

FBI BULLETIN

NOVEMBER 1982

FBI LAW ENFORCEMENT BULLETIN

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The Cover
The FBI Laboratory marks its 50th year of distinguished scientific assistance to law enforcement, as noted in the Director's Message on p. 1.

Federal Bureau of Investigation
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20535

William H. Webster, Director

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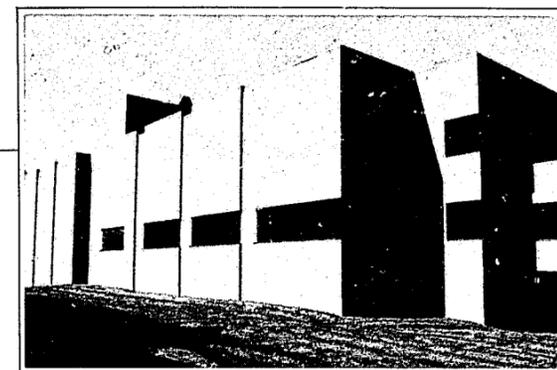
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Director's Message

In 1932, 50 years ago this month, the FBI Laboratory was established with one examiner and one microscope. Today, the Laboratory has grown to 119 Special Agents, 309 support personnel, and an equipment inventory of \$12.5 million. From a beginning of 963 forensic science examinations in 1934 (the first year statistics were maintained), the Laboratory conducted more than 51,000 examinations in 1942, and has about doubled this number every decade, reaching more than 910,000 examinations the past fiscal year.

FBI Laboratory services, including both examinations and testimony in support of the findings, are available without cost to Federal agencies and military tribunals in criminal and civil matters and to all State, county, and municipal law enforcement agencies in this country in connection with criminal cases.

As the value of forensic science became apparent to the law enforcement community, larger police departments established local crime laboratories. The number of these laboratories was rapidly expanded in the past decade and a half as a result of funding provided by the "Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968." Then, in 1973, individual State and local crime laboratory directors requested the FBI to take a more direct and active role in the areas of training and research. In 1974, the FBI began offering specialized scientific courses for State and local crime laboratory personnel at the FBI Academy. In fiscal 1981, more than 1,300 personnel were thus trained.

The need for forensic science research was recognized by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors in their recommendation for a laboratory building at the FBI Academy for this purpose. In June 1981, this building was dedicated, with 7,000 square feet of its space devoted to research facilities used by a permanent FBI Laboratory research staff, research personnel representing academic institutions, and others from specialized areas of forensic science. The Forensic Science Research and Training Center has as research goals: (1) To develop new and reliable methods in forensic science, (2) to develop new methods to overcome problems in forensic science, and (3) to apply current technology to forensic science. This training and research, given proper funding and support, can assist the Nation's criminal justice system by improving the competency of crime laboratory personnel and reducing State and local law enforcement reliance on Federal laboratories for routine case examinations.

From a beginning devoted to proving the worth of forensic science analysis to both the public and the police profession, the FBI Laboratory has moved on to research and training. This has been a vindication of both the worth of forensic science and our system of service to local government.

These achievements make our anniversary an occasion for translating pride into rededication.

William H. Webster
Director
November 1, 1982

Outlaw Motorcyclists A Problem for Police

(Conclusion)

By
ROGER H. DAVIS*

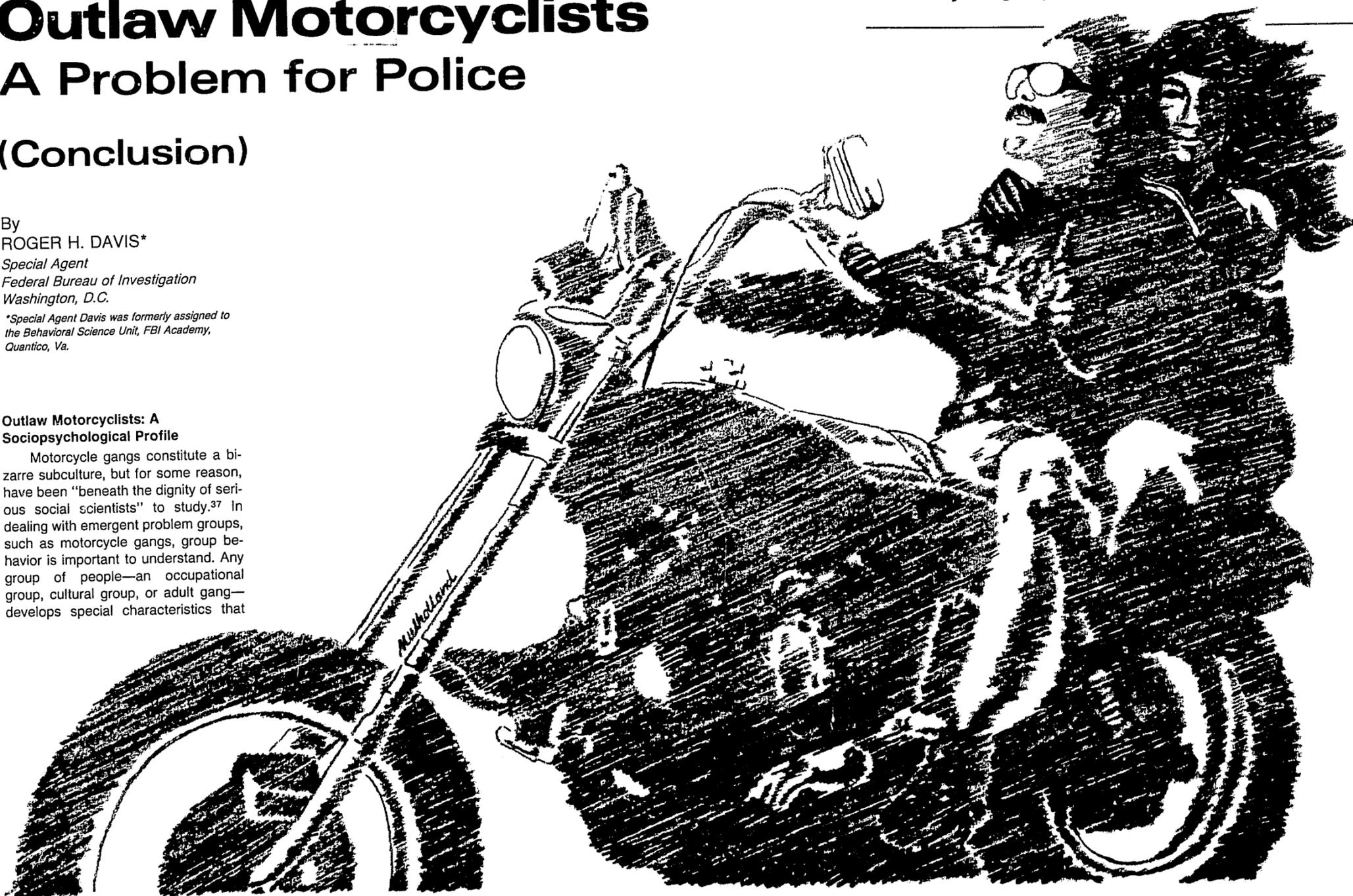
Special Agent
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Outlaw Motorcyclists: A Sociopsychological Profile

Motorcycle gangs constitute a bizarre subculture, but for some reason, have been "beneath the dignity of serious social scientists" to study.³⁷ In dealing with emergent problem groups, such as motorcycle gangs, group behavior is important to understand. Any group of people—an occupational group, cultural group, or adult gang—develops special characteristics that

"Motorcycle gangs constitute a bizarre subculture. . . ."



set it apart from all others. A subculture may be based upon regional characteristics, common traits, occupations or interests, and may carry with it certain styles of dress and behavior.

A motorcycle gang subculture is based upon a number of common factors, including a mutual interest in motorcycles. Other characteristics, however, also draw people to outlaw gangs. Outlaw gangs differ from many other groups in that their behavior goes beyond the dominant characteristics that set many other groups apart. Outlaw gang members challenge dominant features of American society, not only with their criminal behavior but with overt actions intended to shock. The shocking behavior we often see is, in fact, an open break with the value system of society.³⁸

Language can be a component of subculture, and the language of an outlaw gang member sets him apart from other groups. An outlaw motorcycle gang member's language is saturated with vulgarity and with terminology that denotes a different meaning to an outsider. Terms such as "ape-hangers," meaning high-rising handlebars, or a "fash truck," a van that follows the gang's motorcycle formation, are examples.³⁹

Although these behavior patterns are subcultural characteristics, an understanding of the gang subculture is important because a look at the world as seen through the eyes of a gang member may aid the police officer in being more effective in dealing with motorcycle groups. Such an understanding is critical, since indications of future gang activities point toward a shift in behavior from the unruly free-wheeling individualist of the 1950's and 1960's to the older, wealthier, and more deeply connected outlaw of the present.



Special Agent Davis

Persons from different subcultural groups behave in ways that differ from those of the mainstream of American society. As one social scientist explained, value orientations differ among varying groups of people because the views and beliefs people have are the products of learning and group relations.⁴⁰ Most members of outlaw gangs are from lower or lower middle class levels of American society, and as such, bring with them their class-associated behaviors. Criminologist Walter Miller suggests that lower class people are characterized by distinctive values which not only differ from the values of the majority of American citizens but also conflict with our legal code.⁴¹ As individuals with like values become more and more involved with outlaw gang members, some of these values are accentuated, reinforced, and accepted as modes of behavior within that group.

Gang Member Initiation

The process through which a potential member is assimilated into a gang is interesting. When a person expresses a desire to become a part of the group, he is sponsored by a member, is designated a probate, and serves a period of time in that status. The actual time period varies. With some groups it is a vague period that terminates when a group consensus is reached that the probate has met the test. Membership is gained after the process of assimilation and "testing" is satisfactorily completed. During the probationary period, the probate is required to submit to the desires of gang members, wait on them, and run errands. Some outlaw gangs have levied other requirements on probates, including the commission of felony violations witnessed by a member. These

requirements seem to vary with the confidence level the group has in any particular probate. Some groups may require probates to commit one or more criminal acts, while others have no such requirements.

The probationary period is a time of testing, but group influence on what behavior is desirable and what is undesirable is clearly taught. The probate learns that bizarre, shocking behavior is a way to "show class" and gain status. Criminal behavior may also be seen as desirable. During the probationary period, the probate comes to see deviant behavior as appropriate in his new role. Witnessed criminal behavior serves as a test to those probates whose reliability and loyalty to the group are questioned. It also serves to both filter out potential police informers and give the group some leverage over members. Outlaws believe that if some members have witnessed others commit a felonious act, the group's code of silence is more easily enforced.

Frequent close contact with group members, the teaching of group norms, and the membership requirements all mold the probate. He changes not only his behavior but his identity. The new identity is evident in the behavior that follows, which includes a symbolic attachment to the group represented by tattoos of the club logo appearing on members' bodies, especially on arms and backs.

Individual club names for some become the only names they are known by within the group and provide both a special personal identity and a group identity. Names such as Flapper, Spider, Greaser, Loser, Roach, Wild Man, and Zit are typical.

Outlaw gangs are ritualistic groups, and the importance of gang rituals in building probate loyalty and group cohesion should not be overlooked. Rituals, such as initiation ceremonies, funeral and wedding ceremonies, meetings, travel formations, and required motorcycle rallies, are significant events pulling the group together. Gangs exhibit their ritualistic nature in wearing certain patches for participation in events, in certain deviant acts, or for symbolically expressing the group position on issues such as drug usage (indicated by the patch "13") or motorcycle helmet laws.

When a probate has passed the test of acceptance, he will be formally initiated into the group. The initiation process is a ceremony that establishes a totally new identity with the group, and at the same time, serves to somewhat sever a new member's former identity with mainstream society. The initiation ceremony itself varies from club to club. Universally, however, it is

an event where the club jacket (colors) is initiated along with the new member. The person being initiated is sometimes required to lie on the ground while members pour oil or pig urine over them or while they urinate, defecate, or vomit on them. Whatever the process, the event itself provides a formal acknowledgement that the initiate is now part of a special society.

Hopelessness

Since outlaw gang members are primarily from the lower class, they hold values that are associated with persons at that societal level. As individuals with those values drift together and form gangs, some behavior is reinforced, and some characteristics become extreme. One class-level characteristic prevalent among gang members is hopelessness. The gang's existence seems to be the result of a need to deal with bitterness toward society. Members have little hope of succeeding in society in terms of living

up to societal expectations that require achievement and education. The gang offers an answer—it provides security for misfits in society. George Wethern, a Hell's Angel turned Government witness, identified the strong connection between his psychological needs and his gang associations when he said, "My self-esteem and my deepest friendships were bolted to my motorcycle."⁴²

A poem in a magazine widely read by gang members typifies the hopelessness that pulls a member toward gang associations:

My dog has fleas and doesn't know where to scratch, my bike won't run and I have no place to crash, I just spent the day getting food from the trash, I think I'll go and score me some grass.

This o'l world ain't treating me right, it's the same old way from morning till night. I try being peaceful and end up in a fight, I'll just smoke a number and get my head right.

I go look for a job and get no place, I smile at my friends and get slugged in the face, I keep telling people I'm not running a race, I think I'll sit down and get stoned just a taste.

My chick just split with another man, I lie in the sun and can't get a tan, when I'm out in the streets there's always The Man, I'll go to a station and smoke in the can.

Well, that's my story from day to day, it never varies in any way, so if you need me—I'll be away, lying somewhere and smoking the hay.⁴³



"An outlaw gang is structured to allow the group its own standards, rules, rituals, status requirements, and tests to pass."

The outlaw code is a code of mutual support—one for all, all for one. Mutual support combats the feeling of hopelessness and provides for some individual security needs. The gang-code requires that members rally to each other's aid, and evidence is mounting to indicate that the credo of mutual support extends to an opportunity to provide for financial security, as well. According to a former Hell's Angel, "... cohesion (no longer) was strictly a matter of fraternal pride. 'It was an insurance policy protecting our livelihood and keeping us out of the slammer. . . .' By the late 1960's being a Hell's Angel had become a full-time job for many and at least one income supplement for most."⁴⁴

The profits some gang members make in crime offer ample opportunity for members who so desire to "get a piece of the action." The group supports this activity in tangible ways. Bond money is quickly obtainable from club coffers or through loans from members. When 11 Hell's Angels were indicted in San Francisco, they were able to raise more than \$3 million in bail money, and when freed, they drove away in a limousine.⁴⁵

The gang also fills other voids in its members' lives. Status and recognition from society, at large, have been withheld from most persons attracted to motorcycle gangs. The gang meets those needs by offering a special status with the group which comes with bizarre and sometimes criminal behavior. Where attaining meaningful roles in life has been difficult for the outlaw biker, the club offers specific group roles and the status, responsibility, and respect that follows.



Group Structure

Social scientists have studied secret societies and find a remarkable variety of formal and informal group structures dependent upon the centralization of control.⁴⁶ Outlaw gangs have an organizational structure that includes a group president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, enforcer, and road captain. In some gangs, the structure of individuals involved in criminal activities may resemble the organizational hierarchy. This seems to be more the case among older groups, such as some Hell's Angels chapters. For other groups, however, the criminal network associated with the gang has included connections among gang members and persons only tangentially associated with the group. In some of these instances, the criminal structure bears little resemblance to the formal club hierarchy.

Groups with a hierarchical criminal structure are of particular concern to law enforcement because the structure is an indicator of a movement toward a more deeply rooted criminal organization. According to a member of the Hell's Angels, "... club structure was easily adapted to drug trafficking. All essential jobs could be filled with club members—distributors, dealers, enforcers, transporters."⁴⁷ With solidifying criminal organization, law enforcement efforts targeted against such groups also become more difficult. Because of this movement by some groups toward a deepening involvement in criminal activities, police officials warn of the necessity for early law enforcement intervention.

An outlaw gang is structured to allow the group its own standards, rules, rituals, status, requirements, and tests to pass. Within these outlaw subcultures, certain universal characteristics appear.

Strength or toughness appears as a universal gang requirement that seems to confer status. Members flaunt their tough image.⁴⁸ They seem obsessed with height, muscles, and obesity. Tattoos are particularly prevalent. Social scientists who have studied tattoos and established a relationship between maladjustment and tattoos report that persons with large numbers of tattoos tend to be more deviant, hostile, impulsive, and sociopathic than persons without tattoos.⁴⁹ Tattooing by gang members is not only indicative of possible maladjustment and a desire to identify with the gang but is sometimes an outlaw group requirement.

The motorcycle itself is an extension of this concern with masculinity and is used not only to attract attention but as an expression of power. Weapons are also an outlaw obsession and appear as a further extension of power and masculinity.

A sexual fertility theme is consistently present among outlaw bikers.⁵⁰ Sex rituals are occasionally included as part of the initiation ceremony, club meeting, or motorcycle run. Sexual "achievements" by members are rewarded by the group, are seen as conferring status, and are formally depicted by various colored jacket patches denoting witnessed sex acts. In effect, these status symbols are "merit badges" for deviant acts.⁵¹

Risk-taking behavior is also prevalent among gang members. Shocking behavior and hedonism bring status that comes with the group's distortions of society's values.

Members of outlaw motorcycle gangs, particularly those attracting police attention, frequently have dominant personality characteristics. The

sociopathic personality is not only the most common criminal personality but also the most dangerous and difficult to identify and is characterized by a lack of guilt or remorse.⁵²

The sociopathic outlaw biker believes the world wants to be like him. He is OK—it is everyone else who is out of step. Although appearing tightly bonded to the group, the outlaw biker is a free spirit who has very little loyalty to others. His essential commitment is to himself. This characteristic makes him a potential informer, but only in those instances when there is clearly some benefit in it for him. Police officers working with this type of personality find that the gang member is seldom targetable until after he is charged with a crime and is faced with the choice of either informing or going to prison. Interestingly, the gang member exhibiting this personality needs to prove himself constantly through bizarre or criminal behavior. The group allows him an excuse to become deviant to impress his brother gang members. This type of person is self-

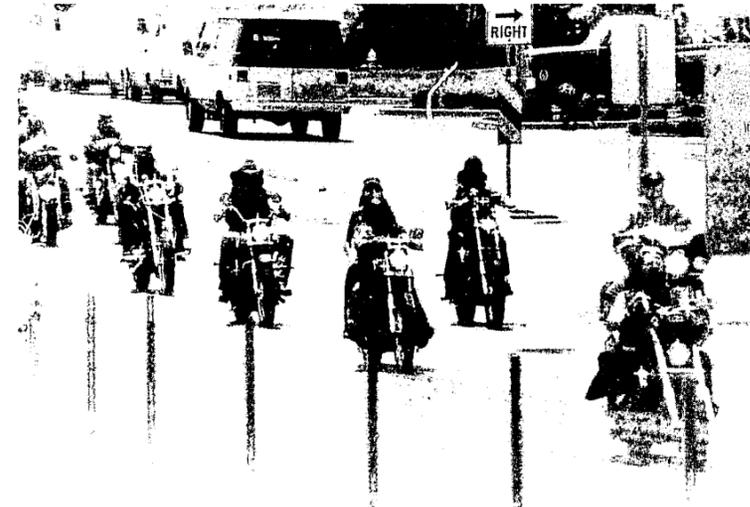
centered and has difficulty with interpersonal relationships. Even within the group, he has difficulty keeping close friends because of his irresponsible and cynical nature.

The sociopathic group member often has little tolerance for frustration. He externalizes life pressures by blaming others for his problems. This inclination to place blame elsewhere is combined with an impulsiveness that produces an individual who fails to think through the consequences and irrationality of his crimes. It follows, then, that a sociopathic gang member will often have a police record that appears to show no pattern of criminal specialty. Rather, because of his unpredictable nature, he is often involved in a variety of crimes and is occasionally motivated by impulse.

Police dealing with gang members know about the impulsive nature of gangs. An incident in Houston, Tex., exemplifies the dangerousness of some gang members. A member of the Conquistadors gang, reacting to the discovery that an 11-year-old boy had been fishing in a pond on the gang member's property, fired an M-2 machinegun into the boy's home, injuring the boy.⁵³

Of concern to police is that this kind of impulsiveness is often connected with violence. Not only does this type of person act out his tensions, but he has no worry or remorse about his behavior. He feels no remorse because, in fact, he feels little guilt. He reacts, often with violence rather than worry, about what is bothering him. He does not learn from bad past experiences because he gives them little thought—he is simply reactive.

A sociopathic gang member may exhibit deceitful and manipulative behavior, but be likeable on the surface. When it is to his advantage, he puts on



"The extent of criminal involvement of outlaw motorcycle gang members is extensive, and the behavioral nature of the group is complex."

a good front, becomes outwardly friendly, and feigns repentance and remorse. Officers experienced with gang members of this personality style know, however, that this friendly disposition is only a temporary first impression.

Motorcycle gangs are particularly attractive to persons exhibiting some of the tendencies discussed above—they are mutually supportive. To the sociopathic gang member, violence is exciting and easy, since he feels no anxiety or guilt for what he has done. The group, in turn, needs his muscle to establish and maintain its reputation and to support and enforce criminal activities. The group meets his needs in turn for his daring. Since the sociopathic personality style is frequently encountered in outlaw gangs, officers who handle gang investigations have learned to use extreme caution with the members.

Gang Women

A final important aspect of gang investigations and an aid to an understanding of gang behavior is the role of women and their association with the gang. Although women are usually not gang members, they perform an important function in many gang-related crimes. Initially attracted because of the excitement gang life offers, many women are later held involuntarily or stay out of fear.⁵⁴ They may be the "property" of one member only or used by several gang members. The female role is that of a servant. Women are looked upon as objects to be used for sexual, criminal, or personal purposes. The women who allow themselves to remain in this role seem to be best characterized as inadequate personality types. They have relatively poor judgment, not because they do not care but because they are inept.

Gang women feel guilty for failing to live up to the expectations of others; they are also less reactive to pressure than their male associates. They seem to internalize life's pressures rather than blaming others. Consequently, gang women are attracted to the dominant personalities of some gang members and are easily used by them. Because of fear and a relatively low level of self-esteem, and often simply because of no place to go, the gang "old lady" or "mama" feels unable to break away. Instead, she develops a strong dependency. Not unlike some battered women, she may even accept responsibility for being abused and may feel guilty for not living up to a gang member's expectations.

For many gang women, sex becomes a means to establish intimacy. The need for affection and self-esteem is strong, and exploitive sexual relations with male members and associates become confused with affection.

It is, in part, because of these behavioral dynamics that officers investigating gang activities often have difficulty developing gang women as informants. Fear and the need to depend upon gang men produces a loyalty that is difficult to overcome. Investigators often find gang women most helpful with information when their associations with gang members weaken and loyalties shift. Unfortunately, information received then is often outdated.

Conclusion

The extent of criminal involvement of outlaw motorcycle gang members is extensive, and the behavioral nature of the group is complex. There is no easy path to dealing with the criminal activi-

ties of these groups. Any law enforcement officer who has investigated crimes by outlaw motorcycle gang members knows the lengthy plodding effort these complex cases require. Techniques that are, however, essential in gang investigations include the development by a gang investigator of an understanding of the group's "culture" and the ability to apply knowledge of gang personality types and behavior characteristics for the purpose of more effective information-gathering from gang members. **FBI**

Footnotes

³⁷ Randal Montgomery, "The Outlaw Motorcycle Subculture," *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Corrections*, vol. 18, No. 4, October 1976, p. 332.

³⁸ Although the term "subculture" will be used throughout this article to refer to customs and beliefs of outlaw motorcycle gangs, a more specific term "contraculture" seems appropriate. See J. Milton Yinger, "Contraculture and Subculture," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 25, No. 5, October 1960, p. 628. In a contraculture, the value conflict with society is central. Outlaw gangs are contracultural groups in the sense they appear as "subsocieties" with emergent norms in conflict with society.

³⁹ *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette*, vol. 42, No. 10, 1980, p. 37.

⁴⁰ Edwin H. Sutherland, *Principles of Criminology* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1947), p. 6.

⁴¹ Walter B. Miller, "Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 14, No. 3, 1958, p. 8.

⁴² Wether and Colnett, supra note 20, p. 63.

⁴³ P. Overholtz, untitled, *In the Wind* 6, No. 6, (Burbank, Calif.; Paisano Publications, 1981).

⁴⁴ Wether and Colnett, supra note 20, p. 108.

⁴⁵ Ross, supra note 1.

⁴⁶ Bonnie H. Erickson, "Secret Societies and Social Structure," *Social Forces*, vol. 60, No. 1, September 1981, p. 188.

⁴⁷ Wether and Colnett, supra note 20, p. 336.

⁴⁸ Montgomery, supra note 37, p. 336.

⁴⁹ Robert J. Howell, I Reed Payne, and Allan V. Roe, "Differences Among Behavioral Variables, Personality Characteristics and Personality Scores of Tattooed and Nontattooed Prison Inmates," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 8, No. 1, January 1971, p. 37.

⁵⁰ Montgomery, supra note 37, p. 336.

⁵¹ *RCMP Gazette*, supra note 39, p. 21.

⁵² Thomas Strentz and Conrad Hassel, "The Sociopath—A Criminal Enigma," *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, vol. 6, No. 2, January 1978, p. 135.

⁵³ Burke Watson, "Kill All the Kids," *Houston Chronicle*, Houston, Tex., July 31, 1980.

⁵⁴ *RCMP Gazette*, supra note 39, p. 18.

END