of a well-known gang during which police seized $500,000 of methamphetamine and cannabis; the death in June 2008 of 39-year-old Joanne Wang, killed from being run over in a Manukau shopping mall by a van allegedly driven by a 21-year-old Ōtara man; the murder of Navtej Singh also in June 2008, killed in his Manurewa liquor store by a gunshot wound, allegedly by one of seven Pasifika youth; and Yang Yin Ping, beaten during a home invasion in June 2008, allegedly by a 29-year-old man from Manurewa, and who died three days later.

1.1.2.3 Government response to youth gang activity

In 2006, the Government responded to the earlier events by forming the Auckland Youth Support Network and developing the *Improving Outcomes for Young People in Counties Manukau* 'Plan of Action'[4] to help young people and families involved in gangs. As part of the Plan of Action, the Ministry of Social Development implemented and funded a number of initiatives including the provision of 23 youth workers,[5] 16 secondary school social workers and six Integrated Case Managers.

[4] The 'Plan of Action' and research can be accessed at www.msd.govt.nz

[5] Māngere Pride Youth Collaborators Team (2006) defined youth workers as people employed to assist in identifying areas of high youth gang activity and to work with youth involved in gangs.

A six-month contract was granted to Cross Power Ministries, a community youth organisation, to deploy six of these youth workers to work with young people involved in gangs, and to implement intervention programmes throughout Ōtara in areas known to be frequented by gang members and where gang-related activities took place. In 2006, the project, known as the 274 Youth Core, was given funding for a further four years. Anecdotal evidence from the 274 Youth Core[6] project, the police, youth workers and the Ministry of Justice indicated that the majority of young people involved in gangs in these areas were of Pasifika descent.

A contract was also given to Māngere East Family Services Centre which employed a team of researchers to conduct a research and scoping analysis of the youth gang 'climate' in Māngere, and to document the various providers and agencies working with these young people and their families. This project was called the Māngere Pride Youth Collaborators Project and their findings led to the creation and employment of 12 youth- and gang-worker positions in the Māngere area.

According to the Youth Offending Strategy (Ministry of Justice, 2002) Pacific youth are not over-represented in youth offending statistics except for violent offences. Reducing youth-related gang activity and youth offending has remained a priority for community and government sectors, including the Counties Manukau Police,[7] the Ministry of Justice Crime Prevention Unit[8] and the Ministry of Social Development.

1.1.2.4 Government initiatives around Pasifika youth

A number of governmental reports and strategies have focused on Pasifika youth development and support.

The *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* (YDSA) report (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002) said that too many young people, a disproportionate number of them being Māori and Pasifika, were becoming adults unprepared to contribute productively to their communities. The report focused on how government and society could support young people aged 12 to 24 years to develop the skills and attitudes to participate positively in society as these years were regarded as critical to human development. Outside of school, young people had most contact with their neighbourhoods, and the support available within those neighbourhoods for young people and their parents was significant in determining whether outcomes were positive. Neighbourhoods that aided positive development were said to be those that had a safe, crime-free environment, little local criminal involvement and neighbours and local people who watched out for young people and provided supervision.

The YDSA 2002 report also noted that healthy relationships among young people with similar experiences or interests were very important for positive development as it allowed young people to gain friendship and support, and was a natural setting for talking, negotiating, socialising and exploring future options as well as opportunities for leisure. The report listed common protective factors such as safe, supportive neighbourhoods, and a large network of social support from the wider family, teachers, school, workplace, church, youth organisations and leaders.

The YDSA 2002 report stated that the common risk factors were a lack of social support from family, neighbourhood and the wider community; parenting that was overly harsh or that set insufficient boundaries; and problems or disadvantages in the family, including violence, crime and poverty. The report noted that for young people growing up in difficult family circumstances, supportive relationships with 'other' people in their lives such as aunts and grandparents, church and youth leaders, or teachers could help them find their feet. Fa'alau and Jensen's (2006) study of Samoan youth and family relationships in New Zealand revealed that most of the young people interviewed said their families cared about them a lot and reported having close bonds with them. Fa'alau and Jensen's Adolescent Health Survey which included 30 Samoans between the ages of 13–27 years showed that many considered their siblings to be their greatest source of support and protection. Most of the young people interviewed felt close to their parents most of the time and said that their parents also spent enough time with them but commented on "the large amount of control that their parents exerted over them" including control over who their peers were, money, leisure time, cultural values and schooling (Fa'alau & Jensen, 2006, p. 21).

Some of the key issues identified by the YDSA 2002 report included recognising Pacific young people in the context of their families, and recognising first-generation cultural issues such as New Zealand-born and Island-born Pacific peoples.

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[6] The 274 Youthcore is part of Cross Power Ministries and led by two community workers who have lived and worked alongside young people in Ōtara for many years. The team employs eight youth workers who work in locations where there is concentrated youth gang activity to provide activities for the youth and to encourage them to join small community groups where they can discuss their needs.

[7] Counties Manukau Police Strategic Plan 2005–2007.

[8] CPU Cabinet Paper/Reference Group 2007.

The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs' consultation, *Ala Fou – New Pathways* (2003) with Pasifika youth about their views on identity, prosperity and leadership revealed that these concepts held little meaning for the young people unless they were understood in the context of family. Family was identified as a central organising principle for Pasifika peoples, and New Zealand's youth development policy acknowledged the family as an important arena in youth socialisation.

The *Pacific Youth Development Strategy* (MSD, 2005) was aimed at delivering a positive life change for, and affirmation of, all Pacific youth in Auckland. The initial process of youth consultation included 600 youth distributed among three cohorts aged 9–13 years, 14–17 years and 18–24 years. A set of objectives for the strategy was devised to support MSD and other government agencies to meet the needs of Pasifika youth. The strategy included formulating an appropriate cultural consultation process, leading collaborative strategies between government and Pacific communities to increase the capacity of Pacific youth, and mobilising and empowering Pacific communities to become involved in community initiatives. Specifically, the Auckland Pacific Youth Development Strategy identified three elements essential to the stability of a young Pasifika person's life: family, church and the young person him/herself. Tunufa'i's (2005) study of why young Samoans were leaving the traditional Samoan churches revealed the influence of the church on the generational and cultural differences of Pacific families and stated that the role of the church in the lives of Pasifika youth could not be ignored.

In 2006, a series of Families Commission fono[9] were held with communities of young Pasifika people around the country. One of the major concerns for the participants was whether gangs were replacing the family for Pasifika youth. This concern was raised, in part, because of the media attention being placed at the time on the criminal and violent activities of Pasifika youth in South Auckland and the perception that increasing numbers of youth were becoming involved in gangs. Researchers (Macpherson, 2001; Tiatia, 1998; Tunufa'i, 2005) confirmed that young Samoans growing up in New Zealand experienced tension between their lifestyles and those of their parents as well as conflict because of the parents' struggle to control their children's choices.

The Auckland Youth Support Network – made up of representatives from various government departments including the Ministries of Social Development, Education, Justice and Youth Development, Pacific Island Affairs, the New Zealand Police and the Counties Manukau District Health Board – commissioned a report that recommended a set of 26 action points to be carried out in the Counties Manukau region in the hope of providing better outcomes for young people in the area. The final report, *Improving Outcomes for Young People in Counties Manukau* (MSD, 2006), detailed a Plan of Action that was a commitment by government and non-government agencies to work together for better outcomes for young people in the Counties Manukau region. The report highlighted the need for government agencies to take a co-ordinated approach to their services for young people as it was noted that young people involved in youth gang activity often suffered from multiple disadvantages including poor health and educational outcomes, economic deprivation and housing overcrowding. The plan of action identified actions within the three themes of crisis management response, intervening with young offenders, and preventing poor outcomes among at-risk young people. This was a cross-sector government plan to ensure that young people were provided with appropriate services when necessary. The plan linked with other activities including the *Counties Manukau District Pacific Peoples'* Strategic Plan 2005–2007 which identified family violence and youth offending as two major areas of concern for Pacific peoples.

Initiatives of the Counties Manukau Plan of Action include further support for Youth Offending Teams, Family Group Conference processes and management of truancy, Māori and Pasifika wardens, Family Start services and Youth Transitions Services. New services include youth workers, Intensive Case Managers, parenting programmes, social workers and Police in schools, reception centres providing safe housing for young people and Police Youth Action Teams.

The Improving Outcomes for Young People in Counties Manukau report and Plan of Action had been informed by research conducted earlier by MSD on youth gangs which highlighted poverty, parental disengagement, boredom, a proxy family unit and social status as reasons for young people joining youth gangs (MSD, 2006, p. 11). These findings supported those of

[9] Fono – Samoan word for meeting.

the Māngere Pride Youth Collaborators Research Project which noted that there were specific cultural, emotional, generational and spiritual factors that contributed to gang membership and affiliation.[10] The recommendations of the report sought to scaffold the work of local and government groups in providing better support for improved outcomes for young people.

In 2008, MSD published a report on youth gangs in Counties Manukau. The report provided a definition for youth gang participation and gave an historical analysis of gangs in Auckland over the last 50 years. There was a particular focus on Counties Manukau because of the prevalence of youth gang activity in that region (MSD, 2008, p. 3). The report used a classification model to illustrate youth involvement in youth gangs but acknowledged that there was no agreed definition of youth gangs.

The Counties Manukau Police *Street Gang Violence Strategy 2006–2009 (2006)* is an attempt to ensure the safety of the region's community by reducing the negative consequences of youth gangs. It intends to take a focused and co-ordinated response to the activities of youth gangs and outlines the deployment of two extra units to high-risk areas as a visible deterrence at high-risk times. The strategy proposes a public disorder team that would be highly visible with the aim of reducing the number of Pasifika young people apprehended for minor anti-social behaviour activities. The strategy also aims to achieve a police workforce that reflects the community.

In addition to the various initiatives mentioned above, the Ministry of Youth Development has the responsibility of reporting every three years on New Zealand's activities in ensuring that young people are in a safe environment. The Ministry has a five-year work plan that includes targeting the growing disparity in schooling achievement between Pasifika young people and those considered to be from the mainstream.

1.2 Literature on youth in gangs

Libbey, Ireland, and Resnick (2002) state that young people who have healthy relationships with their families are less likely to engage in risky behaviours. Studies by Blum (1998) and Resnick (2000) show family relationships to be fundamental to the positive health and development of young people. In Thai's (2003) study of Vietnamese gangs, many of the Vietnamese families said it was hard for parents to understand why their children had changed upon immigrating to America while the children themselves did not understand why their parents still clung to traditional ways. Thai (2003) believed that parents could help to prevent their children from joining gangs by influencing who their children associated with and who their friends were as well as being aware of the activities in which their children were involved.

Gangs are said to form under conditions of social disorganisation such as poverty and ethnically diverse neighbourhoods that create social instability (Lane & Meeker, 2003; Pattillo, 1998; Sampson & Groves, 1989). The problem is compounded by the presence of low-income immigrant families in which the children become estranged from their parents at the same time that they are rejected by the dominant culture (Phillips, 1999). Thai (2003) also used social disorganisation theory to explain youthful crime in immigrant populations. The author regarded this as a relevant theory for this phenomenon because he believed that in immigrant communities, "solidarity is weakened as the young generation adopts the values of the new community rather than the traditional values of the parents' generation" (p. 50). Although most gang research in the United States is grounded in social disorganisation theory, and more recently economic marginalisation theories, Zatz and Portillos (2000) argue that the central problem with using social disorganisation theory to understand gang research is that it "overemphasizes family dynamics, focussing [sic] on individualized resources and constraints to the exclusion of larger structural concerns" (p. 376).

Freng and Esbensen (2007) found that gang membership and participation could be predicted more by parents' highest level of achievement at school, attitudes towards the police and street socialisation rather than by racial or ethnic characteristics (p. 618). Several factors referred to as multiple marginalities were said to combine to influence gang membership (Ferrell, 1999; Steffensmeier & Allan, 1989). Society, neighbourhoods, communities and schools were thought to have broken down for minority youth socialised in poor, urban environments who went on to internalise the values and mores of 'the street'. Gang

[10] Māngere Pride Youth Collaborators Team (2006) Final Recommendations Report.

membership indicated that society had allowed the development of streets that were poor and anxiety-laden and from which parents were unable to protect their children (Phillips, 1999). Using the multiple marginality model – a model that listed factors encompassing "the institutions of family, school and police alongside social and economic conditions" – authors Freng and Esbensen (2007) showed that such indicators served as better predictors of gang membership than race/ethnic-based questions. The action points outlined by the *Improving Outcomes for Young People in Counties Manukau* report (MSD, 2006) acknowledged that those involved in youth gangs often came from backgrounds of multiple disadvantages.

Tupuola (2001) emphasised the ambiguity of identity when considering the participation of young people in youth gangs. She acknowledged that although many gangs were involved in violent crimes, they also nurtured and catered for the personal, social and cultural needs of an individual. Tupuola claimed that gangs filled a void for young people, allowing them participation in a group as a means of understanding and sometimes achieving a sense of self-esteem and adulthood.

Tita and Ridgeway (2007) observed that gang formation in a community impacted on local crime patterns. They offered two theories as to why gang members were more likely than non-gang members to commit crimes. First, gang members possess little self-control and are more likely to offend in the first instance. Thus they engage in criminal and delinquent activities to perpetuate a particular type of behaviour. Second, gang members have higher rates of offending prior to joining the gang. This is called the enhancement model. Tita and Ridgeway's research noted that drive-by shootings increased at gang sites where gang members congregated and that gangs flourished in deprived areas, increasing already high rates of criminal activity. Decker, Katz, and Webb (2008) claim that when gangs are well organised, they undertake more criminal activities.

Brotherton (2008, p. 62) challenged the way that gangs have been traditionally viewed. He argued that individuals within gangs can exhibit 'resistance'. This view is based on research of former gang members who had moved on to full-time employment and were no longer engaged in criminal activity. Brotherton observed that these former gang members were at a different stage of personal development and their personal situations had changed. Brotherton claimed that gang resistance to mainstream society was displayed in some of the gang activities including participating in political rallies and disseminating ideas that openly critiqued power relations, and that it was possible to see gangs as a grouping of people brought together by a common disparity seeking to make change.

1.2.1 Youth gangs in New Zealand

Youth gangs arose as a phenomenon in New Zealand in the 1950s though the number of gangs remained small through the 1960s. At the time, most gang members were Palagi. Throughout the 1970s, gang membership comprised those adults who had grown up as younger members with the gangs. The main source of information about gangs during that period was the Police, though some researchers believe that police information about practices regarded as socially deviant is unreliable (Chesney-Lind & Hagedorn, 1999; Ferrell, 1999; Monahan, 1970). In the 1980s, gangs were composed mainly of adults and membership was long term. Established gangs became more visible in the 1990s in relation to the amphetamine trade and gangs became more organised.

Ethnic gangs first came to public attention in New Zealand in 1971 when gang members, most of whom were in their early to mid-teens, claimed that they had been brutalised by police (Meek, 1992). In the 1970s, Māori and Pasifika gangs expanded, specifically in depressed rural and urban settings. The increase of Asian migrants in the 1980s saw an increase in Asian gangs in the 1990s. Eggleston's (2000) participant observation study of New Zealand youth gangs found little evidence of a national youth gang culture though the author claimed that youth were involved with emerging and established adult gangs. Eggleston's study, which included individual interviews with gang members at a youth facility as well as gang members he had been observing, noted that youth street gangs of 'ethnically homogeneous composition' had become common in the cities (p. 149).

The New Zealand Police estimate that there are approximately 73 youth gangs comprising 600 members in Counties Manukau though accurate data on numbers are difficult to obtain (MSD, 2008).

The MSD (2008) report, *From Wannabes to Youth Offenders – Youth Gangs in Counties Manukau,*

classified gangs into four groups – wannabes, territorial gang, unaffiliated youth gang and affiliated criminal youth gang. Wannabes were reported by the author to be mistakenly classed as gang members and were highly informal; territorial gangs were described as more organised and characterised by territorial boundaries; unaffiliated youth gang members were stated as not being under an adult gang and engaged in criminal activity for their own benefit; and affiliated youth gangs were thought to have a relationship to an adult gang and to carry out criminal activities on behalf of the adult gang.

The MSD (2008) report identified a number of factors that contributed to poor outcomes for young people. For example, parental disengagement was evident amongst both employed parents as well as with parents not in employment or who held multiple jobs. Thai (2003) had found that adults and organisations blamed the family and home life as the causes of Vietnamese delinquency and youth gangs but said it was because the parents worked long hours and were not around to supervise their children. The lack of supervision was said to cause the youth to turn to their peers and eventually to the gangs.

The MSD (2008) report stated that gangs provided youth with a "proxy family unit" that met the social needs of the youth and provided support (p. 16). The research identified a number of risk and protective factors related to family, peers and community. Protective factors included supportive and caring parents, a secure and stable family, a pro-social peer group and a pleasant, low-crime neighbourhood. Risk factors included socially isolated parents, parents and siblings who engaged in criminal activity, deviant peer group and neighbourhood violence. Breakdown of the family, youth violence and gang activity are frequently mentioned issues related to poverty in the urban setting (Reiboldt, 2001).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The research was conducted between November 2007 and May 2008. It was based on a set of semi-structured interviews with Pasifika youth from the suburbs of Māngere and Ōtara to find out what 'family' meant for them; to identify which individuals or groups were included in their definition of family; and the vision that Pasifika youth had for their family and for themselves. As the concept of family is closely tied up with the home and community, the research also investigated where home and community were, and what it meant for Pasifika youth. The researchers also sought the perspectives of Pasifika youth on leadership and culture in relation to their family and the community. The researchers also attempted to determine whether the family and the home were being replaced by the gang and the street for those Pasifika youth involved in gangs.

The study used a qualitative design involving group interviews, focus group interviews and individual interviews to gather data. Data collection instruments included the use of semi-structured questionnaires, interactive prompts, tape recorders and note-taking. The use of qualitative methods of data collection was the most appropriate for researching with groups traditionally considered difficult to access. Qualitative methods are believed to provide an in-depth approach to understanding gangs, and researchers believe that more face-to-face, academically rigorous studies are needed in gang research studies (Phillips, 1999; Venkatesh, 1997).

Eggleston (2000) argued that research on gangs should avoid the presence of hype by using multiple methods to collect data. Eggleston believed that hype was a strategy used by younger gang members to build themselves up to an outsider. Interview hype, explained Eggleston, is recognisable and understood by the ethnographer in ways that it would not be to an interviewer.

In this study, two of the three researchers were long-time residents of Māngere and Ōtara with access to young Pasifika people and their families including those involved in gangs, and relied upon established networks and personal relationships to recruit participants. The team of researchers consulted widely with youth workers and community organisations in Māngere and Ōtara and the involvement of trusted youth workers from a community youth organisation was a significant factor in the successful meetings between the gangs and the researchers.

The researchers were aware of the past and current social, political and economic environment in which these communities are located and were well placed in terms of research capabilities, background and knowledge to complete a research study on this topic. The researchers' knowledge of gang relationships and operations as well as their familiarity and friendship with the gang members allowed the researchers to detect the presence of hype in the data and avoid its mis-analysis in the results. The different groups interviewed by the three researchers enabled a triangulation of the data and the use of focus groups reduced the element of power that could have existed in individual interviews of non-gang and gang members.

The data were initially analysed under the themes of family, community, home, culture, leadership, gangs and the future as these themes provided the framework for the interview questions. As the voices of women in New Zealand gangs are often marginalised because of the media's focus on the role and activities of the mostly male young people involved in gangs, the reader is reminded of the female voices that are present in the research. The focus of this research is on Pasifika youth in South Auckland. It is not just on gangs. The use of the phrase 'non-gang' seemed to be the only clear and simple way to differentiate amoung the three groups of participants.

2.2 Ethics approval

Ethics approval for the research was granted by the Families Commission Ethics Committee. All participants were given information sheets outlining the aims of the study and detailing what their participation would involve. The participants were also informed that the information they gave would be confidential and that their identity would remain anonymous. All participants signed consent forms.

2.3 Recruitment and selection

Three distinct groups were selected to take part in the study. Group One participants (non-gang members) were young people who had never been involved in gangs. The participants for these group interviews were recruited from churches, educational programmes and from the streets and neighbourhoods where the researchers lived. The legal guardians of some in the 12–17-year age group were approached to discuss

their child's involvement in the project. Participants in the 18–24-year group were individually approached by the researchers.

If the person or adult/guardian agreed to participate or to have their child participate, they were given an information pack which contained:

> participant information sheet about the project with the date, venue, length of the interview, contact person for the project and a brief outline of the interview process

> consent form

> map showing where the interview would take place

> parental consent form for the guardians of those aged 12–16 years.

Group Two participants (gang members) were young Pasifika people who were actively involved with a gang. For the Māngere participants, one of the researchers who lived in the area and had worked with some of the gangs made contact with the leaders of the gangs to arrange a meeting. A trusted youth/gang worker was also a significant part of this initial meeting in which the researcher explained the project and what was required. If the gang leader agreed to participate, the researchers followed up with an information pack, phone calls and texts to ensure that the gang knew the time, date and location of the interview.

To recruit gangs from the Ōtara area, the researchers consulted with the 274 Youth Core Project, a well-known and respected community organisation. The researchers had met with the youth workers to inform them of the project and these youth workers provided valuable connections for the recruitment of gang participants. The youth workers approached gang leaders and gangs in Ōtara to discuss the project with them, to ensure that the confirmed participants were aware of the time, date and location of the interviews and that they were provided with travel assistance to attend the interviews. The relationship between the youth workers and the gangs was essential to the gangs' involvement in the study.

Group Three participants (ex-gang members) had previously been involved in gangs but were no longer active gang members. The participants were drawn from the personal networks of the researchers and the recommendations of the Voice Project's Advisory Group.

2.3.1 Recruitment challenges

During the recruitment process, the researchers encountered a number of problems, particularly with the recruitment and confirmation of the Groups Two and Three participants which delayed the progression of the project.

A considerable amount of time was spent arranging meetings with the gang leaders which were subsequently postponed for indefinite periods of time or cancelled, and for a number of reasons such as court trials of gang leaders, hospitalisation of gang members, preparation for retribution with rival gangs and arrests of gang members. In addition, gang leaders often could not confirm the gang's attendance or how many members would be attending the interview.

For the Ōtara gangs, these issues were compounded by the fact that the researchers, who relied on the youth workers to recruit the gang members and organise the interviews, had to work around the youth workers work schedule and commitments.

During the recruitment of the individuals for the Group Three interviews, the process was also protracted. Some of those approached were initially interested but withdrew for various undisclosed reasons. For those who maintained an interest in participating, confirming times, dates and venues proved very difficult due to work commitments and unavailability.

2.4 Participant details

Group One consisted of 21 Pasifika young people with 12 participants aged between 12 and 17 years and nine participants between the ages of 18 and 24 years from Māngere and Ōtara who had never joined, or had never been involved in a gang. The research team conducted four group interviews with Group One. Two groups, one consisting of participants from Māngere and another consisting of participants from Ōtara, were of the 'younger' Pasifika youth aged 12–17 years (Young Māngere Group and Young Ōtara Group). There were two other groups similarly made up of Māngere and Ōtara participants aged 18–24 years (Older Māngere Group and Older Ōtara Group). There were more males than females present in the Group One: 12–17 years old interviews but a balance of males and females in the 18–24 years old interviews.

Group Two consisted of 26 Pasifika youth from Māngere and Ōtara who were actively involved in gangs in one of these two suburbs. The participants were

drawn from four gangs with differing profiles in an effort to provide for a greater representation of youth gang membership in the South Auckland area. Gang 1 (CWI) was a multi-ethnic, predominantly male gang based in Māngere East. Gang 2 (Twain) was an all male, ethnically based gang of Samoan heritage also from Māngere. Gang 3 (Broadways) was a multi-ethnic female 'affiliated' gang from Ōtara. Gang 4 (Birdies) was a multi-ethnic neighbourhood gang based in Ōtara. Most of the gang members interviewed were between the ages of 14 and 24 years.

All of Group One and most of Group Two participants met the Ministry of Youth Development definition of youth (12–24 years old).

The Group Three participants were male ex-gang members from a range of Pacific Island backgrounds and included a Samoan and Cook Islander from Ōtara and two Samoans and a Tongan from Māngere. They were all over 24 years of age but this was to be expected as this group comprised those who had transitioned out of a gang in which they had been a member during their youth.

All of the Groups One and Two participants were born and/or raised in Māngere or Ōtara and were still living in one of these two suburbs. They came from a range of Pacific Island backgrounds including Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Niuean, Tokelauan and Cook Islands. A small number of the participants were Māori who, through their gang associations, accompanied the participants. The interviews took place in the suburbs of Māngere and Ōtara.

The descriptions of the focus groups and the individual participants are as follows:

Māngere and Ōtara Pasifika youth (non-gang members)

The participants for the Young Māngere Group were living with their immediate family and some had members of their extended family living with them. Only one participant lived with his extended family in South Auckland. The participants attended their local state secondary schools. They were attached to a church but not all were active. Some had family members in the gangs and all had friends who were involved in the gangs.

The Young Ōtara Group were born and raised in Ōtara. The participants were students at local state secondary schools. All but one lived with their immediate family and all had extended family living with them. All were active in the church. Only one had a family member in the gangs, although some of the participants had friends who were involved in the gangs.

The Older Māngere Group were born and raised in Māngere. The participants lived with their immediate family and some had extended family living with them. Two were working in Māngere, one was a student at a polytechnic institute and another attended a dance school. All of this group had attended local state secondary schools and all were active in a church. None of the participants had children. Some had family members in the gangs and all had friends who were involved in the gangs.

The Older Ōtara Group were born and raised in Ōtara and all had been locally schooled at the state secondary schools in the area. One of the participants was still at secondary school, one was attending university, two were unemployed and one was working. All but one lived with their immediate family and had extended family living with them. None of the participants had children. Four were attached to, but were not active in, a church and one did not attend church. Three of the participants had family members in the gangs and all had friends who were involved in the gangs.

The gangs

The CWI gang began in a prison in the 1990s. Now based in Māngere, it has around 100 members. The gang members were originally from the Pacific Islands but membership now includes people of any ethnicity. Many of its members are employed.

The Twain gang began in Māngere over 10 years ago by the older brothers of the current gang leaders. The Twain gang is affiliated with two other larger gangs.

Broadways is a small female gang of only three years from Ōtara and is connected to a larger well-known gang that was established in the 1970s.

The Birdies gang is a relatively young gang that was established about five years ago. Its membership is difficult to estimate but is said to be between 200 and 750 members. The gang is based in Ōtara and most of its members are unemployed or attending the local schools.

Ex-gang members

Toa is of Samoan heritage from Ōtara who joined a gang because of a friendship made at church. His

involvement in gangs began when he was 14 years old. Toa has been out of the gang for more than four years.

Leki is a Cook Islander who was born and raised in Ōtara and still lives there with his mother. He said he had been in the gangs for as long as he could remember. He has been out of the gangs for almost two years.

QT, originally from a smaller town south of Auckland, is Samoan. QT was a member of a gang he started with his brothers in the early 1990s. QT was in the gang for about seven years but although he is not active in it, he remains associated with it.

Nick is a self-employed Tongan and lives with his family in Māngere. His involvement in gangs began when he was 12. Nick has been out of the gangs for two years now and has a tertiary education.

Maka is Samoan and has been involved in the gangs since 1993 as a result of a rivalry between the Samoans and Tongans from two local high schools. He is now 29 years old and lives in Māngere although he has spent quite a number of years in Ōtara.

The following table details the composition of the groups. All participant names and gang names have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

Group One (non-gang members): Māngere 12–17 years old

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
Romeo	13	Male	Tongan
Avaiki	16	Male	Cook Island
Toma	12	Male	Samoan
Rasela	15	Female	Samoan
Sara	15	Female	Tokelauan/Tuvaluan
Petelo	13	Male	Samoan
Venus	12	Female	Tokelauan

Group One (non-gang members): Ōtara 12–17 years old

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
Charlie	17	Male	Samoan
Greg	15	Male	Niuean
Sale	17	Male	Niuean/Samoan
Elena	12	Female	Samoan
Iopu	16	Male	Samoan

Group One (non-gang members): Māngere 17–24 years old

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
Ivana	18	Female	Samoan
Tania	18	Female	Samoan
Jeremiah	17	Male	Cook Island
Willie	24	Male	Samoan

Group One (non-gang members): Ōtara 17–24 years old

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
Ruta	17	Female	Tongan/Niuean
Cameron	18	Male	Tongan
Bobby	20	Male	Niuean/Samoan
Bruce	20	Male	Niuean
Catherine	21	Female	Niuean/Māori

Group Two (current gang members): Māngere CWI

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
Saile	31	Male	Tongan
Fuatino	25	Male	Samoan
Lasalo	35	Male	Tongan
Rajen	22	Male	Indo-Fijian
Naima	26	Male	Samoan
Charlie	19	Male	Samoan
Joseph	24	Male	Samoan

Twain

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
Saile	21	Male	Samoan
Tama	25	Male	Samoan
Sefa	22	Male	Samoan
Raymond	22	Male	Samoan
Fili	19	Male	Samoan
Tavita	20	Male	Samoan

Group Two (current gang members): Ōtara Broadways

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
Treena	19	Female	Fijian/Niuean
Aroha	14	Female	Māori
Katie	16	Female	Māori

Birdies

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity
Peter	23	Male	Māori
Lisiate	18	Male	Tongan
Graham	17	Male	Niuean
Loti	18	Male	Samoan
Tala	16	Male	Samoan
Travis	18	Male	Tongan
Freddie	19	Male	Niuean
Frank	17	Male	Tongan
Fesola'i	17	Male	Samoan
Tino	16	Male	Samoan

Group Three (ex-gang members)

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Location
Toa	31	Male	Samoan	Ōtara
Leki	30	Male	Cook Islander	Ōtara
QT	31	Male	Samoan	Māngere
Nick	28	Male	Tongan	Māngere
Maka	29	Male	Samoan	Māngere

2.5 Interview questions

The primary aim of the interviews with all three groups was to determine how they understood family and community and how they perceived these understandings in relation to the future.

The secondary aim was to ascertain the reasons that young Pasifika people (Group One) had for not joining gangs, to find out what they believed the reasons were for young people joining gangs and to document the reasons and support systems they had, and used, to remain out of gangs.

The data gathered from focus group interviews with the gangs (Group Two) provided valuable insights into the world views and life experiences of young Pasifika gang members. The researchers believe that the information obtained will be relevant to understanding other Pasifika youth gangs in other parts of Auckland and New Zealand.

The purpose of the individual interviews with the ex-gang members (Group Three) allowed the researchers to gather information on the experiences of exiting gang life and what assisted gang members to transition out of gang life.

Although similar questions were asked of all three groups, additional questions were used where appropriate for the different groups.

Questions – Groups One, Two and Three
**Additional questions to Group Two*

Family

What does family mean to you?

Who do you regard as your family?

Do you live with your family?

What influence has your family been in your life?

What do you think your family is most proud of about you?

What are you most proud of about your family?

If responses to family did not suggest 'immediate or birth' family members, participants were asked:

What do you think your immediate family members are most proud of about you?

What are you most proud of about your immediate family?

Leadership

Who are the leaders in your life?

Why are they leaders to you?

Do you consider yourself a leader? Why?

Would you like to be a leader? In what way?

Home/community

Where do you see as being home for you?

Where is your community?

What do you like about your community?

What do you dislike about your community?

Gangs

What is the place of gangs in your community?

Do you perceive the presence of gangs as being a positive or a negative thing? Why/why not?

In what ways do you think gangs can make a positive contribution to the community?

How do you think your community/New Zealand should deal with gangs or gang culture?

What do you believe is the future of gangs?

Do you think time, money and resources should be used to assist young people who are involved in gangs or should the time, money and resources be directed towards those who have kept out of gang life?

*Do you see yourselves leaving your gang or the gang lifestyle? Why?

*What support would you need if you wanted to leave?

Culture/identity

What cultural heritage, customs and practices do you most identify with?

*Is your culture connected to your gang affiliation?

Future

Where do you see yourself and your family in the next 5–10 or the next 10–20 years?

Additional questions to Group Three

Family

Is your family still an influence in your life? How and to what extent?

What did your family think of your gang involvement?

At the time you were involved with gangs, were any of your family members in the same/different gangs? Are these same family members still involved in the gangs?

Since that time, have any new family members joined the gangs?

Are any family members currently involved in gangs? Why do you think they have joined gangs?

Leadership

During your time with the gangs, what organisations did you see as playing a leading role in your life?

What part did organisations such as the church, police, schools play in your life?

What organisations do you see now that can play a leading role in your life/community?

Home/community

Were there any organisations or people that helped you leave the gangs?

Do you believe gangs should have a presence in communities?

Is there a need for gangs in our communities?

Do you think Pasifika youth in South Auckland want to join gangs? Why?

Is it better to keep them from joining gangs? If yes, why and what needs to be done?

In what ways can you help?

Culture/identity

Did your ethnicity play a part in your joining the gangs?

Future

Are you still connected to the gangs? In what way?

Are you likely to maintain/ resume gang involvement? To what extent?

What do you think is the future for those Pasifika youth involved in gangs?

What future would you like to see for those currently involved in gangs?

What future do you see for Pasifika youth not involved in gangs?

What future would you like to see for Pasifika youth not involved in gangs?

What support would Pasifika youth need to get out of gangs?

What support would they need to stay out of gangs?

What is the future for Pasifika youth in South Auckland?

2.6 Interview process

Interviews took place at local venues in the Māngere and Ōtara suburbs in order to provide familiar and convenient surroundings for the participants. All the interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the participants. The interviews were based around a set of semi-structured questionnaires that varied slightly according to each of the three groups. During different stages of the focus group interviews, participants were asked to draw or write their answers to questions about family and culture and were then invited to share these drawings or writings with the rest of the group.

This method was not used in one of the gang interviews due to the nature of the interactions among the participants.

During the section of the interview that focused on identity and culture, the participants were given the opportunity to select from a number of items, including a kava bowl, a Cook Island necklace, jandals, an ie *lava lava*, a rugby ball, a video game, a pair of basketball shoes and t-shirts with the words 'Māngere PRIDE' and 'Ōtara's Finest', those items with which they identified or believed were representations of their culture.

Participants were also asked to select people whom they regarded as leaders from a number of photographs. Images included community leaders from Māngere and Ōtara, and public figures in the regional, national and international arena.

The interviews were between 60 minutes and 95 minutes long.

2.6.1 Interview considerations

'Snitching' or telling outsiders about gang life and activities is regarded as a major breach of gang protocol. Thus, the researchers had to reassure the gang leaders that the content of the interviews as well as the identity of the gangs that participated in the study would remain confidential. A confidentiality agreement was signed by the transcriber. In the presentation of the data, the names of the participants, and those of the gangs, including those gangs mentioned by the participants, have been changed to protect their identity.

Initially, the researchers had considered carrying out separate interviews with the gang leaders on the topic of leadership. However, because a specific section of the interview focused on the issue of leadership, the researchers were able to obtain valuable insights from both the gang leaders and members on this topic. Moreover, because the gang leaders had contributed significantly during the interviews, the researchers held the view that carrying out separate interviews with them would have resulted in a repetition of the data collected.

A few difficulties arose during one of the gang interviews such as gang members leaving and returning intoxicated with new members during the interviews, mobile phone conversations openly taking place and play fighting between the participants. The researchers dealt with this in ways that maintained the continuity and ethics of the interview and research respectively.

At least two of the three researchers were present at each of the interviews. This served to ensure accountability and allowed for consistency in the interviewing method.

None of the participants were paid to take part in the research although they were given a meaalofa or gift at the end of each interview in appreciation of their time.

2.7 Advisory group

Throughout the study, the researchers consulted with the Voice Project's Advisory Group which was set up at the beginning of the study to provide guidance and support on several aspects of the project including its aims, effectiveness and worth as well as access to the various community organisations, youth workers and networks associated with Pasifika youth. The Voice Project's Advisory Group comprised long-term residents of Māngere and Ōtara including a pastor, two Police Community Liaison Officers, a university academic, two heads of local community organisations and a youth worker. All the members of the Advisory Group worked in the area, mostly in programmes involving Pasifika youth. Most of the Advisory Group members were Pasifika except for two, one of whom was Māori and the other Palagi.

2.8 Data analysis

The data were coded under family, community, home, culture, leadership, gangs and the future, areas that the *Ala Fou – New Pathways* (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2003) report recommended needed to be explored with regard to Pasifika youth and their family. Further analysis of the data allowed the researchers to identify key concepts. In the analysis, the researchers made a distinction between 'home' and 'community'. 'Home' was used to refer to the living spaces and family associations of the Pasifika youth whereas 'community' referred to Pasifika youth's area of contact and socialisation away from the immediate family. For some Pasifika youth, however, there was little distinction between community and home. Due to the attention given by the gang participants to the subjects of police and schools, these themes are discussed in the analysis of the gang interviews. As one of the major foci of this study was to investigate Pasifika youth in gangs, the analysis of some of the data from the interviews with the gangs and ex-gang members is explored separately under a number of subthemes.

The results of the data analysis are described under two main headings with various themes and subthemes:

Voices – Views of Pasifika youth on family, community, culture, leadership, future and gangs

Family

> meanings of family

Community

> feeling good about South Auckland

> watching your back in South Auckland

> over the bridge and home in South Auckland

Culture

> representations – changing colours

> stereotypes within and beyond

Leadership – qualities and opportunities

Future – hopes for the future

Gangs

> youth perspectives on the presence of gangs in South Auckland

> joining the gangs

Voices – Pasifika youth gang members' and ex-gang members' experiences in the gang

> family ties – family involvement in the gangs

> values and expectations

> playing by the school rules

> making a living

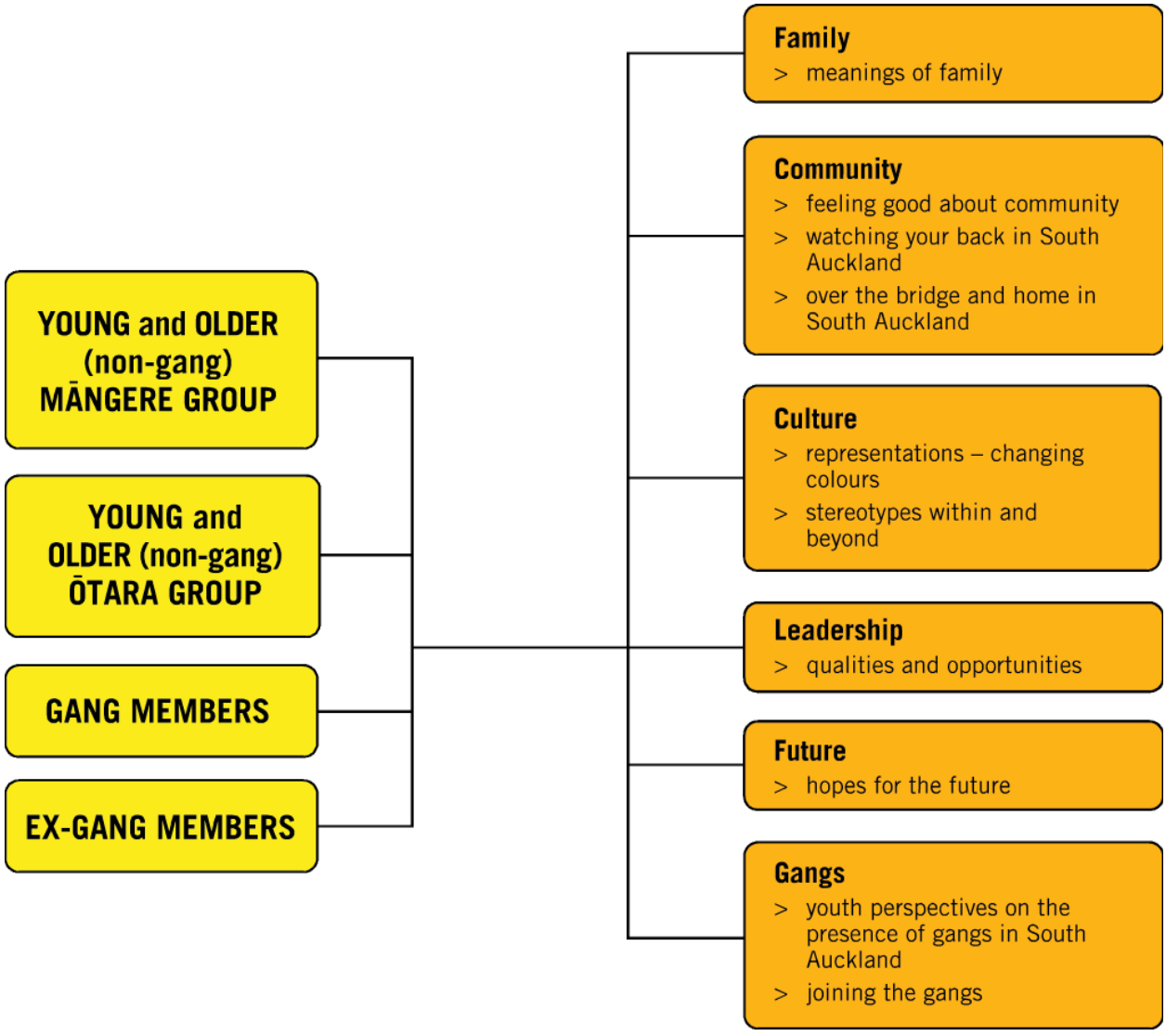
> encounters with the police

> leaving the gangs

> future of gangs

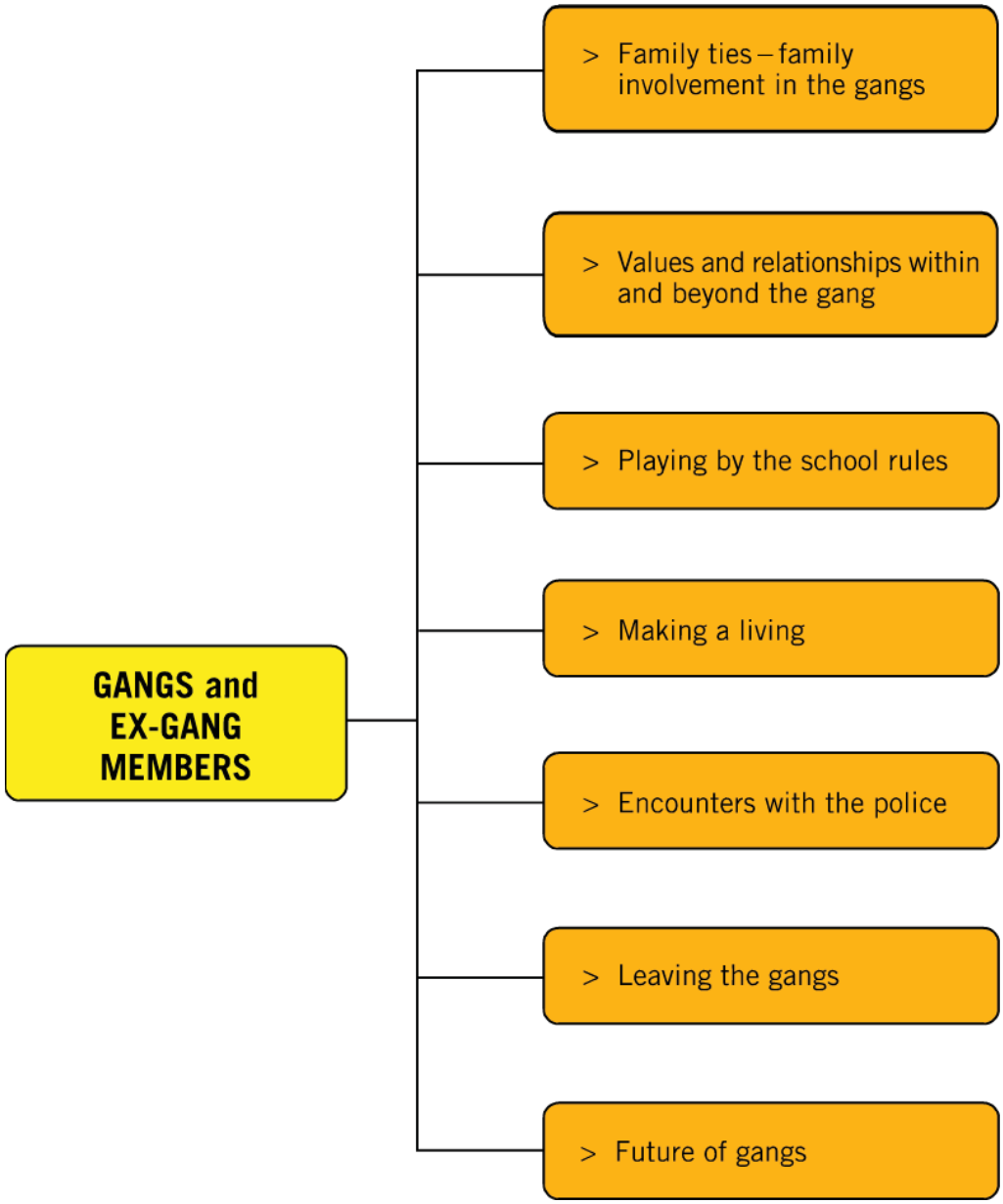
2.8.1 Themes – Diagram 1

Voices – Views of Pasifika youth on family, community, culture, leadership, future and gangs



2.8.2 Themes – Diagram 2

Voices – Pasifika youth gang members' and ex-gang members' experiences in the gang



3. FINDINGS

3.1 Voices – Views of Pasifika youth on family, community, culture, leadership, future and gangs

The findings presented in this section are based on the data collected from the three groups – non-gangs, gang members and ex-gang members. The findings are centred on the themes that have been the focus of the research as well as those that have been given particular emphasis by the participants.

The participants are identified by the following labels:

Young Māngere Group – Group One participants between the ages of 12 and 17 years who had never joined or had never been involved in a gang and were from the suburb of Māngere.

Older Māngere Group – Group One participants between the ages of 18 and 24 years who had never joined or had never been involved in a gang and were from the suburb of Māngere.

Young Ōtara Group – Group One participants between the ages of 12 and 17 years who had never joined or had never been involved in a gang and were from the suburb of Ōtara.

Older Ōtara Group – Group One participants between the ages of 18 and 24 years who had never joined or had never been involved in a gang and were from the suburb of Ōtara.

CWI and Twain – Group Two participants who were currently involved in one of these two gangs from the suburb of Māngere.

Broadways and Birdies – Group Two participants who were currently involved in one of these two gangs from the suburb of Ōtara.

Toa; Leki; QT; Nick; Maka – Group Three participants who had been involved in gangs but had transitioned out of the gangs.

3.1.1 Family

3.1.1.1 Meanings of family

Who is family?

Family for the non-gang members included their immediate family such as their parents, brothers and sisters, particularly for the younger Pasifika participants, one of whom drew a picture to describe her family:

> That's my dad and he is cool, that's my mum she's alright, that's my brother and he's mean, my other brother he's humble, that's my other brother wannabe gangster, that's me and my little brother, acts like a girl, that's my little sister wannabe queen and the smallest little brother, actor. (Young Māngere Group)

Family was those who met their immediate needs, provided guidance and enjoyed their successes such as "trophies from school" and "good grades".

For the older Pasifika non-gang members, family included their friends, those with whom they had close relationships and those who would help them:

> Anyone that you can go to or someone that you're friends with.
>
> I think of the people I live with, my church family because I see them more than the people at home. (Older Ōtara Group)

One participant was especially grateful to his grandmother and what she had done for him:

> I love my grandma so much cause like she's taught me a lot... I would have been on the streets ... like roaming the streets or something but I'm just grateful for my grandma.

Family for most of the gang members was their brothers, sisters, cousins and the gang members and their partners. One of the gang leaders present said his family was like his favourite movie. He had a number of young children and enjoyed watching them grow up. For a small number of the gang participants interviewed, the parental care they received came from the gang. For most of the gang members, their immediate family took priority over the gang family:

> That's our number one rule – your immediate first, we second – always have. (CWI)

The female gang Broadways included the neighbourhood and the area of Ōtara as their family. Like the other gangs, they saw their gang peers as family because they were always there for them when they got into trouble and tended to understand them much better than their families did when situations went badly for them:

> If you get into a fight, your family is not going to back you up, they will say you are stupid for doing that, and if you are in the hood they like back you up, they know where we were coming from.

Being with the gang was important to gang members because of the feeling of connectedness and the experiencing of similar circumstances – "it's like a street life connection, it's like a bond we all have and we are all on the same boat especially from Ōtara". Most gang members said that they were prepared to fight for both their immediate family and the gang:

> The family are in your blood, like you care for them, like if they die you are gonna fight for them, but the hood they are like 24/7 when you are out on the street, when you need money, you've got it. (Broadways)

Many of the gang members preferred to hang out with each other and did not "like going to hang out with other crews". Many of them participated in family outings and activities but inevitably returned to the gang – "straight after dinner I go back to this family (the gang)". (Twain)

A couple of the gang members who were soon to be fathers did not expect their association with the gangs would change on becoming parents. Some of the members had been disowned by their immediate family for joining the gangs. One ex-gang member recalled being labelled a black sheep and called *lou mea auleaga* by the family and extended family, something which he still remembers and remains resentful about, particularly when he sees his father and extended family members.

For a number of the gang members, their fathers had a major influence in their lives. An ex-gang member said that, for a few years, he hid the fact that he was a gang member from his family though he said his sister knew and his mother tried to deny it.

Spiritual family

The Older Māngere Group had a strongly religious perspective on their concept of family:

> Family is more than your immediate family… I see it more from a biblical and spiritual view, is that you're all brothers and sisters in Christ [and] are also part of my family. So that those are people that I consider my family.

Some participants in the Older Māngere Group admitted that their involvement with the church when they were younger had been at the expense of the time they spent with their family. This older group had held certain high expectations of their Christian family in the church but when these Christian friends had disappointed them or had left the church, they had turned to their immediate family. Growing up had made them aware that family did not necessarily mean only those who shared their values:

> In my earlier years of being a Christian … I used to always hang out with my Christian mates … and I never really thought much of my family but like a little bit more matured like physically and mentally and spiritually ... my perspective has changed, I see the importance of family.

Family lifestyle

The young people in these groups did not like to see their family struggling with bills or experiencing challenging relationships with other family members. They liked being with their family, enjoyed being together with them in the same house, and coming together to talk, have fun and know each other. One of the Young Ōtara Group said that he would be happier if his family spent more time together as his mother was always working and his father was always busy.

The participants acknowledged that their parents needed time to themselves and to know that their children were in safe environments:

> Sometimes parents appreciate some time away from the kids and maybe having free stuff that are reliable for you to be able to take your kids to, that you know you won't get into trouble afterwards. Usually at events, youth gather around outside afterwards and you know the gangs come or trouble comes and fights breaks out. Just somewhere that they know they can take their kids and have some time to themselves and have that peace of mind that they won't get into trouble during or afterwards. (Older Māngere Group)

Some of the participants were concerned about their families' lifestyles, particularly their contributions to family events and the effect this had on family relationships:

> The majority that my mum and stepdad argue is because of money issues especially when

> like fa'alavelave pop up, something like special occasions like funerals, weddings, birthdays, and the whole family has to put in money, and that my mum finds it quite hard sometimes, and they always argue about because there is two sides to the family. There's my mum's side and then my stepdad's side you know, and things are always happening and you know we always have to put in money or something. (Older Ōtara Group)

One member of the Older Ōtara Group said a happy family was having two parents together and since he did not have that he did not know how it felt to have a happy family:

> I don't know who my family is, like my mum and dad are not together so I don't really know what's it like 'cause a happy family have two parents together, so I don't know.

The gangs saw themselves as a family and likened the roles and responsibilities of their gang to those found in a family:

> The way I see things is like your own family, okay you've got your mum, your dad, you, your two brothers and your sister and this is an example – your dad works in the factory, your mum probably works at Kmart, you are a lawyer, your brother is a mechanic, your sister is a secretary, so in the CWIs we've got a uso working at the gym ... my brother is a hustler, I work at the (chicken) factory, so each of us have a role to play and it's to make money for the families and it's up to you how you label yourselves. To me, my brothers are just my brothers and we are all about aiga, the family ... basically what I'm trying to say is the CWIs is made of different individuals and different talents, skills and gifts. (CWI)

3.1.2 Community

3.1.2.1 Feeling good about South Auckland

What's not to like about South Auckland?

There was much that the participants liked about South Auckland including "the skate park", "the different islanders, Māoris" and their friends. Some said they found the culture elsewhere boring.

Like the non-gang and gang participants, Leki, an ex-gang member, felt safe in South Auckland and in Ōtara: "with all my heart I feel safe". He said that people who felt safe in Ōtara were those who knew who to talk to and where to go.

Nick, an ex-gang member, liked Māngere because he saw it as a friendly community:

> I have never like had so many friendly people saying hi, bye, there is always a smile on the face and not scared to approach you even the white people and Māori people out here.

The Broadways gang liked "everything" about their community of Ōtara and were proud of the struggles they faced living in Ōtara and the fact that everyone knew how hard it was growing up there. If they were to leave, nothing would stop them from returning:

> If you live in Ōtara like for most of your life you'll see how things are, like how hard other people have been. Like we thought we were having a hard time but there are other people … they have respect for us for being like that.
>
> I will always have the heart for my hood, even the whole of Ōtara.

A member of the Broadways gang said that being in Ōtara had been a calming influence on her and had made her less aggressive:

> If they didn't bring me to Ōtara, I wouldn't know where I am today. Like in my head it's violent, like chick look at me funny it's like – what the f**k is your problem. Like arguing and that's in my head but around me when I am home it's nothing compared to that.

They believed that whatever the situation, Ōtara would continue to be a community:

> There's ups and downs, but no matter what, it's Ōtara.

The Birdies gang liked that food was cheaper in Ōtara, giving credit to the local shopkeepers who, they said, knew "how to feed us Otarians":

> You can't get any cheaper, the food, the bread 90c, pies a dollar, drinks a dollar. And you want to go out to Papatoe, you won't get a dollar pie, more like a dollar fifty, two dollars. And if you go over the Shores, four dollars (laughter).

Most of the participants were familiar with a few of the community organisations such as 274 and Māngere

Youth Core, that were helping the younger members set goals and think about positive ways of dealing with their problems. The gang and ex-gang members did not believe that the Government had been very helpful with regard to their circumstances:

> The government just needs to help this place – 274 ... 'cause they (274) look like they are trying to do something for the community but the government should get involve because you can't just rely on one source. I mean you gotta have other sources to help the community to work and it's like your car, if you don't have a battery it won't start, and if no petrol, it just sits there. (Birdies)
>
> I have so much respect for Alan Va'a because MYC [Manukau Youth Centre] and all those sort of things that Alan has been involved with, I have always looked to them as like – these men are out there trying to get our kids off the streets and I have always respected that. (QT)

3.1.2.2 Watching your back in South Auckland

Some things need to change

The Young Ōtara Group felt they had to "watch their backs" in South Auckland and were divided on the safety of Ōtara, noting that there were some streets which were best avoided. There were a number of things in Ōtara they believed needed to change such as "the lifestyle of people, broken homes, gangs" and they also called for more organisations like 274.

Some of the young non-gang groups said that they did not socialise with non-Islanders such as the Indians and Chinese because they believed these groups were scared of "the big person standing next to them". Participants from the two younger groups did not like the gangs and the graffiti in their neighbourhood and believed that gangs needed to be banned in order to make their communities safer. They disliked the violence in their communities which they said began at parties and blamed the ease of access to alcohol as partly responsible for the violence.

A few of the gang members were hesitant about raising their children in South Auckland as they did not see much opportunity for success at life, school, employment or in the future:

> I definitely wouldn't raise my family here in Māngere … yeah I'd like my son to be successful aye, keep going to school and stuff like that – definitely not be like me. (Twain)
>
> I think the environment makes a big difference, I mean, where I'm staying now in Botany is quite nice, peaceful environment, no rocks through windows and stuff like that. It would make a difference if I raise my kids somewhere else, and it's not because I don't want to raise my kids around my friends, of course I do, but it's like I don't want him to see a rock thrown through the window aye, and stuff like that. (Twain)

The ex-gang members also did not like the presence of gangs in South Auckland or seeing "the young ones walking on the streets". An ex-gang member said that parents in the community needed to pay attention to what their children were actually doing. Most parents, he said, used their children to do babysitting and when they were not doing that, "most of their time is spent on the streets or roaming".

A Broadways gang member said that a lack of money and support made life difficult in Ōtara and contributed to the presence of gangs:

> Like if you're living out west or you've got everything, you've got money, you've got love, support surrounding you, and when you are in Ōtara, like your parents, like after a while they don't even care – you don't have love, you don't have support, you don't have things you need – you don't have anything.
>
> Yeah and that pushes everyone to the street because you have nothing – nothing to live for ... that's why there are gangs in Ōtara .

The Pasifika youth from Ōtara, both non-gang and gang members, were contemptuous of certain gangs who they believed felt the area was under their control. They themselves believed Ōtara belonged to all those who lived there:

> No one runs Ōtara… The whole community runs Ōtara… Everybody that lives in the neighbourhood runs Ōtara. (Broadways)

Not as bad as you think

One of the ex-gang members, however, believed that gang behaviour in South Auckland was not as bad as other parts of Auckland. Nick described gang activity in Glen Innes as "cut throat" and said the way the gangs

operated there was different from how gangs operated in South Auckland:

> I heard stories about Māngere and that but not as bad as GI like guys turning on guys doing each other's houses over, doing each parents over and that's why I connect with South Auckland, it's a really island atmosphere, we wouldn't have done that in the islands. (Nick)

The Young Māngere Group said it was dangerous to be out alone at night but they said that if they were out with friends, people would think they were a gang. There were some "dangerous" people around but mostly they felt safe and this was helped by the fact that everyone knew each other:

> If I get into trouble then like there's bound to be one guy who says nah nah nah, that's **that** guy's mate, leave him alone.

The Older Ōtara Group said that the reports of gangs and poverty had caused people to have an unfavourable opinion of Ōtara:

> I don't like to stereotype because I come from Ōtara … but I just came back from this little place that I never heard of, and they like knew who we were and they say, 'Oh these guys are from Ōtara.' They were expecting us to come up with all these gang stories (laughter) like mean arm wrestlers. They asked us when we first got there and they like, 'Oh are you from the Killer Bees', and they like expecting the gangsters to come down yeah.
>
> With people that haven't been to Ōtara and they ask you where you are from and you say Ōtara, they think the worst… They've never come to Ōtara so they judge.

3.1.2.3 Over the bridge and home in South Auckland

I'm home!

Home for the Young Ōtara Group was in Ōtara, where they had been all their lives. For other participants, home was more specifically "the place where my mum and I live, and probably my grandma's place". Home for these Pasifika participants was wherever they felt safe, whether it was their parents' home or the church.

The Young Ōtara Group said their parents wanted them to stay at home because they felt this was the safest place for them:

> They [parents] want to see us at home ... so they'll know that we're safe. Not at other places that they don't know where we are. (Young Ōtara Group)

The Older Māngere Group also felt at home in their own suburb:

> I'm so comfortable that when the bus gets over the Onehunga bridge, I could get off from then on 'cause like, 'I'm at home' and walk the rest of the way home... Do you know that Onehunga bridge? Once it goes over, it turns into the Māngere Bridge shopping centre – I could get off anywhere from then onwards and feel like, ahhhh, I'm in Māngere.

Ōtara was home to the Birdies gang who said they felt safe and invisible in Ōtara:

> Here's the south side ... can't be anywhere safer than that… It's like you just can't wait to get back to Ōtara. You go out of here, like you just go to Papatoe and when you get over the bridge, you're just safe aye, you're invisible, just invisible – Ōtara is my home.

Home for Leki, an ex-gang member, was not in the Cook Islands where his cultural roots lay but Ōtara, the place he "shed blood for".

Defending South Auckland

The Older Māngere Group was amused and slightly mocking when they talked about what people from outside South Auckland thought of Māngere:

> I like the idea of people outside Māngere, like the nicer areas, like Remuera, Ponsonby – they are scared of South Auckland. I'd like to think we know it is safe and we can walk the street and then when we go to uni, we are not around people who are from South Auckland, we can make it out as if it was real bad and they are real scared. Just joking around but I like the fact that it is safe and that it's just home. I can walk the streets and all the gangsters that people are afraid of, they are like people that I grew up with and so I like that. I could see that there's boys that I could have a conversation and catch up with, I could walk away and look back and look behind and staring down that person driving past the house.

They felt accepted in Māngere and safe from the discrimination they experienced in other parts of Auckland:

> Like I go down like shopping Botany Downs and like see those clean areas and it's kind of of when those white people look at me you know, like a brown guy, like my family, and it's kind of off there and if they come here like you know we can accept them. (Older Māngere Group)

The Older Māngere Group was staunch in their defence of Māngere, noting that there were areas worse off:

> Like some people will say Māngere and Ōtara are like the most ghettoest place like suburb, but then when you go like in Mt Roskill, bro', that's the most ghettoest place of Auckland. I see all the gangsters there and I think they should be sorted out like Māngere and Ōtara. I thought Ōtara was ghetto to be honest but it's like Māngere ... it's quiet and there's hardly any gangsters there anymore.

All of South Auckland is my home

For the Older Ōtara Group, everywhere in South Auckland was home including the Ōtara flea market, the shopping centre, the church and their friends' houses:

> Home is being at the flea market, going to the shopping centre, home is walking up to church, just talking to your mates on the way, home is going to your nana's house, my nana's house, stopping at every second house to see my old mate, my old school mates, some of them in gang and some of them having babies, home is where you play touch on the road.

QT, an ex-gang member, had similar feelings as the Older Ōtara Group about South Auckland and considered the whole of the area as his home:

> What is there not to like about South Auckland (laugh). I don't know, it doesn't matter about the bad things or the negative things, it's our home and that's all there is to it. Everybody has a home and this is our home no matter what happens, whether we have the dollar pies or whatever, it's our home.

Some of the gang members who were born in other South Auckland suburbs but had moved to either Māngere or Ōtara considered both suburbs their home because some gang members still lived there. Though some would like to return 'home' to the suburb where they were born, they were obligated to remain where they were because of their partners and children:

> I'd like to go back there [Otahuhu], there's opportunity to go back and live but my mrs, 'cause she's here for her life and the kids and my lifestyle, I go one way and that is the hard way, but in consideration for my partner and my beautiful babies I had to relocate and that's it. My family is first and if it wasn't for her I would go back there. (CWI)

Home is local

One of the gangs felt at home only in their own neighbourhood. For the Twain gang, home was their own street, the back of each other's homes and the entire neighbourhood. They lived only a couple of minutes away from each other and liked the friendly nature of their community:

> Everyone knows each other around here, and if you walk down to the shops you don't worry about being jumped, everyone is there, yeah safe.

The members of this gang did not feel as though they belonged in the whole of South Auckland and felt like intruders in those areas they did not know or frequent.

3.1.3 Culture

3.1.3.1 Representations – changing colours

Many things make me

All the participants said they were proud of their Pasifika heritage. When asked to draw or select symbols that they felt represented their culture, many drew or chose items such as a pair of jandals, a shell necklace, a lavalava, the Tongan flag, coconuts, donuts, the pe'a sogaimiti and a dance.

Some of the participants viewed culture in terms of their ancestors and their iwi.

The Older Māngere Group drew images of Jesus Christ, a Bible and a baby to show the word of God and to represent the new generation. They also said that the different languages that they spoke represented culture for them. They believed that their culture influenced how they were as a person and the way they lived:

> 'Cause you know how Samoans like to share, like Palagis at work they don't like to share, because we have one Palagi dude and because he works with so many Samoans he used to be quite stingy, which

he still is sometimes but now he shares his lunch (laughter). (Older Māngere Group)

Negotiating culture

Culture was seen by the Older Māngere Group as something that should be appreciated:

> My mate is a Cook Islander, his mum used to be my primary school teacher but then they moved out of South Auckland into Ellerslie and now she like hates South Auckland. She always disses South Auckland and she like lives like a white person, like she is embarrassed of being brown.

All of the participants said they felt positive about their own culture and that they related well to other cultures:

> At school, because I was Māngere for four years and we have a (Niuean) culture group, and some of the people were surprised that they thought I was Niuean but when they got to know me, they found out I was Samoan, and most people are happy that some cultures are bonding with others. (Older Māngere Group)

Most of the Older Ōtara Group were of dual or multiple Pasifika or Māori heritage and said that their culture made them feel strong mentally and physically. They appreciated the best of what they said they had gained from each of these heritages. One young woman said that she had got her love of the church from her Niuean side but her singing from her Māori side.

One youth of Tongan, Fijian and Palagi ancestry drew a self-portrait and wrote the word Palagi smaller than the words Tongan or Fijian because, he said, he knew very little about the Palagi side of his family:

> Don't laugh at my self-portrait – I didn't know how to draw the Tongan flag so I only put red (laughter) in case you mistake it for England or something, D*** that's my Fijian side, that's my grandfather's chief name, P*** that's my Niuean side – that's my nana, L*** he's my dad – he's half-caste. I wrote it little because I didn't really know the Palagi side. (Older Ōtara Group)

One of the gangs chose a number of traditional cultural items to symbolise how they saw their culture. These included the fue and the tanoa. The gang's members also chose sports items such as a rugby ball, a pair of boxing gloves and a baseball bat. The members purposely avoided choosing a red bandana explaining that the bandana itself meant nothing to them: "It's just a piece of rag, piece of cloth" (CWI).

In contrast, a member of another gang selected a bandana because he said it represented the beginning of his involvement in the gangs:

> 'Cause this is what it is, when I was a little kid ... it sort of started from there and end up somewhere else. (Birdies)

Ethnicity and gang membership

The Broadways gang members believed that being a Pacific Islander or Māori had a significant influence on someone joining a gang:

> Māori and Pacific Islanders have a mean part in gangs and the hard life – yeah they are the ones that brought it all out.

Both gang members and non-gang groups agreed that gangs had become much more multicultural in their membership:

> Yeah we are multicultural in our (gang). We have Samoans, Tongans all sorts – they all get along. (Broadways)

> Some gangs stick with one culture (but) you often see people that mix culture, like there are Samoan or Tongan gang and then there are those with Samoan and Tongan and they know each other. (Older Māngere Group)

One of the CWI gang members said that he liked the colour brown because that was the colour of his skin and the colour that represented the people in the gang. He said that needed to change, however, as the gang now included people from other cultures: "We now have Palagis and Asians coming."

Leki agreed that most gangs were no longer segregated ethnically. He held the theory that the connection between being Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islander and being in a gang was a link to the past when Samoans, Tongans, Pacific Islanders were warriors and worked together to defend their families. Leki attributed the decline in ethnically based gangs to the fact that the New Zealand-born Pasifika youth outnumbered the island-born Pasifika youth:

> If you're born in New Zealand and you're Cook Islander, you're not really Cook Islander, and those people who fall into that bracket will form that

> merge. With the other gangs where there are all the cultures, there's always people feeling like that who will combine, and we got huge numbers like that against people who are staunch Samoan, staunch Tongan. They outnumber them.

Leki cited the well-known gang Birdies as an example of a group of youth who were told that they were "not real Samoan or Tongan" and he believed that was responsible for fuelling the animosity among those of Pasifika heritage.

Although the participants from the Twain gang were all of Samoan ethnicity and were proud to be Samoans, the gang also had members who were Tongans and Niueans:

> It doesn't matter what race you are ... we've got Tongans, Niueans, it's not a racial kind of thing.

However, they said they were more proud of coming from Māngere because that was where they were born and where they grew up.

Twain members wanted their children to be bilingual as they believed this would help them in the future as well as enable them to communicate with the older generation:

> Better for their future, you don't want them talking to their fobby grandma in English.

Toa, an ex-gang member, said his Samoan identity was part of the reason he joined the gangs as he had experienced prejudice towards Samoans when he was growing up. He had considered Tongans, most of whom he knew were in the Truckies gang, as his enemies. Now, he said, the Tongans are like family to him: "They are family bro, everyone is family."

QT and Nick, two other ex-gang members, agreed that the priority for gang members was membership in the gang and not ethnicity. Nick believed that the conflicts between Tongans and Samoans were historical but said that the two cultures were united now:

> Most of all it was an era that there was a lot of Tongans coming and they were causing a lot of strife around and most of fights are with Tongans, and we have head butted a lot with Tongans, a lot man, but years have changed and some of those guys when we see them are all good friends now. (QT)

> To be honest I have never seen the Tongans and Samoans so combined like they are today. (Nick)

Toa believed that if Pasifika youth knew more about their culture, it might help them stay away from gangs:

> Like that Māori channel, they have Te Reo and all the Māori people watch it.

A rivalry between Samoans and Tongans at two local colleges was the reason that Maka said he had joined the gangs:

> I was involved with the L*** back in 199* and then it was the X***, the gang was called N*** and that was back in B*** college. It was against H*** college. That was how it all started and we didn't like H*** college because it was full of Tongans, that's how it all started and from there it started happening out at the bus depots and then ended up getting expelled from school and that's how we ended up making our gang.

3.1.3.2 Stereotypes within and beyond

The Older Māngere Group believed that growing up in South Auckland had made them much more accepting of, and adaptable to, other cultures than those who were not exposed to the variety of ethnicities that was present in the South Auckland communities:

> I think it happens more out here, like cultures mixing, so with people like from Ellerslie like my mate, and from North Shore they don't get along with islanders and don't get along as well as islanders from the south side like how they get along (with) the Palagis, Asians and Indians.
>
> That's part of the reason why Māngere is home, because I feel comfortable coming into Māngere and with the Palagi, Indians and Asians here, they know what the islanders are like and if you go somewhere else they don't know what islanders are like so they might look at you differently and discriminatory.

The Older Māngere Group were aware of the stereotypes that people held of South Auckland Pasifika youth:

> Like one of the boys, he was the only islander in his class at uni and he did business and he said that the people in there didn't know him and when they got split into groups and they finally got to know him and they said 'Ah we thought you were a gangster' and he said 'Why is that?', 'Because you dress like

one' but he dresses like this and this is normal, this is our south side casual ... they never really knew islanders so when they saw him... Because of the way he was dressed aye.

The Broadways gang held their own perceptions of people and how they lived. They had a particular disdain for those they regarded as the "white chicks, all those rich bitches". They said they did not dislike white people just those whom they believed thought they were better than others by the clothes they wore and the cars they drove:

> They think they are better than everyone else … their handbags, their clothes, walking with little dogs (laughter) ... you see their nice cars parked up.

3.1.4 Leadership

3.1.4.1 Qualities and opportunities

What's in a leader?

The Young Māngere Group described a number of characteristics that they believed a leader ought to have including being someone who could "stand up for themselves", a "front man", "somebody high", "someone you can depend on to lead people", "someone who has a strategy" and someone with "a strong voice' cause no one wants to listen to someone who is quiet". They also named a number of world leaders from the range of images shown to them such as Nelson Mandela who they said had "just done a lot to change the world" as well as their teachers who they saw as "giving us opportunities for our future".

The Young Ōtara Group regarded their parents, God, their church pastor, grandparents and a principal as their leaders. They also saw some local community people such as the youth workers as leaders as well as national and international figures such as Nelson Mandela, Helen Clark and the Pope. For the Young Ōtara Group, leaders were those who "do work around the house ... work around the community" and "run the country". Leaders, they said, were like "teachers, they teach you things". Those who had listed their parents as leaders said it was because they appreciated "the things that they have taught us to make us better".

The Older Māngere Group also saw their church pastors as leaders because they had helped them to understand the different stages of life they were going through. One member of this older group considered her sister as a role model and leader because of the experiences she had been through. To another, his grandparents were his leaders because his parents were not involved in his life and he did not know his father.

From the pictures provided, the Older Māngere Group had chosen well-known persons as leaders including Martin Luther King because "he was radical for his time" in wanting "equal rights for black and white", Mother Teresa for being "a good role model for the females" and Nelson Mandela for the "sacrifices" he had made.

The Older Māngere Group also selected the South Auckland researchers as leaders because of their positive attitude, the qualifications they had achieved and for teaching them things that helped them in their lives. Long-serving and well-known community leaders were also mentioned as leaders because of the time they spent working with the youth.

The Older Ōtara Group said that leaders were those who had power, made changes and had the final say. They saw those who worked in the community as leaders because they were "doing everything they can and doing everything in their might to make a change in Ōtara". One member of this group said his pastor was a leader "because even though he's not like as famous as the other guys, he's willing to lead his people, to lead us into change" and believed that leaders were there to "serve the people". This Older Ōtara Group also selected Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King as leaders because of "the respect that they have throughout the world, civil rights, they led their people through struggles". One young woman had chosen her parents as her leaders because her mother "was the boss" and her father was "the head of the family and what he says pretty much goes".

The Broadways gang members said that a leader should have personality, be fun and active and be respected and have respect for others. Leaders, they said, should have "a heart for everyone". As with the other gang members, the Broadways all saw themselves as leaders. One felt that she was a leader in her street because she was always encouraging the younger children to go to school.

The gang considered a local community gang member as a leader as he had looked after them and provided them with food. They said he was well known for

looking after youth and respected women without expecting anything in return except that "you have to listen to him". They said Tupac was a leader because of the way he had had to live his life:

> That's like how we are living our lives, but the way he was living his, it was like a little bit harder than ours. (Broadways)

The gang also mentioned two well-known community workers as well as their own youth worker as leaders because of their work with young people:

> They are trying to help Ōtara and all the kids in Ōtara – they are trying to get them into a better life but it's up to the kids if they want to have a better life. (Broadways)

The Birdies members believed that a leader needed to have morals, motivation and mental toughness. Most chose Tupac as a leader because he had achieved fame despite the allegations that he was a drug addict. They also saw Muhammad Ali as a role model because of their own love for the sport of boxing.

QT, an ex-gang member, said "good" leaders were desperately needed because youth were lost in the school system and the police were getting tougher on the youth who were unaware of their rights:

> Our kids are just lost or the school system is not doing their jobs and it's getting harder, and the police are getting harder, and our kids don't even understand what their rights are or what they have to do, so the cops just walk all over them and the police is just boxing them in and that's why we need good leaders.

QT said he now tried to be a good role model to others and to have those who represented his business company realise that the image they projected reflected on him.

We are leaders too

All the members of the Older Māngere Group saw themselves as leaders, particularly to younger members of their families. They felt that they possessed leadership qualities such as the ability to teach and to communicate easily with youth as well as their general attitude. All the youth believed that in order for them to grow as leaders in their community, they needed opportunities and resources to practise and demonstrate leadership:

> Opportunities to lead, as you say, if you are passionate about something … opportunities to teach, you know the skill that you can teach others. (Older Ōtara Group)

> When we run youth events, in the beginning we have some money in our church and the bigger our ideas got, like we realise we need money for it, like something we need to do for the community. (Older Ōtara Group)

The Young Ōtara Group also believed that they themselves were leaders:

> It's already in us, it's just like bringing it out.

Like the Young Ōtara Group, the Older Ōtara Group also saw themselves as leaders as they knew the younger ones were looking up to them and watching their actions. They said that made them think about what they did because their actions affected not just themselves but those around them as well:

> The thing about being a leader, because sometimes people like put you up on a pedestal, and as soon as you do something wrong you're like let them down, so you have to think about what you do ... because your actions doesn't affect just yourself but affects everyone else around you. (Older Ōtara Group)

Leadership in the gangs

The leader of the Birdies said he wanted to be a voice for the gang and the neighbourhood because he knew the gang members looked up to him:

> I'll do anything for these fellas just straight up. I have had most of the brothers crash at my house. My whole house has been packed up with the little brothers. I've kept them and that's why I see myself as a leader. I mean even little youngsters they look up to me. I mean I see it, I'm not blind to see it, I'm not gonna say ah, I'm not going to pretend I don't see it.

Some of the CWI members did not consider any of the international people as leaders. Instead they looked to their own gang members as leaders. Although some acknowledged that people like Helen Clark and David Tua might be considered leaders "in their own world", their leaders were the boys and the current leader of the CWI gang. They also saw themselves as leaders because they did not follow others. The members felt that it was the attributes of a person that made them a

leader and one in particular was especially grateful for the leader of the gang who had helped to keep him out of trouble:

> It's what you bring, like calms us down like, especially me and I speak for myself – I'm the most violent one out of all of us, I think … but without my little brother [the leader], I would not be sitting here – I think me and K*** would have killed somebody and gone back to jail. I spent most of my life in institutions since I was 13 and I got out of jail on my 30th and I haven't turned back and followed that s**t... Yeah my brother is a leader … I am thankful that he's there all the time because if he wasn't, I would be screwed up or someone would be dead. (CWI)

Toa said he had been seen as a leader by gang members because he did not need to be told when to fight and could be relied upon to do so when necessary. However, he did not consider himself a leader back then. He said he saw himself as a leader now though he knew he needed to equip himself with proper leadership skills.

Leki's leaders were the dominant figures in his life such as his father, his brother and his uncles. Leki saw himself as a leader and had thought that one day he would lead a gang. His new role as a youth mentor had made him reconsider this goal: "Now I'm to lead the young people, lead to a generation of success away from gangs." Leadership for him was about commitment, relationship and uniting the youth.

QT said that when he had been a member of the gang he was not a willing leader and had not chosen to be one but on looking back, he realised he called "a lot of the shots":

> You don't choose to be [a leader] but all of a sudden you do become one. In all events of my life those things happen.

QT's father had a significant impact on his life even though he had passed away when QT was only 11: "Now that I am a father, I try to be like my dad." To QT, a leader was someone who spoke the truth about what he believed in and who worked and cared for those for whom he was responsible. Several of his comments about leadership were directed at gang leaders:

> [A leader will] get things to benefit his people ... to find a way to benefit his crew and families … a true leader does not lead his soldiers and people into harm's way or whatever ... or send his soldier to go and do an arm robbery cause if anything goes wrong they will be sitting in jail for the next eight to 10 years.

The older Pasifika non-gang groups said that the violent activities in which gangs were involved disqualified their leaders from being regarded as 'leaders'. They believed that gangs had created a lifestyle that was not acceptable to society and had detached themselves from the community taking many young people with them:

> I think it depends on a type of gang. If it's gangs like violence and rob and stuff, nah I don't think those gang leaders are actually leaders but I know they think they are.
>
> With all respect to your gangs or their leaders, I think they are lost sheep aye, and I think it's their purpose and that's why they are not leaders ... it's because they are trying to create their own system and that's why I call them lost sheep ... they are trying to have their own system when there is already a system set out for the good … you should know like B*** and then there's N***, the majority of kids that go to our school have dropped out and the majority joined them. (Older Ōtara group)

However, some in the older Māngere non-gang group acknowledged that even if gang leaders were not their type of leader, they were still leaders because people followed them and listened to what they had to say, and they were making a stand like many leaders did:

> I reckon that they are leaders. For me personally they are not my type of leaders but they are still out there making a stand, just going their own way and being different, and they have people that want to follow them and the people following them are kind of making them leaders but just not my type of leader. (Older Māngere Group)

3.1.5 Future

3.1.5.1 Hopes for the future

The Young Māngere Group had decided on a range of options for their future including becoming an All Black, getting a university degree, joining the police force, finishing school, getting a job and going on a church mission. They credited a number of people and institutions such as parents, community workers, teachers and the church with helping them to achieve these goals.

The Young Ōtara Group's focus on the future revolved around helping their family:

> I want my whole entire family to be saved and be more happy and joyful and go to church.
>
> I want just enough money to support my parents so they don't have to work … and to live well enough to maybe own a house of our own and for education.

The future for some of the Older Māngere Group included having a family and children and living in South Auckland. Others wanted to join the Special Forces or to join a church mission overseas. All the participants in this group said that even if they travelled away they would return to Māngere.

This older group were aware of the need to set goals to achieve their future and one of the youth said that he would have benefited from a career advisor who believed in him:

> I wasn't doing too good in the beginning of the year and in the prelims, and he goes 'Willie, what do you want to get in maths?' – 'I want to get a B' and he goes, 'Let's be realistic (laughter), aim for C', and I walked out ... it would have been good if he had believed in me. (Older Māngere Group)

The Older Ōtara Group also wanted to travel, work with youth, have families and become prominent sports players. But they also had more visionary goals such as wanting "to be able to change lives, help people":

> I just want to see people be happy, like join the 'family against violence' campaign and things like that. It's not cool to see people hurt, I just want to help people.

And just like their Māngere counterparts, the Older Ōtara Group wanted to be "still here in Ōtara".

The CWI gang had a number of plans for the future of their gang over the next five to 10 years. These included having a business that employed members of their family, working in a gym, furthering their education and having a workshop garage. CWI wanted to help young people by having a recreation centre that would help youth who had been abused and where they would be able to learn activities such as carving:

> I see us gradually one day, 'cause most of us have got kids, and the plan is to open a recreation centre, that's where government money comes in – we want to set up to help the youths that have been abused and stuff, learn educational stuff.

They were willing to take any positive steps to achieve their goals because they knew that if they did not provide opportunities for their children, the future was not going to be a positive one for them: "They are just gonna go down the same path as we did" (CWI).

The Broadways gang wanted to be employed in the next 10 years. Their goals for the future seemed basic and not much more than immediate needs. One of them found it hard to make plans for the future:

> Evie [youth worker] tried with me [to think about the future] but it was hard to try and think of what I wanted.
>
> You just don't know where you wanna be. I could be in America living the life. I could be living in a mansion. I could be locked up – it's really hard aye.

When prompted to think about the dreams they had when they were young, one of them said her dream had been to be a police officer but she definitely did not want to do that now and if she did she would help those in trouble with the law:

> If I did become a police officer, I will help heaps of criminals, like little criminals, I will help them. (Broadways)

QT wanted Pasifika youth to achieve more than their parents did. He said their parents had brought them part of the way to attaining their goals and now it was up to the youth to move on from there:

> Their parents put them in a plateau and it's them that takes themselves from that plateau upwards... The kids from the B*** could say 'I have, look at all the money I've got', but it's very short lived, so I wish that our kids could take it further.

QT believed that the Government needed to know what the real issues were for youth and to devise effective solutions.

Second chances

The Birdies gang wanted a future that would give them a second chance to achieve:

> If we were given that one chance to succeed in something and all the bad s**t that we've done – just that chance to wipe all that s**t away and come into the good, and bro all the bad s**t in the past

will motivate us into doing good and becoming the best in whatever.

However, the Birdies were not hopeful of being given that second chance and believed that they would continue with their current lifestyle:

> Nah, not one chance, not even. Look at that chance. The boys haven't looked at it because they think and they know and they have that idea they are not gonna give us that chance, so we're gonna keep robbing, robbing, getting locked up.
>
> We see the quick way of getting money so we take it but at the end of the day we are still stuck here.

When asked what they saw themselves doing in 10 years time, the Birdies' responses were either highly optimistic or without hope: "in a mansion", "asking you for toilet paper", "millionaire", "boxing champ", "be the best rapper there ever was and ever will be". However, they were adamant that they did not want their children to grow up in gangs or to live the lives that they did.

Some of the Birdies said they had the support of family members, friends and the church but believed there were influential people and institutions like "John Key" and "the media" that were against them and were making it difficult for them to get ahead. They wanted to "shout out to all those government people" and to "the law" to "'try and make something to work with this neighbourhood".

Toa had wanted to become a truck driver or to work in customer services. His dream now is to work with youth but he knows that in order to achieve this he would have to enrol in a course. He said he tried to join the police force two years ago but was declined because of his previous youth criminal record which he thought would have been deleted. Though he was adamant that he would never return to gang life, Toa believed that the only way other hardened gang members would or could leave the gangs was either to "give their lives", as he did, to Christianity or to listen to what "other gang members that have been there [prison, beatings]" had to say. Toa said that resources should be available to advise youth that gang life was "not the place to be".

Leki hoped to be running a youth agency and a recording studio in the next five to 10 years but was aware that he needed money to do this. He wanted to re-involve himself with gangs in the future in order to help those who were unsure about being in a gang. His uncle who was a gang member had offered him money to set up his youth agency but he had turned it down – "I know that's evil money". He said that his uncle's offer was prompted by his recent heart attack and he had begun to think about making a positive difference in the lives of youth:

> Even all the top guys who are in gangs, they know that their life came to nothing. All it was, was just jail. Maybe a few cuts and bruises, hospital then back into prison. Yeah there is always money but money is not always consistent. If you see someone selling better than you then that money dies out.

Leki's family was most proud of him for not going to jail: "When I was growing up everybody thought I was the one going to jail." Even though his father had expected him to follow in his footsteps as gang leader, Leki said his father was proud that he had been the first one to complete secondary school, particularly as both his father and uncle had spent time in prison.

QT said that in 10 years time he would like to have established a good relationship with his daughter and to know that she was getting a good education:

> In a good space with my daughter ... if I'm able to clothe my daughter and send her to a decent education and do those things, well that's where I would want to be in 10 years time.

Nick had never set any goals for himself and therefore had never directed any thoughts to achieving. In fact, he said, people including him were surprised that he was still alive:

> I seriously thought I would probably be dead before 30, and I was always told that.

The future and gangs

The Older Māngere Group believed that gangs would always be around and that very soon the numbers of gangs and their activities would begin to increase again:

> It's not completely going, it's just dropping like not much crime ... they will rise back.
>
> Because of the attention that is caused, it has gotten so much attention that people are doing things about it and so many young people are being reached and maybe that's why it's quiet down.
>
> It's like getting rid of spiders aye, spiders are hard to get rid of.

This older group thought that the presence and the activities of the younger members would ensure the continuity and existence of gangs:

> Just those younger ones that joined will bring it back ... the younger ones will start tagging on the fence so that the older gang members will look at it and say they are trying to rise up, and they rise up ahead of that gang so then they will rise up and another gang will look at it and they are competing, so we should join in and help, you know not help, like you know bring them down and move us up.

The Birdies did not believe that the gang situation was improving and predicted that increasing numbers of young people would join gangs as the situation worsened:

> Not the worse, it's happening and it's growing, and every generation is getting badder and badder if the government don't do nothing about it.

Leki said time was important in working with young people to get them out of the gangs. Although he admitted that society would never get rid of gangs, society could use the knowledge from youth gang members to help keep other youth from becoming involved:

> We can use what they already know to help. Instead of going against it, why not work with it".

QT did not believe that prisons were the answer to the presence of gangs and argued that society had not learnt anything if they continued to believe that imprisoning gang members was the solution. He noted that the number of gangs was increasing even as gang members were being arrested and jailed, and warned that it could be worse if gangs were to return to the traditional gang culture. He predicted that smaller gangs would join with other gangs to become a "super gang", bringing with it greater power.

3.1.6 Gangs

3.1.6.1 Youth perspectives on the presence of gangs in South Auckland

Gangs in the neighourhood

The Young Māngere Group did not like having gangs in their neighbourhood for a number of safety reasons – "because they get into a fight when they're drunk", "they rob your house", "they kill younger people" and "they're bullies". This younger group had witnessed gang dealings and how that had affected innocent people – "innocent people get caught in the crossfire and crap they [the gangs] are doing". Some members of the group had had trouble with the gangs but did not want to talk about it.

The Young Ōtara Group were aware of gangs in Ōtara but were contemptuous of them and their activities:

> Gang is just like a getaway for some people. It's a place where they can be like gangster, like beating up old ladies and other boys because that's what they can do, because they have the support of their gang.

The group did not think that gangs had anything to offer the community and talked about their encounters with gang members. One of the participants said he had been hassled by one of the gangs for allegedly picking on one of their members at school. Another had "nearly got a hiding" when a gang started shouting at him one night as he walked past the dairy causing him to run. The incident had scared him – "I could be dead by tomorrow if I don't watch where I go".

The Older Māngere Group did not like the presence of gangs in the neighbourhood, saying that it had a negative impact on the young people:

> I dislike the gangs now aye ... cause the younger ones look up and say 'Oh I wanna be like that – look at how he dresses and act'... they think they are cool like, 'Look at that group of boys, you know I wanna be in a group like that.'

This Older Māngere Group said that it would be a contradiction if gangs were seen as contributing positively to the community and commented that they would not trust any generous gestures on the part of the gangs:

> I heard like that one of the gang offered to pay for like uniforms for a dance but they declined it because they did not want to have any ties with that gang, and that was a decent gesture from them.
>
> I think the only doubt that I have, maybe in the future it will be you owe them something and if they do something for you, you now gonna owe them and that's the only advice that I have, that you might be in debt to them and then in the future they will come back and say 'Hey remember when we did this for you, you owe us and now you are gonna do this for us.'

The CWI gang members believed that their gang belonged in the neighbourhood but despised other gangs whom they believed were imitating the American gang culture of colours.

The Broadways gang said that some gangs in Ōtara were disrespectful and they were somewhat afraid of what other gangs were capable of:

> Just a little bit [afraid], but then again you've gotta push back, they did try to do it but we're protected.

The Broadways did not believe that society would ever be able to get rid of gangs in South Auckland – "they are always gonna be around forever".

Leki regarded the gangs as "pathetic" though he admitted that he did not see them that way when he was a young gang member. He said that gangs now try to build on the reputation of others:

> A lot of it is just guts and gun ... they have in their heads that they all hard but ... they have never stood in the middle of 20 people and just get smashed up ... they've just gone off the reputation of someone else.

Contribution to the community

The Older Māngere Group believed that being in a gang was not necessarily a mistake and that the gang, as a group of individuals, had positive characteristics. However, they said it was the activities in which gangs were involved that had a negative impact on the community:

> Like being in a gang is all right, but the things they get up to – having fights with others, you hear people dying, you hear people in the hospital on life support and it's all because of gangs and you see them on the news and stuff, and I think the media portrays gangs as something bad but yeah there is a positive to it as well as negative. But I think it's just the things the gangs get up to. (Older Māngere Group)

The Birdies members said that the gangs were a positive influence in the community because they helped to feed families and youth on the streets: "we put food on the table", "we help other people that are there on the streets".

Nick did not believe that gangs ought to have a presence in the community because he said that their main purpose was to be destructive. He did not agree with those gangs who said they were similar to sports teams because the latter were not involved in illegal activities:

> The main reasons the gangs are built and made is for destructions, that's the only reason you are in a gang and a lot of gang members say that being in a gang is just like a rugby team or a league team, it's just a club where you are just joining up but the difference is that the clubs don't go on armo [armed robbery] jobs.

The Twain gang believed that gangs provided a service to the community by protecting their neighbourhood:

> They are good for protecting their own environment and own neighbourhood. That's one good thing with gangs, like when trouble comes in, always there to try and keep other people out of our area.

Twain members regarded other gangs as rivals because of their threatening and dangerous behaviour towards them:

> They hurt our family, they hit my van, they bottled our houses, and they do things when we are not around, or we are around the fight starts.

Maka did not think that the perceptions that the community held of the gangs were positive:

> I think they get disgusted. I used to see some older people look at some of the youth walking around with bandanas and I see them look disgusted, and if I look at them now and I have a laugh. I guess I now know what people used to think of me.

Companionship and wellbeing in the gangs

The Young Ōtara Group believed that young people joined gangs to be accepted in a popular group and for their protection – "they think they are cool", "it makes them feel safe" and "they want to be like the people they see on TV. They like being black gangsters they see on TV."

Even though all the participants in this Ōtara group said they had friends who were in gangs, none of them said that they had considered joining the gangs because they believed they were capable of behaving in more positive ways:

> It's not like I was taught to be an animal on the street, that's not how I was raised. I was raised like being disciplined.

The Older Māngere Group also believed that gangs offered security and a way for Pasifika youth not to feel isolated:

> You know, you are a one man gang, like there's no one there, but when you are in a group it's like yeah, I belong to a group because people know you and you feel secure that if someone picks on you, you've got people. I guess it's just security.
>
> Like they have no friends but you don't want to show that you have no friends you know, like in this community, we live in a society like if you're seen alone or by yourself, like as a loner and in this community it's a bad thing. You wouldn't want to be called a loner so you're trying to do whatever you can to be with someone or with a group ... but knowing that you'll ... end up in gangs and stuff but they still do it because they just don't want to be seen put down.
>
> I know quite a lot of young dudes that used to get bullied at school that they end up joining the WS. And I think maybe because they couldn't defend themselves so they needed to be part of a gang so that people will see them as being part of a gang.

The Older Māngere Group said that some young people who had joined the gangs found it hard to leave, not because they would be threatened if they left, but because they were reluctant to leave behind the friendships they had made or they did not want to be seen as betraying friendships:

> I know, like as brothers, like one of the guys at R*** I know he wants to leave but it's just that you know, he has been with those guys for so long, like if he loses them people will look at him like, ah nah like.

The Older Māngere Group also believed that South Auckland youth were attracted to the money that the gangs provided because of their own lack of financial resources:

> I think it's a bit of Trojan horse. Like they [the gangs] offer the things they don't get from their families or whoever, like they could get what they want out of them, the individuals.
>
> The gang leaders, they offer like little kids money, whatever you know, and if they come from a background like they are quite poor and they never had money, all of a sudden they join this gang and running for them and they are getting money or whatever, then they think 'Oh man this is me'. You know the gang leaders are kind to them and fattening them up.

Leki agreed that there were a number of positive outcomes to being in a gang: "You stand on your own two feet, you learn to take care of those who are around you, you learn leadership, you learn about saving money [laughter]."

QT said that the presence of gangs in South Auckland was both negative and positive. The negative, he said, was the activities that were part of the gang lifestyle while the positive was the opportunity for young people to belong to a social group:

> The negative is the idiot things that they do you know, like try and go out there and try and become people that they not … the positive is, and I know that this might sound a bit stupid, but for me they have something to belong to. In all different stages of our life, and I'm talking about our people who are outright so poor that they don't fit into any circles, even communities, they don't even come under that, and for them it's like what do they have? And that's where I believe the crew from the streets you know, it becomes their thing and they believe in it, you know, I remember there are a lot of different crews, I remember the F*** from Magele [Māngere], they have grown up and have become awesome dudes and they still represent F*** and to me they were one of the original taggers of South Auckland you know.

Friends in the gangs

The Older Ōtara Group said that their friends who were in gangs had different sides to them. They had good relationships with one another but said their friends behaved differently depending on where they were, and when they were with their gangs they took on the persona of a gang member:

> I hang out with friends in gangs, but when we hang out it's like the normal side, they are just normal friends. When they go to their gang friends, that's when they become gang members.
>
> I see people, like we go out clubbing, wasted off their face and the next day they say, 'I'm off to church, I'll see you there.' These people they always put on different masks for different occasions,

like different hats – gang hats, church hats and family hat.

3.1.6.2 Joining the gangs

There were a number of reasons suggested by the participants as to why young Pasifika people joined the gangs. The younger and older Pasifika non-gang participants also gave some insight as to why they had not joined the gangs.

Why we didn't join

The Young Māngere Group said they had not joined gangs because they believed that they would not have much of a future in a gang – "you get nowhere in life". They said that youth as young as 10 were joining gangs while still at primary school. They admitted that they had been tempted to join a gang in order "to be like the rest" and "to watch the fights" but had decided not to because they had lost interest in joining or did "not want to get a hiding".

Their parents' warnings about the consequences of gang life had also served to discourage them – "once you get a record, you can't find a job ... it stays with you for the rest of your life". All the members of the Young Māngere Group said they had family and friends who were in gangs. It was their opinion that people joined gangs to be part of a social group or to know that they had support and protection if needed – "so they can act cool", "try to fit in", "makes them feel safe", "sometimes they want to be like others", "know that someone has got their back if they have fights with other gang members".

The Older Māngere Group said they did not join the gangs because they believed it was a waste of time and would be a barrier to their opportunities for achieving in the future:

> Like what would you get out of it and what is the point of being in a gang?. And I was like thinking of the future and stuff and what would you be if you were a gangster now? Would you still be in school? I reckon if I was in a gang I would have dropped out or something and I would have regrets and look back. I wouldn't have taken this path. Yeah I reckon it was just a waste of time.

They credited their family and the experiences that they had with their decision to stay out of the gangs:

> I was brought up by my grandparents ... they have disciplined me well and I was brought up in the islands. Came here when I was nine, I've been here like nine years or 10 but yeah they have brought me up really well. (Older Māngere Group)

> For me it was something that I saw as a kid. Like I really like admire my brother because he was like a tough dude around Māngere in school ... [local] primary [school] and then went on to [local] college and one of the dude that was known to be a tough guy around Māngere, he later went to start the K*** [gang], kid named Jaden. My brother used to bully him. I knew that guy Jaden was a tough guy and I used to see my brother pushing him around. The dude used to say 'Come on man, leave me alone.' There was one time that guy Jaden was pushing me and he didn't know that my brother was there and my brother came up like the alley way and start pushing him back and I used to like admire the fact that my older brother was like one of the toughest dudes. And when I became older and that gang started up and I kind of knew that they were like a bunch of pussies anyway because my older brother used to bully one of the main guys. And the other guys that went on to join that gang I went to school with them. They weren't tough either, so I guess my older brother was like a role model and a big influence on me on being part of a gang 'cause he was never part of any gang but he was a tough guy yeah and so I wanted to be like him. (Older Māngere Group)

The Older Ōtara Group gave a number of reasons for not joining the gangs such as the way in which they had been raised, the preference to think for one's self, knowing people who were not involved in gangs and belief in their potential to act as individuals:

> I was lucky enough to meet the right people that are not into gangs as well and violence and stuff.

> I just choose not to because I can think for myself, I don't really need anyone else to think for me.

> I reckon I have way more potential ... than just to join a group of people and do the same thing as everyone else ... there's way more to life than just being one of those slaves, sombre-like people following the trend.

One of the participants in this group said that life had not been easy for him but there had been a number of factors that had kept him away from gangs, including having to care for his family:

> For my situation – typical Tongan family struggling, my older brothers leave for the army, I step up, work full time since 5th form leave school. I'm not saying that if I didn't go to work I'll be in a gang but I think if it's meant to be, it's meant to be. If I am not working I'll be at Dawson playing ball, or help out Tia at 274. (Older Ōtara Group)

Even though they acknowledged the money and opportunities that gangs offered was a great motivation for young people to become involved in gangs, the Older Ōtara Group believed the presence of family was an even greater reason not to join:

> What gangs offer, like opportunity for young kids who join their system, it is a good life like selling drugs and making money but you can have a better life 'cause you've still got your family, and the reason I didn't join a gang I guess is because the best gang you can have is your family. (Older Ōtara Group)

Even though some had family who were gang members, what one participant had seen of his family's gang experiences had led to his decision not to join:

> I haven't joined a gang because ... I was brought up with my mum's side ever since I was 12 then I moved to my dad and my whole family was in the gang scene or whatever and I kind of saw like I think ... I just thought I don't want to be like that, I don't want to go through what they went through.

Why they join

The Older Ōtara Group believed young people were attracted to gangs because of their own lack of possessions. The group felt the youth became tempted by the popularity of the gangs and what they offered. They said there were a number of factors that were influential in the reasons young people joined gangs including the life experiences at home, not feeling accepted, needing someone to look up to, wanting attention, desiring to challenge rules and the absence of role models:

> It could have something to do with home because I think that is the main reason why people join gangs and stuff, because they don't have good parents.
>
> I reckon it's people who want attention, people who like when there are rules, there are always people who want to rebel, or want to cheat, just don't want to follow the steps.

Some of the Older Ōtara Group agreed that schools had contributed to young people joining gangs because the education system had not worked for some students. They believed that schools, at times, gave up on students and failed to recognise that certain students needed different approaches to learning. They believed that if students were not able to access opportunities in the school, they were likely to give up and to seek out avenues that provided opportunities:

> I think sometimes it might have something to do with school. Sometimes the system works with specific people, like there's teachers who give you chances and there's teachers who don't, 'cause a teacher just came up and gave my mate a leaving form and my mate dropped out and he left after that. They just sometimes just need chances, like some give up on you and some people want to see you grow, and I think that's why they give up on school and just walk the streets or whoever that gives them the opportunity.

The Older Ōtara Group believed that the stereotyping of Pasifika youth by the school and society created pressure on the students and forced them to conform, denying them the chance to express themselves. This in turn prompted the youth to look for ways to do so and some of them joined the gangs as a way to communicate with others with whom they could identify and find comfort. Joining the gangs was also a way of retaliating against those they believed had marginalised them:

> I reckon in their own mind ... like in school and different places you get stereotyped and people doubt you. Like you could be wearing a cap or beanie or be brown or something and people will look at you and think 'oh black man' and that you don't belong and that kind of thing. And I think that going to join a gang or be around people that are like yourself kinds of comfort you, and in the same way it could be like a chance to make a stand against those people, like I'm doing something, like getting your name out, getting your face recognised.

The CWI gang believed that young people were joining their gang because they liked the respect that gang members showed towards each other and the fact that they did not engage in fights or illegal activities.

Both gang and ex-gang members believed that many youth had joined gangs not only because they were

following a trend but also because of the protection and comfort gangs offered. Young people joined gangs to feel safe and to know there was someone to turn to or to protect them:

> If they get the bash from someone's gang they'll go back and say 'I got the bash from that gang' and their gang will go back and see this kid or chick and they will take from them and that's why I think kids jumped into gangs – to get protection. (Broadways)

> If something goes down then everyone [the gang] is there… There might be stuff going on at home and there's no one else to turn to. (Twain)

> It's the family bro, it's either the parents are not at home or they are just looking for comfort. (Toa, ex-gang member)

> A lot of the top level ones are the ones who don't find love, who are invisible to their own families. They're the ones basically that are [the] leadership because they so hard, hard to break and you got them hanging out with guys who are in same backgrounds. (Leki, ex-gang member)

The Broadways gang acknowledged that it would be difficult to get young people to stay out of gangs because almost everyone was connected to or knew someone in a gang. However, the gang said they would advise young people not to get involved in gangs as they would be wasting their lives especially as it was difficult to withdraw from gang life once they were in it:

> I reckon they're wasting their life in gangs, stay out of the gang for as long as you can – stay out of it.

> You're in it like till death. You can't turn around, you can't jump out of it, so you own to it, you have too much experience of the street life to jump out of it. And you have seen what the people have to go through to get pass aye.

> If they have to say like I did a murder, she will have to cover for me.

Unlike the Older Ōtara Group who believed that the gang lifestyle prevented individual thinking or the Broadways who believed that joining the gangs was a trend that youth were following, the Birdies believed that people who joined gangs did so because they had decided to make that choice. The Birdies, whose gang contained the children of gang leaders and members from other gangs, did not question the motives of those who joined their gang saying that it was open to anyone. Like the rest of the participants interviewed, however, they did not think young people should join gangs "because at the end of it, it's not what you thought it was from the start".

Toa admitted that he was rebellious as a youth and said that the abuse of his mother by his father was one of the reasons he had joined the gangs and the reason that he now wanted to break this cycle of abuse:

> I saw dad fasi mum. I went through that so it's good to break the cycle.

Toa believed that youth in gangs were trying to imitate the actions of gangs in the United States and, like other participants, did not believe there should be gangs but did not think that society would ever get rid of them.

Leki believed one of the main reasons people joined the gangs was for the financial rewards with the older gang members employing young members because of the advantages of their age:

> That's the draw card for a lot of the gangs. Like if you go to any young person and you know when they look at another family with big toys, trucks etc, and they look at their family and they know that they can't afford it and then you get a gang member asking 'Do you want that truck? I'll get you that truck if you do this', of course that young person's going to do it.

> I think now people are trying to make money fast, people are trying to be the youngest on the block with the most money … and the older guys are supplying drugs to the younger ones, basically because they know the younger ones won't get caught.

QT also believed that money was a primary factor in youth seeking gang membership:

> It's money. They just put money right on top there, making it, and I think B*** have become that. They are the money gang, that's all it is, because a lot of kids see a lot of [gangs] come and gone but B*** has always been about money, and name me any kid in the world today that doesn't want money. M*** used to do it really well. He used to give

> kids money and this is how you make a thousand dollars, just go and sell this. You've got kids running around in the hood with cash loads of money in their pockets. He educates them too and he knows his law as well too, like if you are under this age they can't touch you.

QT did not think that there were many options for Pasifika youth in South Auckland that met their social needs. He said that currently the only choices available were youth groups and the gangs, neither of which appealed to many of the youth. QT thought that Pasifika youth needed an alternative to gangs, something to which they could belong and claim as their own with a style and culture with which they could identify. QT attributed the growth of a relatively new and well-known gang to the lenience granted them by family members who were leaders and members of more established gangs and who were reluctant to see their children hurt in gang conflict. QT admitted that he was impressed with the way this new gang operated and its success in recruiting a large number of new members. He believed that this was because the gang had adjusted the traditional ways of gang life to match the lifestyle of the new generation of gang members.

Nick said when he joined the gangs it had been about being proud to be a Tongan or a Samoan. Now, he said, it was a "power trip".

Nick believed that the church was a fertile ground for the recruitment of new gang members because it was the place to get other church members involved and where gang members met to plan further meetings – "it was a good breeding ground".

Nick admitted that it was not easy for South Auckland youth to resist being involved in gangs but said also that there were some youth whom gangs were unlikely to approach for gang membership – "there are some kids that have no reason for a gang to approach them".

Maka believed that one of the reasons for gang membership had to do with the area in which you lived. It was no longer about the different gangs but the neighbourhood to which you belonged:

> It's all about turf. Like the Māngere S*** and R*** are joined together to fight against the Manukau S*** and R***…
>
> These days it's where you stay, where is your area.

Family influence on gang membership

For Leki, family was a significant influence in his being in the gangs. The gang, which had been established in B***, was brought to Ōtara by his family and contained a number of affiliated gang leaders. Leki's involvement in the gang had not been a problem for most of his family (except for his mother) because it was a part of his father's side of the family and it was the wishes of his father, whom he saw as his leader, that he considered.

His sisters were not allowed to be involved in gangs because they were girls and regarded differently:

> Because they girls. They were precious gems. My sisters were rough, they were keen to get in but…

Leki said he once thought he would be a gang leader because of his involvement with gang meetings, funerals and the gatherings of all the members of the different branches of the gang as well as the status that accompanied it. The family had expected that Leki, as one of the male members of the family, would one day lead the gang:

> To keep the leadership of that gang like with the bloodline… It was who we were. They were the brotherhood and if they had kids and you were a boy you will be raised and taught to take over… I was born into it. When I was born it was already happening … and I was to grow up and be in it. It was a family business.

He said that his family still expects that he will one day take over the gang leadership:

> They thought it was time for me to start getting into it, and because it was a big chunk of my life, sometimes I do, I do think about taking it over ... because to be honest, I wanted to make my own name, I'm connected to a family who started this gang, who kind of birth it and I wanted my own glory. A lot of people always ask for my last name and I ask why because straight away they will connect me to my uncles and I wanted people to fear me because of me, I wanted my own kingdom really and that's the way it was.

Nick said that when he was 11, his parents separated and he was given a lot of freedom to roam the streets and consequently ended up in the gangs. At that time, he said, the Glen Innes junior branch of the C*** was

formed to protect the Tongans and Samoans from the children of the P*** and H*** gang members – "it meant we didn't have to sit at the back and play second best to the Māoris".

Nick believed that knowing they were welcome by the gang had influenced many to join:

> I think to a lot of guys it was being needed and being wanted and being appreciated which they never got at home.

Nick said that youth were joining gangs now because they were trying to live up to the name and the reputation of older brothers and family members who were in the gangs. One of his younger cousins had rejuvenated an old gang to exploit the notoriety of his older brother:

> Purely just for the power ... his brother went in for murder so it's basically living in the limelight his brother had.

3.1.7 Summary

This section summarises the views of all three Pasifika groups – non-gangs, gangs and ex-gangs – on family, gangs, community, culture, leadership and the future.

Family for the young Pasifika non-gang participants was their immediate family and those with whom they had regular contact. For the older Pasifika non-gang participants, family included the immediate family as well as the people with whom they had relationships or could go to for help. For a few of these older participants, a significant family for them was their church family who they said they saw more of than their family at home. They regarded as family only those who were part of their church group and held the same Christian interests and beliefs as themselves. For the gangs and ex-gang members, family meant their 'blood' or immediate family and, for them, this family took priority over their gang family especially for those gang members who had children of their own. Just as with the older Pasifika non-gang participants, family for the gangs included their established networks and those friends who had been of assistance to them throughout their lives. The gangs looked after each other's families in times of need and there was a strong family feeling for other gang members, in addition to the feelings of brotherhood and solidarity that the gang members shared.

All the participants expressed a strong affinity to the community of South Auckland. Both the young and the older Pasifika non-gang groups were proud to belong to the Ōtara and Māngere communities and said they would always want to live there. However, although South Auckland was where they felt most at home, there were aspects of the community that the participants thought needed to be improved such as the availability and quality of facilities. They also identified those features of day-to-day life that they wished were not a part of their community, including the poverty and the gangs. The Pasifika non-gang groups wanted to feel safe and not marginalised and they liked the sense of belonging that they experienced from living in South Auckland.

The gangs, like the other Pasifika non-gang groups, saw Ōtara and Māngere as their home and said that they would never want to leave. However, they expressed a desire to get out of their current situation which they saw as a barrier to a positive future.

Several of the participants acknowledged the work of community organisations such as 274 and appreciated those people in the community whom they believed worked to help the youth of South Auckland. They believed that more community and youth workers were needed to address the phenomenon of gangs and to work with youth to present alternatives to gang life.

All the participants said they were proud of their culture and selected a number of items such as the jandals, the Tongan flag, coconuts and a dance to represent their culture. For some, culture was their ancestors, and having iwi.

The older Pasifika non-gang group said that the different languages that they spoke represented culture for them and they believed that their culture influenced how they were as a person. They believed that living in South Auckland had made them more accommodating of other ethnic groups.

None of the gangs interviewed were divided along ethnic lines. Even the all-Samoan gang said they welcomed members from all ethnicities and had friends from other Pacific nations.

The younger Pasifika non-gang group said that leadership was being able to stand up for oneself and being someone on whom other people could depend. The leaders for the young Pasifika group included their

parents, pastor, teachers and local community leaders. For the older Pasifika non-gang group, leaders were those who held power, made changes and had the final word. Most of the older Pasifika non-gang participants, as well as the gang members and ex-gang members, saw themselves as leaders because they said that there was always someone looking up to them. Many of the gang members saw their own gang leaders as those whom they considered leaders.

The young Pasifika non-gang group saw the future in terms of what was most obvious to them, and in terms of those factors over which they felt they had some influence; for example, education, achievement of qualifications, buying a house for their parents and getting enough money to pay the bills. The older Pasifika non-gang group had a more idealistic perspective of their future as they visualised how they wanted to shape their future, and how they could help or contribute towards realising that vision.

The gangs wanted a future that would enable them to have access to the opportunities, jobs and possessions that other people had.

Most of the participants interviewed believed that money and resources should be spent on keeping Pasifika youth out of gangs; though they agreed that some attempt should be made towards helping those already in gangs or those who wanted to leave the gang life.

Although the participants acknowledged that gangs gave young people the opportunity to be part of a social network, they also saw them as a negative influence. The young Pasifika people who were not involved in gangs recalled a number of their own encounters with gangs, for example, being intimidated and chased by gangs, and having friends who were involved in gangs. Like the young Pasifika non-gang group, older Pasifika youth who had not been involved in gangs saw the presence of gangs as a negative factor in society but agreed that gang life offered a place that was accepting of young people when other mainstream organisations such as the schools and churches were seen as unwelcoming. This older group recognised the benefits that gangs offered and the leadership potential that existed within them. They also believed that the proliferation of gangs was partly a consequence of the failure of institutions such as education to provide for the different needs of students.

The non-gang participants had themselves stayed away from becoming involved with gangs because they were influenced by their families' beliefs that gang life was not an acceptable lifestyle. The strength and the support of the family had contributed to keeping these Pasifika youth out of gangs.

Many of the gangs and ex-gang members said they had become involved in gangs because of their own family involvement with the gangs. Almost all had joined for the protection, friendship and camaraderie of gang life. Some had joined because of the isolation they had felt from within their own families and, for them, the gang had become their family. Money was also a strong motivating factor in gang involvement. The gangs claimed that there were many young people in South Auckland who were keen to join the gangs and said that resources and opportunities were important to help Pasifika youth stay out of gangs.

The gang members said that the support that they received from their gang family would make it difficult for them to disband, especially as they did not think there was anything to replace the money and the social relationships that they received from the gangs.

Like the young and older Pasifika non-gang groups, most of the gang and ex-gang members said they would not recommend that young people join gangs because it was a waste of a future.

3.2 Voices – Pasifika youth gang members' and ex-gang members' experiences in the gang

As one of the emphases of this study was on the views of those Pasifika youth considered to be outside mainstream society, this section focuses on the voices of those Pasifika youth involved in gangs as well as a small number of ex-gang members.

3.2.1 Family ties – family involvement in the gangs

Many gang members had a familial link to the gang, joining cousins, fathers, brothers and uncles who were already members of the gang. The exception was the Birdies gang which seemed to recruit on the basis of maintaining numbers to carry out gang activities and which Pasifika youth appeared to join in the expectation of monetary and social rewards. The gang members' priority regardless of gang affiliation was their family.

The Twain gang members did not want their children involved in the gang lifestyle they had chosen but instead wanted them to have an opportunity at a better life. They wanted to share with their children what they saw as the positive aspects of gang membership such as loyalty and standing up for oneself. They did not want their children to be involved in drugs and hoped to be able to talk to them about those things which no one had talked to them about. As their own parents had not been involved in drugs or gangs, they believed their parents did not have the knowledge or experience to discuss those matters with them.

They said it would have made a difference to them if someone they respected had talked with them about becoming involved with gangs:

> If it's just the random guy coming out and telling me, I would probably put on my boxing gloves and knock him out… If it was someone that I would trust and has been there for me, then you know I would probably take their advice.

Leki said that in order to understand the continuity of gang culture, it was necessary to look into the background of gang families and the role of the gang father:

> Because that's generational, I'm just one of many. I'm considered as a person who made it out. It's kind of like having a chief title in the islands and if your dad dies then you became the chief and that's why it's important to hit that.

Leki's family, particularly his father, was actively involved in the gangs and it was not expected that Leki would leave the gang, though it was acceptable that his cousin could do so if he chose:

> It was kind of okay for him [cousin} to go somewhere else because he wasn't directly birthed into it [the gang], like he wasn't my dad's real son.

Although Leki has become a non-active member there was still an expectation in the gang that he would one day take over the leadership. He had no obligation to do so but said that, if necessary, he would support the gang because it is his family:

> If anything goes down … I have to be there and it's not looked at, not as a gang, but it becomes family … that's my tie to them… If my uncle calls on me there's no doubt I'll go … for the family ... because at the end of the day they are my blood.

Leki claimed that there were many female gangs out there because each male member had a female partner who became an adjunct member of the gang:

> For every man in gangs, there's one girl because they all have girlfriends ... they are part of the same gang but just a slight change of name.

QT, who had been involved in gangs for 20 years, had later kept his gang life separate from his family life because his wife, who had been with him for a long time, had not wanted him involved in gangs:

> I will never try and mix the two, like when I am with her I won't be with the boys, and when I am with the boys she won't be there… Because I always knew her being hurt and if something broke out I never wanted her to be anywhere near that.

Even though QT's brothers were gang members, all his family were still active church members. QT and his brothers had been considered 'black sheep' by the rest of the family for being in the gangs and it was not until one of his brothers had been sent to jail that QT and his other brothers decided to keep his cousins away from the gangs. However, the gang's reputation had tempted his younger cousins in Wellington to join.

3.2.2 Values and relationships within and beyond the gang

The gangs had a set of principles specific to each gang and which gang members were expected to follow. The members were expected to behave in particular ways towards each other and to outside gangs.

Resolving conflicts

One of the gangs said that if they were provoked, their first step would be to try to resolve the conflict by talking, though all the gang participants said that if necessary, they would resort to violence:

> To us we don't have enemies – it starts with the word jealous and hating but we are trying to achieve a good cause, to make sure our brothers are getting jobs, to make sure our brothers get into course, to get their skills upgraded and be somebody, not like these wannabe gangs wandering the street, and difference there is we push our brothers to work … [but] if a crew steps in our way, we try to talk it off

> first but if they want to boogie then we will boogie, like we will fight if we have to. (CWI)
>
> The last incident we had was we found out they were our cousins, they live across K*** house, in New Year – that got sorted out without anyone dying – they pulled a shot gun on us. One of us was running with an axe and was having a gun pointing at him (laughter). Thank God for that – I went over and talked to the parents and found out that we were family on our dad's side – one of us would have died from either side… No blood was shed on that day (CWI)

The Twain gang said that people should know that the gangs in South Auckland were not like the gangs depicted in film or on television. Twain members did not always have guns nor did they just shoot "at each other like everyday". However, Twain admitted that the situation had become more violent and that if they needed guns they knew how to access them.

The ties that bind

The trust and bond the Birdies had with one another were what maintained the friendship and commitment among its members. They said they looked after each other, helped one another in difficult times and became a de facto welfare provider for gang members:

> We look after each other. We basically breathe and eat like a family, basically when one falls we are always there for each other.
>
> Yeah I have mad love for my brothers bro, like they know that I'm going through some stuff and every now and then they're dropping off coin just to help me out ... they just stop by every day and drop me a coin. I mean like what these fellas get up to is like double digits [laughter]. (Birdies)

The Birdies members said they were aware of the feelings of hatred and jealousy from other gangs who had made themselves their enemies because they were jealous of their money and their rise to fame:

> People that want to be like us, just wanna be, but they can't… They're jealous of our money, our rise.
>
> Straight up anyone, they get intimidated by us, they like 'Oh man look at these fellas – what are they … how are these fellas getting their money' and it's all through bad ways, strictly bad ways, there is nothing good about it. (Birdies)

Twain described themselves as "a group of boys all born and raised together, humble, do the same thing, look after their neighbourhood and make sure no troubles come". Though they acknowledged that people saw them as a gang, they considered themselves to be a "family gang". They said they avoided intruding into their enemies' territory and claimed that their rivals avoided intruding into theirs. Twain had not affiliated themselves with any of the other gangs although they had been approached to do so.

According to the Twain gang members, the internet had created another forum for rivalry among gangs, causing the rivalry to move from the streets to internet sites like Bebo (a social networking site). Although they said they used Bebo to talk to their family and friends, Bebo was being used to provoke animosity among gangs:

> They try to be one big gang in Māngere and they hate on that gang and someone from Bebo goes and tells that they beat on Twain – yeah trying to get a reputation.

Leki, an ex-gang member, claimed that the protection of the immediate family was a respected rule within gang culture and it was dishonourable to endanger the lives of the family members of other gangs:

> Family is a huge part. It depends how you are in the gang, family can be your safety net. If there's one thing I know about New Zealand gang, you deal with the person you have the problem with, but you don't touch family. The family is what keeps you strong as an individual ... and if you're part of a gang then you become a strong part of that gang. You touch the family, you're considered the lowest of all.

3.2.3 Playing by the school rules

Although the focus of the study was not on schools, it was interesting to hear from the participants, the relationship, influence and role that they believed the school played in the presence of gangs.

One of the Broadways members said she had attended school only because "the Ministry of Education told me to". Schools, she said, "talk too much". Another of the Broadways gang had been expelled from school three years ago and that had been her last school. Although she had attended a number of courses, she had never completed them.

The Birdies gang members did not believe that schools were 'working' in ways that would keep youth out of the gangs as they saw many of the students leaving school in the afternoon to be with the gangs:

> All the kids that come here, as soon as they leave [school] there they come to us, and that's straight up bro. (Birdies)

Leki agreed with the Birdies that what took place in schools did not dissuade youth away from gangs. The schools' culture and rules, he argued, conflicted with the rules and culture that were needed to survive on the streets and with what took place at home. Instead of educating the youth and accepting them for who they were, Leki said schools were more interested in maintaining rules he saw as unnecessary:

> Schools are to educate our kids, but the school I came from kind of shape us you know, they tried to put rules on us so we won't act a certain way but you know, we are who we are. At the end of the day we go back to our families or to the streets but if we tried to be like how the schools wanted us to be on the streets we will just get taken over or killed… And if the school just took us for who we are we would have been alright, instead of telling us to tuck our shirts in and whack us around – nah you have to act like this, back straight. If you don't get that at home then of course you are going to start to play up at school.

3.2.4 Making a living

Most of the gang members said they were in need of money but had little hope of finding legitimate, paid employment:

> Without money we can't do nothing. We can't buy shares yeah [laughter] because most of the boys we call brothers can't get jobs, can't get qualifications, I mean, get employed you know, and that's why the government looks at us and thinks that they are just a hopeless bunch of kids. But if they give us opportunity you know, to try and make something of the neighbourhood you know, if they ain't gonna do nothing because that's all the cops do is go around sniffing and if you don't get lock up you get chased or something. (Birdies)

For a few of the Birdies, it had been easy to get jobs but for others who had been in trouble with the law, employment possibilities were limited:

> I can get a job ... the brothers I sort of know what they are going through. I mean to be honest I'm all good, I can get a job. I have one conviction for unlawful entry and still I've got nothing to moan about but for these fellas here, they need chances.

The Birdies realised their gang lifestyle was not a positive option but for the moment it provided them with money and personal support. Some said they wanted to get out of the gangs but did not know how they would manage financially if they were to do so and believed that the lifestyle in the gang would always be a temptation:

> I reckon that this will never stop, what we're doing now is just a waste of time – think about it, everyone wants money, everyone is greedy, you think about it, you want your own money, you just don't want to f**k, you know.
>
> Look everyone knows there's robbers out there, there's legit people out there, but bro what we are doing is just another option but a bad option – it's that option that will never get taken away, that option is always here until the next generation, the next generation – how are we gonna stop it, you tell me. We ain't gonna stop this s**t – are you Jesus? Are you God? We ain't none of that s**t.

One of the Birdies gang members admitted that he was not proud of what the gang had to do to make a living but felt that they had no other choice and that the 'system' made it difficult for them to earn a legitimate living:

> To be honest ... I'm not actually proud of my family [gang] – I mean look at where I am now. I am not proud of the system, look at where it leads us – hard times, but still gets us paid but we have to put major work and it's not legitimate too. The work we put in will get us double digits and 15-years sentence. (Birdies)

Despite their own lack of resources, the Birdies said they still managed to provide food and some entertainment to the youth:

> We feed all of them, heaps of little boys. They all come across to our fale, boxing like K1. They are always there. They come, I do my best. I tell them there's more of these and I tell them if you get hungry and if you need some where to sleep – come.

> They come cause the Birdies they've got their own boxing team and that car. (Birdies)

One of the Birdies gang said his family was proud of his ability to look after himself and his family but he knew that he was only doing what was necessary to provide for himself and his children:

> They [family] are proud of me for standing on my own two [feet], I mean nobody is catering for me, like I'm out there making my money just like the other boys, like my other brothers and that's what we do all day. I mean the government ain't gonna help us so we just help ourselves. That's the reality and if you want the truth, there you have it. I mean they are not gonna give to us you know, then we'll just go and grab it like just off the shelves.

The Birdies said it would be difficult for people to know what street life was like:

> Nah they don't have no clue as far as I can remember. I'm 23 now and I have been involved since I was 14 and in an' out and still maintaining my legitimate side, working, family, eight to five whatever but like I said before, street life is in my blood.

Twain said that they needed money to make their dreams a reality and that the only people helping them were their parents. They also admitted their involvement in illegal activities like drugs "because some of us don't work".

Nick, an ex-gang member, admitted to selling stolen car parts and illegal warrants as a way to earn money.

Leki said he remembered sitting in meetings where his father ruled on decisions regarding which houses to "rush" as a way of obtaining money. He was trying now to encourage his family to find other ways to survive financially without being involved in gangs. The main activity of Leki's former gang was the selling of drugs with other minor activities such as "getting rent money off people if you want to set up shop at the neighbourhood". Marijuana was still the main drug with which the gang was involved though it had had transactions in methamphetamine for a brief period. Most of the buyers, Leki said, came from "mainly the white areas" but there were also those in his community who bought drugs – "you'll be amazed like how many people choose drugs over food, over their families".

Leki noted that fighting among gang members resulted in members being sent to prison thereby decreasing the numbers available for selling the drugs and said that the level of gang violence was decreasing because gang members were focused on increasing their income from the drugs:

> People just want to get on with the business where money making becomes more important than fighting over turf.
>
> You lose numbers and try to sell … [so] they decrease the violence and increase the money.

3.2.5 Encounters with the police

The gang members did not have favourable opinions of the police probably because of their encounters with them and the nature of their activities as gang members.

The Broadways gang members said they did not have much respect for the police because of the way they had been treated. The ethnicity of the police did not affect their dislike of them and the police behaved in ways that reflected their impressions of South Auckland and of them as gang members. Although the gang acknowledged that they had met a few 'good' cops, they resented most of them and the way they operated:

> Yeah they smash the s**t out of us, like they will beat us up, like made us eat the stones. Even my little sister was in the car, they grabbed her from the boot because she was in the boot and then chucked her at the window and started smashing her and then smashing my brother, and I saw my brother's face and it was like swollen, cut everywhere. Like what do they expect us to do when we see that kind of stuff from them.
>
> There are some cool as Five Os but there are some that say there is something bad about Ōtara and Māngere ... they are like the baddest South Auckland, but they can't assume, they can't do that.
>
> It's a waste of time talking to them nicely … they will just [say] – get in the car… Yeah whatever, get in the car, you are from Ōtara, you are a troublemaker.
>
> We've had cops calling us little bitches … and it's like 'You are lucky – you're in your uniform.'. (Broadways)

The Birdies saw the police as enemies. They complained about being harassed by the police although they seemed to be aware of their rights. Like the Broadways gang, they believed that the police had already formed negative impressions of them:

> I could be just walking, I mean I'm not even a bad person bro, and the cops pulls up – 'Hello G***, how's your day.' The fella wants to check my pants, I don't have anything in my pants, I'm as broke as they comes. I pull out my two hand wraps [for boxing], my mouth guard drops out of my front pocket, tell the officer to drop his batch ... what do they call it – harassment – they've got five minutes to get out of my face so I can put charges on them 'cause you know, cops can't be around more than five minutes aye and I think that's policy rules ... they can't keep arrest and that's what they do – they harass us.

The Birdies saw the police as another gang but one that would always have the advantage because of their role as a legitimate organisation:

> F**k them, they're just another gang … and their gang is always gonna win no matter what.
>
> They are just as much as criminals as we are… They're doing the same thing, but it's like they are not ripping off the government.
>
> It goes to prove it – about a month ago aye they killed our brother, the one that died on G*** Road, East Tamaki.

The Twain gang said that they were more likely to be hassled by the police in Māngere and in South Auckland than in other areas. One of the members said he had been harassed by police the night before when they were trying to frame him for the robbery of a liquor store. Although they believed that the majority of the police officers in South Auckland were Palagi, they did not think it would make any difference as to how they were treated by the police if the police officers had been Māori or Pasifika. They said that the "island cops" were "rough with the islanders" although the Palagi officers were the ones most likely to apprehend them.

The Twain gang members did not believe that the police were doing their job which was to protect them or their neighbourhood:

> My dad got hit and I was at a farewell and when I got back home we had nine car loads of cops on my street. I was like wondering – who's looking for them [the offenders], they don't need nine cars loads to come and interview the whole street.

The Older Ōtara Group did not like the presence of the police in their community as it projected a negative image:

> The 'helicopters' [the police] … they are over our streets every day … every single day, everyone talking about our street.

Toa who had been arrested a number of times but never sentenced to a prison term, said he had had little respect for the police during the time he was involved in the gangs:

> I didn't really respect the cops back then. I must have got a few jabs from them because they were rough bro.

But he said he has come to realise that the job of the police is to protect:

> That's their job to protect us, they are the law and I respect them big time.

Leki said that the police presence these days meant that it was not as easy for violent fights to begin. In his time, he said, the police took a long time to come to troubled areas. For example, if there was a fight in Tamariki Park the "cops won't come for ages but these days one little fight and the police are right there". He said that family members now step in to stop the fights if they knew, or were related to the people involved.

Leki believed that the warnings from older incarcerated gang members, rather than the presence of the police, had reduced the amount of fighting among younger gang members:

> My uncles use to tell stories and they [young gang members] don't listen and when they go in and when they come out they like 'Nah bro, you're right.' Some of the gang members did not wear patches and that's how I knew they stay under the radar away from the police. My dad had a patch tattooed on his chest that signified the O***.

Like the other gang members, Leki thought the police used the badge as an excuse for their actions against

the gangs as the badge gave power to the police as an agency:

> To the streets the police are weak, but for me they are one of the strongest gangs in NewZealand because they have resources. They also have the power to shut down whatever they want to really. I've been involved with those stuff myself where they just tried to use that badge, the power of the badge you know, and people think that's weak. If you hide behind something, that's weak, and a lot of the police they hide behind the uniform, that's considered weak.

Leki also acknowledged the presence of what he regarded as 'good' cops:

> I know cops who don't care about being a policeman and those are the ones that don't hide behind their badge or behind their job, they just love the fact that they are hard, so you just respect.

QT said that the youth no longer feared the police the way he did when he was in the gangs. Besides, he said, the gang leaders and members knew the law with regard to the rights of the youth which was a major factor in who carried out illegal activities on behalf of the gang:

> I always remember, I always had the fear of the police. These kids don't fear the police because they know their rights and it's like 'Hey you can't touch me.' That's why it's funny to see what's going to happen with this court case – because if you have a look at all those kids that were pulled in, a lot of them are like young kids, you see baby faces and all that – because there is a lot of pissed off people in jail.

Nick's dislike of the police had not changed from when he was a gang member and he recalled the beatings he had received from them:

> I've got hidings from the police officers, bad hidings too, all Palagi cops... I was saved by a Samoan cop in GI from a hiding from a Howick cop once and I always remember that.

Nick still saw the police as corrupt and believed they had not changed their behaviour.

Maka also had held a poor opinion of the police when he was in the gangs because of the physical altercations he had had with them:

> I used to look at them as helpful people when I was young, then I joined the gang and I looked at them like a bunch of assholes – I didn't really like them and their couple of hooks when they cuff me but I guess I sort of deserved it.

Now that he is no longer in the gangs, Maka agrees with Leki that the police are only doing their job in their encounters with the gangs:

> Oh man they are the bomb [laughter]. I guess when you come into the family life, there is change. When I see the gangsters now get it, I would think 'good job' because they [police] are doing their job.

3.2.6 Leaving the gangs

The gang members observed that leaving the gangs depended on the level of your gang affiliation and the gang in which you were a member.

The Broadways gang was affiliated to a larger well-known gang but did not want to become part of the gang because of the difficulty of leaving: "When you're in it, you're in it. You can't jump out."

They mentioned a gang that was respected by almost everyone including "little kids, intermediate kids, high school kids and even the adults" and that a member of this gang could leave anytime they wanted though they would not be permitted back:

> You can go 'I don't wanna be in anymore bro' and you're out, but you just can't go back.

The Broadways gang said that usually it was not easy to change membership to other gangs and that suspicion and betrayal followed those who attempted to do so while having to prove their loyalty:

> Yeah and you can't easily just jump from a gang to another 'cause you either get the bash or there is always one thing you have to go through to get in the gang and to be in that gang, and if you came from the J***** to the S*****, you'll get the mean bash before you become a S**** and if you get from the S***** to the J***** you will get the mean bash to become a J****.

The Birdies leader said it was normal for its members to want to leave and this was accepted by the gang. However, once they did leave, they were not welcomed back:

> If you leave and get out of the hood, you leave and don't come back ... if you are leaving, make sure we don't see your face.

Leki's association with the church had given him an opportunity to travel overseas, an experience that he said had made him grow up and prompted his leaving the gangs. Leki, now a youth worker, said that although God was the reason he left the gangs, this reason may not work for all youth. What was important, he said, was for youth to hold on to what they really wanted to do.

Leki's concern for his mother and his son's welfare was another factor in his leaving the gangs as he did not want his son following in his footsteps or seeing what he had seen as a gang member. He recalled one such incident:

> The one I still think about now is when I was about nine or 10 I saw a man dragged behind two motorbikes because he owes money to my family. They chained one arm to each bike and the bikes rode off. I had never heard a man with such a scream.

QT said he left the gangs when his brother went to jail. He credited the support of his wife for his making the final decision to leave the gangs. His wife had said to him: "You can cry on my shoulder or you can go and do something about it."

QT said that although he would never go back to the gang lifestyle, he loved the mafutaga that was part of being in the gang. He now tried to get jobs for those who had been with him in the gang so that they would know he was still a part of them: "That I never left, even though I wasn't there, I had to do something else."

QT said his gang still existed but he said that it was the poorest gang around with the oldest members and the young ones who joined did so because they did not want to be part of the more notorious gangs.

QT believed that for long-serving gang leaders and members to leave the gangs, they would need to be presented with something better than they currently got from being in the gangs or a major event would need to happen in their lives that would cause them to reconsider their gang involvement.

Nick left the gangs because of the problems his brother-in-law had in getting into the police force as a result of his connection to Nick's brother who had been involved in a court case that resulted in a prison sentence. Nick said there was noone to support him when he had made the decision to leave the gangs but he had begun the process of leaving by staying at home more and helping out with the chores. He said the gang members reacted badly when he was no longer going out with them or drinking and considered him a hypocrite. He had made several friends in the gangs who were disappointed with him for leaving.

Even Nick's younger family members who were still involved in gangs regarded him as a traitor for telling them that there was a "better life" outside the gangs.

Nick said that family, friends and finance are needed to provide companionship, protection and support for those who want to leave the gangs. Nick, who had only recently left the gangs, said that he is at times tempted to return and that the invitation to come back was there. Although he did not think he would return to the gangs, he would reconsider if the gangs were to hurt his family. He would return, he said, "just to hurt and then I will be finished with the gangs again."

Toa said his departure from the gangs began when he started a family thereby decreasing his connections and involvement with the gangs.

Maka returned to his family once his involvement with the gangs had ended. He appreciated the support from his family and the fact that they had not disowned him but instead had welcomed him back. Without this, he said, he may still have been with the gangs:

> When I was doing all the crime and stuff, like all the violence, fights and they used to put up with the police coming around and now they can have a good sleep and don't have to worry about me off on the road somewhere either fighting, or the police ringing that I'm out there at gutter somewhere. I am proud of them accepting me even though I was still a troublesome fella and without their warm hearts and help. And if they had neglected me I would still be in.

For Maka, it was not an easy thing to leave the gangs:

> Nah it took some time. It takes a couple of years. You can't just do it overnight but yeah I just had to get away from the bad environment and the things that made me angry – it was like changing myself so I don't have to explode every time. Yeah just go

> back to the family life and be happy – yeah the old man give you a lecture but you have to take every word in and knowing that he was right.

3.2.7 Future of gangs

Most of the gang members were not hopeful for their own future as gang members.

The CWI gang believed that respect from government organisations towards gangs was necessary in order to obtain the gangs' co-operation:

> Show them (gangs) respect and that's all they need and they will make sure that none of their boys will get into trouble … do not stand there and look at them like 'You're nothing, you're just a low life living in Ōtara in a Housing New Zealand' [house] – because that's what makes them turn against those kind of people.

The CWI gang members said it would be more productive if resources were given to assisting those who were not involved with gangs and helping to keep them away from joining rather than allocating resources to those already in gangs as they believed it was much harder to improve their situation.

The Birdies said that the Government needed to respond urgently in positive and useful ways to the gang situation as they saw the situation worsening:

> I tell you the government has got to act quick bro, straight up I mean, this is the generation right here and only the worse will happen and the worse is still to come.
>
> We know what the consequences are – f*****g with the law ... and the boys still do it and it's just gonna keep happening, I mean unless the government can come up with $18 starting rate [laughter].

Toa did not see a future for those involved in gangs. He thought they would end up constantly serving prison sentences: "either locked up or in and out".

Toa said society needed to take steps to prevent young people from joining gangs.

Like Toa, QT thought that the only future for youth in gangs was to go to jail. He believed that the gang situation had worsened as gangs became more powerful and the elimination of one gang only allowed for another gang to strengthen and become more dangerous than its predecessor:

> Jail, it's jail or die, because it's going to get worse, and if you think it's not going to get worse then society is kidding themselves, because you just have to look at the trends that's happening since the 60s/70s. Have gangs gotten worse? Yes they have, so why would you think it's going to stop unless real answers are given, and real solutions are found? There's no reason that the underbelly couldn't have a culture that can be controlled by people and that's what needs to happen – stop denying. It's like the government and society is in denial and then they do this big sweep of the B*** [gang] and then they say 'Yeah we win.' No you don't! You're just prolonging the next process, and right now there's the FFF gang who are ready to come out and are worse than the B***. …it will become LA real soon and when these kids play with toys that they shouldn't have their hands on, that's the scary thing and that's what I see, kids rolling around today with things like that, you feel for the people who are going to get caught in the cross fire.

QT acknowledged the work of community organisations such as 274 but said that it was not enough and like the other gang members believed that the situation with gangs was only going to get worse:

> I just think that society lies with the government and that they really need to analyse, they just can't keep throwing money on things. It's a good effort of what they've done with 274 but they need to go deeper, they need to allocate what needs to be done in order to try and straighten this out because it's not going to go anyway, and it's going to get worse. You could put more cops, it's not the answer because cops can only do some much. They have to address what the real issues are … the only people who know it are the kids. Like I said many years ago when we were roaming around the streets, that's when those little youth gangs never came out. There were the NATs, TACs, and that's because we put a lid on that, and that's the problem. I said to some gang leaders 'You guys need to check these young kids.' But once again they have their own dramas they need to deal with, like drugs, that is P, Meth, chemical drugs.

QT believed that opportunities needed to be created in all areas and at all levels of society if youth were to be persuaded away from gangs. It would be a waste of

time he said to try to get gang members who had been around large sums of money to turn away from that for a job they knew would never pay that kind of money:

> You can't concentrate on kids who are in gangs now after they have already been rolling around. And the amazing thing that I've seen in my life is $10,000 in cash, and when I saw that kind money in front of me I was like, wow, and that's what the kids are seeing these days – and you try and tell them to go and work at Fisher and Paykel.

Nick said that one way to deter young people from joining gangs was to provide opportunities such as sports and creative arts programmes that would keep them busy. He said that the Christian life, to which many were turning, was not the answer as he knew of many Christian ex-gang members who could easily return to gang life:

> There are guys out there that I know – they call it sleeping giants – like these guys are still living the life but they are not as active and it won't take much for them to be active.

If they did become active, Nick said, the situation would worsen as gang numbers would greatly increase.

Like Nick, Maka also believed that Pasifika youth needed activities that would keep them away from the attractions of a gang life:

> If we have heaps of community places, to get them cheaper gym fees. Like if they want to have a reputation then give them a clean boxing ring. Organise and get them in there if they think they are tough. More recreational stuff like night activities to keep them out of the street.

3.2.8 Summary

The gangs and ex-gang members, like the Pasifika youth who were not involved in gangs, acknowledged that gangs contributed positively in terms of providing friendship and a sense of belonging for isolated and marginalised youth, as well as protection from rival gangs and others. The gangs said the protection they provided compensated for the protection they believed the police and family failed to provide, forcing young people to seek protection elsewhere.

The gangs and ex-gang members believed the rules of the schools forced many Pasifika youth to look towards the gang for acceptance and identity and said that organisations like schools and churches were opportune places of recruitment for young people wanting to become involved in gangs.

The gang members expressed anger at the disrespect shown to them by the police and the treatment they had received from them. They said the assault of younger brothers and sisters by the police because of the family association with gangs had caused their siblings and younger family members to resent the police.

Several gang members saw themselves primarily as a gang of friends who were also involved in the negative and illegal activities of gang life. They did not want the gang life for their children but wanted their children to have the same friendships, camaraderie and support that came from being in a gang. Leadership in gangs seemed to go to those on whom the gang members felt they could rely or could trust to speak on their behalf.

With some gangs, it was possible to move in and out without any physical retribution for doing so. For the ex-gang members, the gangs still served a purpose if they needed protection, or if they were seeking revenge. Although they no longer held gang membership, all the ex-gang members had maintained some degree of relationship with the gangs and their involvement, and connection with gangs remained open.

Family and friends were factors that had assisted the ex-gang members to transition out of gangs. Leaving the gangs meant leaving behind the friendships they had made and a lifestyle that had become a part of them.

Although there was solidarity within the gangs, there was a lack of solidarity between the different gangs as the gangs appeared to contest hierarchy through the rivalry that existed between them. In some instances, gang membership was welcomed by family members because of the care provided to gang members' families by gang members themselves. The gang and ex-gang members commented on the lack of resources in their area including community organisations and community workers.

All the gangs said they had enemies but despite their criminal activities, they believed they helped to keep South Auckland youth together.

Although South Auckland's Pasifika gang members had dreams for their future, they did not think the

realisation of these dreams was a possibility given their lack of resources and their encounters with the law. The gangs regarded their involvement in criminal activities as a way of earning money to support themselves and their families but believed that it was ineffective as a long-term strategy. The gangs and ex-gang members did not believe the future was positive for those involved in gangs and said resources should be allocated towards efforts to keep young Pasifika people from joining gangs as it would be more difficult to get them to leave the gangs once they had joined.

4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The key findings that emerged from an analysis of the data were:

Family

> Family was a significant and valued influence in the lives of South Auckland Pasifika youth. Family included immediate family as well as close relatives and friends.

> Gang members did not appear to want to give up their immediate family for the gang family although the latter provided an alternative family environment for those members who did not have stable relationships with their own immediate family.

> Pasifika youth involved in gangs did not seem to want to leave their family home for a life on the streets although the street was a major place in their socialisation. Their links to the gang and to gang life did not appear to weaken the relationship they wanted to have with their families.

> Family expectations and values had a significant influence on the involvement of Pasifika youth in gangs.

Home and community

> There was a strong bond between Pasifika youth and their South Auckland community and Pasifika youth felt a sense of identity and commitment to their suburbs.

> The presence and availability of community resources including people and facilities were significant to Pasifika youth's engagement in those activities regarded as socially positive.

> Pasifika youth relied on youth workers to provide them with opportunities to become involved in the community and to give them information about issues relevant to youth.

> The culture and practices of institutions such as the church, schools and the police often conflicted with those of Pasifika youth, particularly those involved in gangs.

Culture

> Pasifika youth were proud of their Pasifika heritage and believed this heritage helped them to interact positively with other ethnic groups.

> Although ethnicity may have historically played an important part in the composition of gangs comprising Pasifika youth, gangs involving Pasifika youth no longer appeared to be divided along a particular Pacific Island heritage.

Gangs

> The perceptions of Pasifika youth not involved in gang life to the presence of gangs depended on their knowledge of and relationship with gang members.

> The gangs were aware that their presence affected how their community was perceived and that their presence had become a 'community problem' instead of a New Zealand problem.

> The encouragement and support of friends and family were essential to assisting gang members who wished to exit out of gang life.

Leadership

> Pasifika youth not involved in gangs regarded their parents and community leaders as the people they considered leaders.

> Most gang members believed in their ability to be leaders and regarded their own gang leader as someone they considered to have qualities necessary for leadership.

Future

> Pasifika youth not involved in gangs saw the future in terms of being able to contribute back to the family or to making improvements in their community.

> Those Pasifika youth involved in gangs did not see a positive future for gangs but like the Pasifika youth non-gang and the ex-gang members believed that gangs would always be present in the community.

5. KEY INSIGHTS

'Family/gang' and 'home/street'

One of the aims of this study was to explore what family meant for young people involved in gangs and to identify which individuals or groups were included in their definition of family. As the concept of family is closely tied up with the home, the research also investigated where home was, and what it meant for young Pasifika gang members. From the results, the researchers attempted to determine whether the family and the home were being replaced by the gang and the street for these youth.

For gang members, family meant their immediate or 'blood' family and this family took precedence over their gang family, especially for those gang members who had children. Family also included those friends who had been of assistance to them throughout their lives. The gangs looked after each other's families in times of need and there was a strong family feeling for other gang members.

Gang members did not appear to want to give up their immediate family for the gang family. For those members who did not have harmonious or stable relationships with their own immediate family, the gang family provided an alternative family environment. The priority for gang members was their own family, and they saw the gang as an extended family. For Pasifika youth in gangs, it was not unusual that the extended family concept was present given its acceptance in Pasifika culture (Poland, 2007).

Although many Pasifika youth in gangs held positive views of their own family, their involvement in gangs might be an attempt to get out of the gang what they did not get from the family; for example, acceptance of their identity, unconditional support of their lifestyle and financial assistance.

Young Pasifika people in gangs expressed a strong desire to remain in their suburbs. Home for many of them included their neighbourhood, their streets and their suburbs. For these young Pasifika gang members, the street was where they met, made plans and socialised. The street became their main place of interaction particularly if they were not welcomed in their home. At times, the street became an extension of their home and they considered all the people, especially friends who lived on the same street, as family. If most of their gang members lived in close proximity to them, it was likely that the street became their social habitat and home. There was a blending of the spatial and social boundaries between the home and the street as the home metamorphosed into the street for many gang members who sometimes claimed ownership to particular streets.

However, despite the street and the attendant neighbourhood becoming the main characteristics that profiled and identified many gangs and the place where they planned and conducted many of their activities, most gang members returned home to be with their families. Although the home had different rules and expectations of them that, at times, conflicted with the rules and expectations of the street, most wanted a place to which they could return after being on the street or with the gang.

Although the research points to parental disengagement as a factor in young people joining gangs, there is little to suggest that Pasifika youth in gangs seek a similar disengagement from the family. Family and home, whether discussed by the young Pasifika gang members in terms of immediate and gang families or the street and the community respectively, were factors that remained essential for young Pasifika gang members in South Auckland and many referred to their close family relationships. Pasifika youth in gangs did not indicate a want to disconnect from family nor did they suggest a desire to do without a family life that included parents, brothers, sisters and the extended family. Furthermore, these Pasifika youth did not seem to want to leave their home, whether home was the place where their family resided, the street where their home was located or the neighbourhood where they, their friends and other gang members lived. The links to the gang and to gang life did not appear to weaken the relationship between these youth and their families except in those circumstances where they were ostracised by there family because of their gang involvement, or the relationship between the gang member and the family was initially weak. In fact, the voices of these Pasifika youth told us that family and home remained important to them.

Perceptions of the presence of gangs

This research has recognised two important factors with regard to the perception of gangs. One, how youth who are not involved in the gangs perceive the gangs. Two, the way the gangs see themselves in relation to

the fear and threats experienced by the community to their presence. Those youth who were not involved in gangs and had little to do with gang members, talked about their apprehension of gangs. On the other hand, Pasifika youth who were not involved in gangs but had gang members as friends did not express having the same degree of fear, perhaps because knowing their friends and what they were like made them less frightened. The gangs did not talk about the fear those not involved in gangs had of them but seemed interested only in how they were feared by other gangs.

The gangs were aware the communities in which they lived had formed perceptions and opinions of their presence. Like the Pasifika youth, the gangs seemed to understand that their presence affected how their community was perceived and that gangs had become a 'community problem' rather than a New Zealand problem.

Though the gangs often referred to violent and criminal activities this was commented on primarily in terms of the financial opportunities they offered rather than as activities carried out for the sake of it. Gang members did not seem to reflect on how these activities, though of benefit to them, might be impacting adversely on others.

Social and political

From the voices of the Pasifika youth, it appeared that South Auckland is not so much about the absence of positives as it is about the impact of the negatives. There are a number of positive influences and opportunities in South Auckland such as the youth workers, community organisations and youth facilities. However, the literature shows the prevalence of low-cost housing, schools with a low decile ranking, high unemployment and migrant communities are factors that influence the presence of gangs. For many South Auckland Pasifika youth in this study, they see their choice as between a way of life which offers companionship, protection, a sense of belonging and an opportunity to provide for one's self and family, or making it on your own. South Auckland's Pasifika youth appear cognisant of the country's political environment and show an understanding of how decisions made by central government affect them and their communities. The social conditions that allowed the gang culture to develop successfully in America, such as the segregation of neighbourhoods, the discrimination within institutions such as the police, the justice system and the schools, and the expectations of society are similar to those that exist in South Auckland. Although the South Auckland youth in this study acknowledge the many positive aspects of their South Auckland community, they are also aware that a community lacking in resources such as money and time will be unable to address the issue of gangs, a likely consequence of the absence of these two factors.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the interviews conducted and the analysis of the data, the researchers believe that a number of recommendations can be made:

> The wider availability of mentoring programmes for gang families and parents of gang members that would present different familial lifestyles and offer positive role modelling.

> Family fono involving Pasifika youth including gang members and their families with community youth workers to further community involvement.

> Government and community services working with the gangs as a 'family' in the context of presenting the positive behaviours and outcomes expected of family life and membership.

> A support strategy and system for Pasifika youth considering gang membership and for those gang members who wish to transition out of gangs.

> The involvement of ex-gang members in working with families of Pasifika youth and young Pasifika gang members to transition young members out of gang life.

> Adequate provision of youth workers and resources at youth facilities and organisations to work in a recreational capacity with Pasifika youth.

> Opportunities for youth to connect and identify with each other and with access to a variety of activities including sports, music, areas of interest to youth.

> Access to academic, financial and career advisors for Pasifika youth to assist in planning for the future.

> Workshops and programmes in schools and churches to facilitate discussions around issues (eg coping with limited financial resources, finding after-school employment, gang membership, conflict between the school and the street) relevant to and affecting Pasifika youth.

> An improved relationship between Pasifika youth and institutions such as the police, schools and the church through the latter being aware and reflective of the particular culture of young Pasifika people through such efforts as training programmes, recruitment, curriculum delivery and methods of engagement.

7. FURTHER RESEARCH

Although the research provided valuable information on how Pasifika youth saw family and the community it did not tell us, except for the allusions to 'us versus them', why Pasifika youth living in South Auckland held such strong positive feelings towards their community. The researchers were also interested in the factors that contributed to the resilience shown by Pasifika youth who had not been drawn to gang life despite being exposed to the same factors as those who had become gang members. Awareness of, and knowledge of these factors would assist in keeping Pasifika youth from joining gangs. In addition, if it is agreed that strong families make strong communities, research is needed to determine what makes strong Pacific families if we are to support other Pacific families to become strong, thus strengthening communities.

Pasifika youth indicated that they want a successful future for themselves and their family but were unsure who to turn to as a first step in achieving this future. Research into how community organisations or governmental institutions can assist with directing the youth towards these goals will increase opportunities for their achievement.

From the data, it is evident that family involvement in gangs is a strong predictor of youth gang membership. Knowing whether or not family members are aware of alternatives to gang lifestyle or whether it is by choice that they remain connected to the gangs will assist in understanding and discontinuing the family cycle of adverse gang membership.

It was observed by the participants that institutions such as the church and schools were successful places for the recruitment of Pasifika gang members. It is worth investigating the characteristics of these institutions and the way their service to the communities allows opportunities for recruitment into gang life. In addition, the cultural relationships between Pasifika youth and these institutions including the police appear to be discordant and an apparent influence in the hostility that many of the youth experience in their dealings with them. Determining how these institutions could more appropriately take into account the cultural backgrounds of young Pasifika people and their communities could lead to better outcomes for these youth and their communities.

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APPENDIX A:

Glossary

274	Family Youth Organisation.
274, 275 etc	Telephone prefixes for various suburbs in South Auckland, eg 274 = Ōtara, 275 = Māngere. Young people use these numbers with pride to represent where they come from.
5–O/Five O	Slang for the police derived from American culture and the 1970s TV show Hawaii 5–O.
Aiga	Samoan or family – commonly used by other Pasifika young people.
Armo'	Slang for armed robbery crime, usually in reference to banks and armoured vehicles.
Bebo	A social networking website popular amongst New Zealand youth (www.bebo.com). Several young people use Bebo to stay in contact with family and friends, and to post pictures etc.
Blood family	A person's immediate biological family, eg parents, siblings.
Catch an eye	Noticing someone looking staunchly and dangerously at you.
Coin	Money or finances.
Crew	A group of friends; used interchangeably with the term 'gang'.
Detached youth workers	Youth workers associated with young people in the streets and parks and employing various activities, sports etc. These types of youth workers were very common in South Auckland in the 1980s with the Te Hau Ora Project.
Diss	To disrespect someone. Feeling or being dissed for a young person can lead to revenge, retribution, violence and depression.
Double digits	A prison sentence of 10 years or more.
Fa'alavelave	Samoan term used to describe various significant events for Samoan families within the Samoan culture. This can include weddings, funerals, headstone unveilings, church openings.
Fale	Samoan term for house commonly used by young people and other Pacific cultures.
Fanau	Samoan word used to describe young people or a family as a whole.
Fasi	Samoan term for 'beating' or 'fighting' commonly used by young people of all Pacific ethnicities.
Fobby	Slang abbreviation for the phrase 'fresh off the boat' – refers to someone recently arrived in New Zealand from the Pacific Islands or someone displaying 'island ways'.
Fono	Samoan word for 'meeting' or 'to have a meeting'.
Fue	A sacred Samoan artefact used in Samoa to swat flies away. The fue is used by Samoan chiefs in special ceremonies.
Gang affiliated	People who are connected to a gang in some way (eg friends, hanging out together) but who are not actively involved in that gang.
Getting rent money if you want to set up shop	Refers to someone who wants to move into someone else's territory or neighbourhood to sell drugs or perform other illegal activities. 'Getting rent money' refers to people who claim to own or run that neighbourhood and are allowed to get money from those people setting up their illegal businesses in their area. This is a process called taxing where the local gang taxes any outsiders wishing to do business in their area.

Getting the bash	Getting assaulted.
'Hood	Neighbourhood – usually a term of affection.
Hori	Slang for a Māori person, can be used in a positive or derogatory sense.
Iwi	Māori term denoting a tribe to which a Māori person belongs.
K–1	Professional international kick-boxing sport and popular with Pacific and Māori youth.
Kava bowl	Sacred traditional bowl for several Pacific nations used in ceremonies to make special kava drink. Also known as a tanoa.
Le lavalava	Samoan word to describe the cloth material that wraps around a person's waist and worn by both males and females in Samoa and throughout the Pacific.
Lou mea auleaga	Samoan phrase which literally means 'you ugly/bad thing'.
Mafutaga	Samoan term meaning 'to fellowship' or come together.
Magele	Samoan word for the suburb of Māngere in South Auckland.
Meaalofa	Samoan word for gift or present. It often refers to money or a gift being given to someone for their time, work or effort and is used in a very similar way to the Māori term of koha.
Palagi	Samoan term for Pākehā or white European person in Aotearoa/New Zealand.
Pasifika	New Zealand Government's definition (which is based on that of the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs) to refer to people who come from or have ancestry from either Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu or Samoa.
Pe'a soga'imiti	Samoan term referring to the traditional tattoos that untitled Samoan men get which go from their belly button down to below their knees.
Poofter	Used to describe someone who is scared or cannot or is unwilling to fight.
Rep	To 'represent' or proudly display your connection to your gang, school, family, suburb, street. It can also mean someone's own personal reputation, eg that person has a rep for being a good fighter (or is well-known as a good fighter).
Selling out	Refers to someone who was once a friend of the neighbourhood or gang but who has since become a different person and no longer does the same things as before Usually a derogatory term about a person who has given up their roots and is acting differently from expected.
Shout out	To say hello or show love or affection for someone.
Snitching	Derogatory term to denote someone who tells the police or other 'outsiders' about the activities and realities of a gang.
Taupou	Samoan female ceremonial dancer who usually dances at the end of Samoan cultural dances.
Tautua	Samoan word meaning to serve and work for your family, village, country.
Uso	Samoan term for brother commonly used by young people of all Pacific ethnicities.

Pasifika

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