FINAL REPORT TO THE CRIMINOLOGY RESEARCH COUNCIL

ADOLESCENT SOCIALISATION PROCESSES: BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS, ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS AMONGST URBAN ABORIGINAL YOUTH

CRC RESEARCH PROJECT 3/94-95

THE SIBLING STUDY CONSORTIUM*

(UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY, BOND UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH & COORDINATION DIVISION OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION)

OCTOBER 1997

SUMMARY

As part of The Sibling Study — a major Australian longitudinal research project on personal, familial, school and community factors involved in delinquency — data were collected for a sub-sample of 119 urban Aboriginal youth. Preliminary analysis provides confirmatory data on comparative disadvantage, on the extent of extended family networks and relatively high levels of self-report offending in certain predicted categories. More importantly, the data suggest that there are strong family and peer support structures, that there is evidence for an 'oppositional culture' operating and that elements of restorative justice are of significance to young urban Aboriginal people. Specific findings suggest that Aboriginal youth are present rather than future oriented but are realistic in their views. They value parental and peer beliefs, are concerned with how others view them and yet have a strong sense of self. These beliefs are counterbalanced by a lack of trust in others, a sizeable minority believing that the law is unfair, and an unwillingness to seek help. This young urban Aboriginal cohort felt that punishment was necessary but that it was important to find out why an act was committed and that restitution should form part of the punishment. Self-reported delinquency of the respondents show that more than between 30 and 50 per cent report status offences (like driving unlicensed or skipping school); around 40 per cent report being involved in drug-related behaviours (using marijuana or purchasing alcohol); over one-third have been involved in a violent offence (such as a group fight); and over one-third concede stealing or property offences. These preliminary descriptive findings indicate that policy options within a restorative justice framework are most appropriate for young Aboriginal Australians.
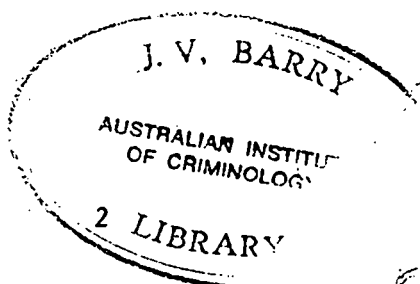
Most of the research conducted in Australia with respect to Aboriginal offending utilises official data and focuses on criminal justice processing. The problems of over-representation have been well-documented, beginning with Eggleston (1976) and culminating most recently in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991). While much of the literature centres on adults and adult males in particular, the disproportionality is greatest for Aboriginal young people, this over-representation appears to be increasing, and the age at which Aboriginal youth become subject to the juvenile justice system is declining (Broadhurst 1987). There are notable exceptions to this corpus of work, of course, like the studies by Cunneen (eg 1988; 1991) and by Gale, Wundersitz and colleagues (see Gale et al 1990; Wundersitz et al 1990). However, there is also this lack of studies that elicit self-report data or that examine the influences to offending from the micro to the macro level. These deficiencies therefore advocate greater emphasis on juvenile matters, on micro as well as macro factors, and on self-report rather than official data — all features of the approach taken by The Sibling Study reported here.

There are likewise a range of explanations for Aboriginal over-representation, most of which focus on criminal justice operations such as: racist bias, visibility, cultural factors, legal factors, extra-legal factors and overpolicing (see Smandych et al 1993; Lincoln & Wilson 1994). Other sets of explanations centre on socio-historical elements: socio-economic status, disadvantage, history of colonisation, racism and discrimination, demographic profile; more broader theoretical outlooks like modernisation theory, world-systems theory and ecological-opportunity theory; or cultural explanations based on difference, resistance and oppositional culture (Smandych et al 1993).

An examination of the international findings on race and crime reveal the same deficits and also have often been 'contradictory, ambiguous, and

somewhat confusing' (Pope & Clear 1994, 132). A meta-analysis of the literature on race and criminal justice reveals that two-thirds of studies show there is a difference whereas one-third state that there is none — some of these studies suggest that blacks are treated more leniently in terms of sentencing; others state that blacks commit more serious and more frequent crime and that over-representation is explained by 'soft' options like extra-legal factors, indirect racism, selection bias; but rarely outright racism and discrimination (Conley 1994). One recent study on juvenile detention found that after controlling for social factors (education, low socio-economic status, personal problems, and so on) race nevertheless 'continues to have a significant and independent effect on detention' (Wordes et al 1994, 163).

The empirical questions remain about whether Aboriginal offending is largely the result of discriminatory practices within the justice system, whether there may be greater rates of offending, or more importantly, whether there are indeed different patterns of offending by Aboriginal young people (Smandych et al 1993; Tonry 1995). The theoretical questions that remain demand that the interactions between the extant explanations are explored in ways suggested by class-race-gender proponents where inequalities and social locations are seen as inseparable relations (Daly 1994) to which we would add the need to explore historical and location-specific influences. So there is a need to conduct new types of research at the individual, community and regional levels to look at the broader perspective of indigenous offending that at the very least, attempts to address these empirical and theoretical inadequacies.

Recent studies concerned with Aboriginal over-representation suggest that disproportionality is an artefact of class and age (La Prairie 1995). While some studies have found that race is used as a marker for socio-economic status (see Cove 1992 below) other studies (Wolfgang et al 1972) found that even when other factors (prior offences, seriousness of offences, etc) are included some variance that could be accounted for by race still exists. The work by

Cove (1992), for example, analysed age, gender and class dimensions to create a hypothetical prison population which has an Aboriginal age distribution. Cove (1992, 163) concludes that 'what the Tasmanian case study demonstrates is that a large proportion of Aboriginal over-representation can be understood in terms of gender, age and socio-economic status'. However, his statistical manipulations of both the Tasmanian and national data reduced over-representation from 5.05 to 2.44 times and 10.1 to 7.0 times respectively, but were not able to eradicate over-representation entirely. In another study that controlled for employment and education it is suggested that unemployment is a doubly more powerful predictor of incarceration and that if education were controlled for and all other factors remain the same, then ATSI incarceration falls from 14 times to 1.64 times the non-ATSI rate (Walker 1994).

Despite these attempts to 'explain away' over-representation, it continues to dominate analysis of Australian criminal justice especially for youthful indigenous Australians. In Queensland for 1993-94, Aboriginal and Islander youth aged 10 to 16 comprised 3.6 per cent of the population but 33.7 per cent of finalised court appearances or a rate per 1,000 which is 13.6 times that for non-ATSI youth (Criminal Justice Commission 1995). On a population basis, 70.4 of every 1,000 Aboriginal and Islander young people aged 10 to 16 years made at least one court appearance, which is 10 times greater than the non-ATSI juvenile population rate (Criminal Justice Commission 1995). Aboriginal and Islander youth in Queensland enter the system at a younger age with 56 per cent of 13 years olds on detention being Aboriginal or Islander and 81 per cent of 14 year olds under detention being ATSI (Criminal Justice Commission 1995). With respect to juvenile detention the over-representation is up to 21 times, with Queensland having the highest disproportionality of 41 times for 10 to 14 year olds detained in institutions (Atkinson 1996). It should be stressed again that over-representation for juveniles (those under 21 years) is greater than that for adults, from four times in Northern Territory to 48.4 times in

Queensland or 24.2 times for Australia as a whole for those aged 10 to 17 years (Walker & McDonald 1995, see also Atkinson 1994; Cain 1994).

Even where non-custodial options are used there is over-representation, such as in New South Wales where Aboriginal youth were over-cautioned with respect to their proportion in the population (Cunneen 1988). The massive over-representation and increasing criminalisation of Aboriginal youth is shown in Cunneen's work in the New South Wales courts where appearances for offensive behaviour rose by 255 per cent from 1985-86 to 1989-90 (Amnesty International 1993; see also Cunneen & Robb 1987). Importantly, increases in Aboriginal birth rates and a younger demographic profile suggest that, in the coming decades, more indigenous youth will be entering the 10 to 17 years age group where they are most likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system (Gray & Tesfaghiorghis 1991; McDonald 1995).

Of course, the findings regarding over-representation or disproportionality are not exclusive to indigenous Australians but have been demonstrated for minority groups in the United Kingdom, United States and some European nations like France and Holland (Hudson 1996). We are also mindful that the creation of a homogeneous racial category comes with problems of definition and Lombrosian overtones but we also concur that 'the effects of long-term discrimination, brutality, and oppression over generations cannot be captured by the most rigorous multiple regression analysis' (Roberts & Gabor 1990, 305). There is the danger though that like police, media and politicians, criminologists too may adopt the criminal justice 'framework in which the alleged "violent proclivities" of black people are taken as an established fact ... It is a culturalism which on occasion goes over into quasi-geneticism' (Gutzmore 1983, 26). On the other hand, issues of race (and also class and gender) are unable to be ignored when examining juvenile justice issues (Hagan 1985). Research from the United States would indicate that there is support for theoretical arguments that emphasise 'a generalized effect of

racial inequality on the offending behavior of residents of metropolitan communities (Messner & Golden 1992, 423).

With respect to predatory versus property crimes, previous studies suggest that, in terms of offence types, Aboriginal people are over-represented in good order or disorderly offences, traffic or driving-related charges but also in assault and domestic violence apprehensions (Hazlehurst & Dunn 1988; Walker 1987). There is some indication that over-representation in offence categories of 'justice procedures' and 'other against good order' has fallen since 1988 (Walker & McDonald 1995). With some changes since the RCIADIC recommendations (1991) such as decriminalisation of drunkenness in some jurisdictions, there has been a decrease in apprehensions for some more minor offence categories. Yet, recidivism remains high for Aboriginal groups (Broadhurst & Maller 1990) although other risk factors do need to be taken into account (see Roeger 1994).

Despite some recent changes in the offending profiles, official data are thought to most likely reflect more serious offending or 'a pattern of more persistent and frequent offending' (Farnworth et al 1994). However, the literature on representations of Aboriginal crime indicate that this may not always be the case for ATSI youth, where issues of visibility, overpolicing, extra-legal factors and so on are implicated in coming to official attention. So the patterns of offending require examination utilising self-report data from Aboriginal youth to determine what differences may exist in the types of frequencies of crimes committed. And, while some suggest that black youth may under-report delinquency (Huizinga & Elliott 1986); others have found this not to be the case (Farrington et al 1996), so that self-report data from our Sibling Study urban Aboriginal cohort are expected to yield comparable results.

While race differences are found in official data for reasons of bias, extra-legal factors, greater visibility and more intense surveillance by police there are also differences between previous and future criminal justice contact. It is

possible that the delinquency developmental life-course is accelerated for Aboriginal youth (see Farrington et al 1996) but there is also some evidence that there are greater offending rates. Those who enter the juvenile justice system at an early age are thought to have more sustained and serious criminal careers. 'For early starters, poor parenting and a defiant orientation led to early association with deviant peers, which in turn, led to early delinquency involvement' although some contradictory findings have also been demonstrated for late-starters (Dean et al 1996, 552). Potential differences in the pathways to initial offending and then what may sustain continued involvement in delinquent activities require exploration, especially with respect to peer, familial and ecological factors as have been included in The Sibling Study.

In addition, the interactions and experiences of young urban Aboriginal people with the juvenile justice system require exploration in our examination of pathways to delinquency. In general children do not understand court processes or structure. They believe that they are sent there for punishment and they feel fearful and powerless (O'Connor & Sweetapple 1988). Evidence of abuse and a resultant lack of trust certainly exists in the court system where there are expressed significant feelings of alienation; where cultural difference in relation to body language leads to misinterpretation; and where the justice system does not allow for significant differences in language and culture (Criminal Justice Commission 1996). Aboriginal youth also report the presence of violence as a routine part of their interaction with the police. Cunneen (1991, 6-7) says that over 88 per cent of juveniles interviewed said that they had been 'hit, punched, kicked or slapped' by police and that 81 per cent 'complained of the use of racist language' by police officers. The experience of policing involves 'the underlying threat of physical violence and the process of abuse [as] omnipresent' (O'Connor & Sweetapple 1988, ix). A recent ABS survey

(1995) found that in New South Wales 20 per cent of Aboriginal and Islander 15 to 24 year olds had been hassled by police in the previous year.

Given this picture, it is not surprising that a lack of trust in criminal justice processes is reflected throughout the literature on Aboriginal justice issues with the conclusion that the justice system is 'far less just for Aboriginal people' (Hulls 1993, 4) and that 'justice [does] not work the same way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as it [does] for non-Aboriginal people' (Hulls 1993, 5). As has been suggested (Miller 1993, 19) 'there is resistance by Aboriginal people to conforming and obeying the laws of white Australian society when they do not have a stake in it. Marginalised by disadvantage and discrimination, they have little commitment to white society's goals and methods'.

Yet, trust and mistrust are part of all social relationships (Freiberg 1995). If we are to approach a communitarian society then we require that trust at all levels (Braithwaite 1989). For young Aboriginal offenders, there is a clear message that they are not to be trusted even from a very young age where the legal and extra-legal factors give the impression that trust in them will not be upheld. This is demonstrated in the work by Gale et al (1990) that shows that arrest is the most frequent initial contact for Aboriginal youth and that alternative options are not often used. Communitarianism (at the societal level) and, more importantly, the interdependency (at the individual level) that are needed to support it at the everyday interaction level is critical (Braithwaite 1989). But as Potter (1992) has argued 'the self' is often omitted even when examining interdependencies at the individual level. To this end the Sibling Study incorporates aspects of 'the self' through its focus on psychological variables.

For Aboriginal people the focus to crime tends to be on causes (rather than symptoms) and the whole culture and community (rather than on individual offenders). Likewise, the concept of 'crime' is one that is problematic

for Aboriginal people because it has social and historical associations with police racism and violence, deaths in custody, dispossession, colonisation and so on (see Tonkin 1993). In light of this it is important to examine self-report data from young Aboriginal people because 'the social values which receive the protection of the criminal law are ultimately those which are treasured by dominant interest groups' (Sellin 1988, 12). The Sibling Study therefore focuses on 'abnormal conduct' or 'deviance' instead of 'crime' for the latter is officially designated whereas the former examines what is outside social or group norms and makes some concessions to incorporating different interpretations of what is crime.

Often violent crime is seen in 'modernisation' terms so that such acts occur because individuals are under pressure from their hostile, rapidly changing and impoverished environment (Reser 1990). Others see violence (towards self or others) as the result of 'brutalisation' so that these acts are the result of decades of violence performed upon Aboriginal people (Hunter 1993). Divergent yet etic explanations like these do not explain why some or many Aboriginal people do not regard some events as stressful and do not see these social problems in the same ways that researchers do (see Brady 1992). Cross-cultural psychology urges a reformation of the problems at least in the ways that they are described and analysed (Davidson 1992), so that violent events cannot simply be ignored but they must be explored in culturally meaningful ways. While we are not attempting to describe a 'race apart' the cultural as well as social, local, historical etc locations do differ and therefore result in different world views (see Bain 1992).

Because of a recognition of differences, while acknowledging commonalities, among Aboriginal groups dependent on regional location and other cultural, historical and linguistic factors, The Sibling Study has elected to focus exclusively on young urban Aboriginal youth in a metropolitan setting (see Merlan 1994). While this limits the generalisability of some of the

conclusions it also overcomes some problems by having a more homogeneous cohort (see Hendricks and Byers 1994). However, indigenous heterogeneity represents 'important cultural resilience, revival and distinctiveness' (Altman 1996, 11; see also Mellow 1996) and such diversity will be paramount in exploring the data from the Aboriginal cohort.

Colvin and Pauly's (1983) 24 step model seems to imply that the class position (including alienation) of parents in the workforce go on to reproduce in the family setting so that they use more coercive control in the family. These then result in poor bonds for juveniles who, because of their class position are likely to find themselves in coercive school control structures. They are also influenced by alienated peers and the poor opportunities available in the class-defined neighbourhoods. Having established these relationships they then imply that there are two possible consequential strands in their model: one is the interaction of alienated, unbonded and coercively controlled juveniles who may then get into serious, consistent, patterned and generally violent delinquency; the other strand is where juveniles are seeking opportunities and may only find deviant ones that then lead them into serious patterned instrumental delinquency. Likewise Sampson and Laub's (1993) re-analysis of the Gluecks' earlier work suggests that delinquency resulting from disadvantaged backgrounds can be ameliorated by strong family and school bonds; that delinquent behaviours have continuity through childhood and adolescence; and that formation of strong bonds to family or work later in the lifecourse can mediate the delinquent pathways. This type of modelling that includes the examination of individual, familial, community and criminal justice processing factors are all key features of The Sibling Study that is explained in more detail below

Despite the wealth of literature and research data on juvenile offending in general we are left with often competing types of explanations but the balance of the literature and research data endorses the view that there is a process occurring. What seems fairly well-documented is that most criminal careers are relatively short (Farrington 1986; Farrington 1992; Blumstein et al 1988; Nagin and Farrington 1992) with an average of about eight years and most ending by the ages of 25 to 30 years (Barnett, Blumstein & Farrington 1987; Blumstein and Cohen 1987; Land & Nagin 1996). Research directed to the identification of particular socialisation processes implicated in community crime creates needs to address both micro and macro issues, that is the individual, the family, the local community and the wider community (Clarke & Cornish 1985; Schwendinger & Schwendinger 1985; Cloward & Ohlin 1960). The identification of relevant factors at each of these levels then allows for the development of practical policy initiatives aimed at reducing crime rates.

The broader Sibling Study addresses the micro to macro factors, and through its longitudinal design, aims to examine the onset and potential cessation of delinquent behaviour. It forms a companion to the work done by the 'Human Development and Criminal Behaviour' project at Harvard School of Public Health by Felton Earls and Albert Reiss. That study utilises an accelerated longitudinal research design involving nine overlapping cohorts. The primary research goal for both projects is 'the relationship between individual traits, family and school environments, and community characteristics as they contribute to the development of criminal behaviours' (Earls & Reiss 1992, 3). In both instances the research designs are interdisciplinary in nature, have a developmental perspective and a preventive orientation. There are nevertheless differences in the way the Sibling Study

extends the US work and focuses more directly on the social and cultural factors implicated in delinquency, as well as a concentration on gender and race differences and the conditions giving rise to such differences. However, the focus is not on biological versus social but on the processes and interactions between them and other factors, and in particular the multiplicity of such influencing factors (see Jencks 1994).

The Sibling Study focuses on the etiology of delinquent behaviour in adolescence with four main aspects:

- it is based on a sample of over 1,000 mixed sibling pairs;

- it involves a semi longitudinal research design to examine changes over time;

- it focuses on the importance of socialisation processes in adolescence, especially the manner in which young men and young women learn their social roles; and

- it concerns the generation of research findings which can readily be used as the basis for practical preventative initiatives to be instituted at the community level.

In examining the etiology of delinquent behaviours in adolescence the broader Sibling Study addresses three key research questions:

- What non-biological attitudinal factors can be identified as important determinants of juvenile delinquency?

- What factors of community ecology can be identified as important determinants of juvenile delinquency?

- What is the nature of the interaction between community ecology and attitudinal factors which serves to increase or decrease levels of juvenile delinquency?

The research design of the Sibling Study involves examination of a range of exogenous, independent, structural, individual, mediating and dependent factors.

Exogenous, Independent, Structural, Individual, Mediating & Dependent Factors

class	age	self-report delinquency
gender	social networks	punishment issues
ethnicity	family dynamics	satisfaction with life & self
community ecology	school processes	personality

Class is measured by educational and occupational levels of parents or guardians and nature of household material possessions. Community ecology is defined as a set of neighbourhood characteristics and availability of and accessibility to a range of public facilities. Social networks explores the strength of social ties to friends and the extent of friendship networks. Family dynamics indexes the levels of affection and supervision within the home, the nature of sibling relationships, parental involvement in child social networks and parental control over friendship patterns. Personality variables include impulsivity in pleasure seeking, response to frustration, egocentrism, moral development and conscientiousness. School factors include stability of schooling, interest and nature of commitment to schooling, and concerns about occupational futures. Self-reported delinquency is measured by the Australian Self-report Delinquency Scale developed by Mak (1993).

By explicitly incorporating these factors within a research design with a longitudinal component, it is possible to directly address the issue of how it is that certain individuals from particular locations within a social system acquire and then articulate certain attitudinal or personality factors in ways which

either increase or decrease the likelihood of their becoming involved in acts of delinquency which may then lead to more serious criminal acts.

The broader research project commenced in January 1994 and the first wave concluded in December 1996.[1] The research design incorporates four discrete cohorts — School, Family Services, Community, Urban Aboriginal — with female/male sibling pairs. Individual interviews and focus group sessions were part of the process to develop the major instrument. The survey instrument is a 65 page questionnaire with 750 variables, which incorporates 14 existing scales as well as newly-developed ones. The major quantitative component took place with interviews conducted on an individual basis with trained interviewers. There was then a confirmatory qualitative research phase, before proceeding to the second wave of interviews which will commence in early 1998.[2]

It should be noted that the inclusion of the urban Aboriginal cohort is particularly important with respect to the explanatory power of the overall research design. However, the sibling criteria was unable to be achieved for the urban Aboriginal sub-sample. The data collection for the Aboriginal cohort, which received funding from the Criminology Research Council, involved two phases in this part of the project: first the conducting of the interviews and completion of questionnaires with the urban Aboriginal sample; followed by data entry, cleaning and preliminary analysis. The two years of the project were funded for $34,755 and in terms of acquittal of the research funds it should be noted that two-thirds of the money allocated was paid to Aboriginal interviewers (as consulting fees, briefing, research training and instrument development, pilot testing, sample identification and on a per interview basis) for the data collection process and a further third allocated to data analysis tasks.

Initially, The Sibling Study Consortium negotiated a collaborative arrangement with the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research

Association (FAIRA) in Brisbane who were to administer the questionnaires. Community leaders within the Aboriginal community were extensively consulted regarding the objectives and research design of the study and this consultative process continued throughout the pilot testing and data collection phase of the project. Unfortunately, a change in the Management Committee at FAIRA resulted in their withdrawal from the arrangement. After considerable difficulty, and a number of 'false starts', the National President of the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee, Ms Cheryl Buchanan, organised for an Aboriginal Elder and a young Aboriginal woman to undertake the selection and interviewing of the urban Aboriginal and Islander youth. These two Aboriginal interviewers not only undertook the sample identification and interviewing of respondents but also in collaboration with the project team developed a more culturally appropriate research instrument which could utilise oral interviewing strategies more effectively than that possible with the standard research instrument.

The interviews were carried out in one suburban location in Brisbane and were conducted in a park with the interviewer approaching individuals and then utilising a snowball technique to locate additional participants. The questionnaire data for this cohort were completed by the interviewers, rather than being self-administered by participants as with most in the other cohorts.[3] To date, the urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents' data have been coded, entered, cleaned and incorporated within the larger Sibling Study data set. Preliminary analyses of these data have commenced. Details of these general findings are presented in the following section.

It is already apparent from the preliminary analyses that the time-consuming procedures adopted for this study have yielded important insights into the attitudes, motivations and behaviours of Aboriginal and Islander adolescents. Given the over-representation of this group in terms of formal contacts with the juvenile justice system, having comprehensive data relating to non-offending and therefore, usually invisible Aboriginal and Islander young people provides a unique and important counterbalance to perceptions of this group which are too often contaminated by both overt and covert racism. Details of the potential policy implications are contained in the final section of this report, but here some selected descriptive statistics of the data collected in the CRC funded study are provided.[4]

DEMOGRAPHIC/BACKGROUND DESCRIPTION

There are a total of 119 respondents in the ATSI cohort. Of these, only three have self-identified as being of Torres Strait Islander origin, so the sample is essentially of urban Aboriginal youth. The cohort is slightly younger than the other groups in the Sibling Study with 43 (36%) aged 11 to 14 years; 47 (40%) aged 15 or 16 years; and 29 (24%) aged 17 or 18 years. There are more males (60%) than females (40%) in the sub-sample. Almost one-third were not currently at school, with almost half (55, 46%) being in junior high school or upper primary and 16 (14%) being in their senior years of high school (with two respondents engaged in tertiary studies and 10 per cent not providing a codable response or no answer). Of the 119 young Aboriginal people, 87 per cent currently have no paid employment, and of those who did they tended to have part-time jobs with only two respondents in full-time work.

Over half the sub-sample have adult carers who left school before completing Grade 12 for both primary male and primary female carers (48% and 50% respectively) but a large proportion provided no response for this item (37% and 28% respectively). Only 16 (13%) had primary female adult carers who went to TAFE, university or college and 9 (7%) with male adult carers who went to TAFE, university or college.[5] Half the respondents lived in households where the primary carers were employed but this means that almost half (45%) did not. In this group, 86 per cent lived with their parents or other adult carers; and the majority (65%) felt that their adult carers were the ones who cared for them the most.

PERSONALITY OR ATTITUDINAL FACTORS

Most of the young people (70%) believed that their adult carers tried quite hard or very hard to teach right and wrong. They tended to take the same view of right and wrong as their adult carers with 14% stating that they 'always' took the same view, 33 per cent stating 'often' and 31 per cent saying that they agreed 'some of the time'. In terms of the same view of right and wrong compared with their siblings they report agreement 'always' for 16 per cent of the sub-sample, 'often' for 28 per cent and 'some of the time' for 25 per cent; while with friends the percentage agreeing is 14 per cent 'always', 31 per cent 'often' and 31 per cent 'some of the time'. Essentially, the responses from these young people suggest that they have independent views that are not reliant on adult carers or peers in general.

With respect to their ethnic or racial allegiances, the young people in this survey responded overwhelmingly (81%) that they felt they did belong to a particular racial or ethnic group. Being identified as Australian was important to 11 per cent; being a member of their particular racial group was important to 39 per cent; and not differentiating between groups was important to 34 per cent of this group of young ATSI people (with 16% not responding to this

item).[6] When asked if they felt separated from, or not part of, the wider Australian community, 50 per cent suggested that they did feel isolated sometimes or often and 34 per cent responded 'hardly ever' (with 16% again providing no answer to this item).

The Sibling Study instrument contains a number of question sets that relate to psychological, attitudinal or personality factors. One set, for example, asks for agree/disagree responses to a range of 19 statements such as: I find it easy to trust other people; excitement and adventure are more important than anything else; overall, I'm a worthwhile person. Responses to these are tabulated in Table 1. In general it seems that the Aboriginal youth are present rather than future oriented but are realistic in their views. They are honest with their parents, believe that peers are important, believe that they are generally outgoing, are concerned with how others view them and yet have a strong sense of self. These beliefs are counterpoise their lack of trust in others and their disposition to not seek help readily.[7]

Another set of items that deal with psychological, attitudinal or personality factors contains a series of 20 statements to which respondents were asked for levels of agreement. The responses of the urban Aboriginal cohort are displayed in Table 2. Again, responses on these items suggest that these young people possess strong peer loyalty, concern for the views of others, a present orientation, trust in their parents and yet a lack of trust in others. They seek active rather than passive pursuits, and tend to engage in risk taking or reckless behaviours.

TABLE 1. Percentage responses of the urban Aboriginal cohort to items reflecting personality and attitudinal factors (n=119).

STATEMENTS	AGREE %	DISAGREE %	NA %
I don't like having to try my hardest to do things	54	40	6
We would be better off without the police	45	49	6
There should be as many women in important jobs as men	76	17	7
I find it easy to trust other people	34	60	7
I don't think much about the future	40	54	6
If I upset people, it's their problem, not mine	29	63	8
Parents are out for themselves	23	71	6
It's important to me that people like me	63	29	8
I feel silly talking about my problems to other people	59	36	5
I try not to do things that I know are hard	43	46	11
Excitement and adventure are more important than anything else	40	54	6
I'm easier to get to know than most people	61	34	5
It's okay to break the law if you can get away with it	39	51	10
Overall, I'm a worthwhile person	77	19	4
I do things which make me feel good now even if I know I'll feel bad about it later	59	29	·12
My mind often wanders when people are talking to me	57	37	6
If you have to break rules or the law to keep your friends they're not worth having	56	35	8
It's important to be honest with your parents, even if they get upset or you get punished	75	18	8
You sometimes have to lie to stay out of trouble	71	24	5

PUNISHMENT, OFFENDING AND JUVENILE JUSTICE ISSUES

In a series of questions about punishment the young urban Aboriginal cohort reported the following responses about what they thought should happen if someone does something wrong. In general, the Aboriginal youth felt that punishment was necessary but that it was important to find out why an act was committed and that restitution should form part of the punishment. They indicate that options of community service and a framework of restorative justice provide policy avenues that should be explored further, even if exclusively, for urban Aboriginal youth.

TABLE 2. Percentage responses of the urban Aboriginal cohort to items reflecting personality and attitudinal factors (n=119).

STATEMENTS	AGREE %	DISAGREE %	NA %
I lose my temper pretty easily	59	32	10
I don't mind depending on other people	36	55	10
Parents usually love their children	76	13	11
I'm more interested in what's happening now than what might happen in the future	62	27	11
I often do things without stopping to think about it	66	23	11
I try and get what I want even if it causes problems for other people	34	54	13
It is best if men work and women stay at home and look after the family	32	56	12
People complain that I don't pay attention	50	38	12
When I'm having an argument it's hard for me to stay calm	57	28	15
You sometimes have to play dirty to win	42	43	15
It's OK to lie if it keeps your friends out of trouble	57	31	12
I like to know what other people are thinking before I make up my mind	68	17	15
Sometimes it's exciting to do things even if they might get me into trouble	60	29	11
I like doing easy things best	65	21	14
I look after myself first even if it makes things hard for other people	50	35	14
I feel better doing something active rather than just sitting and thinking	63	25	12
Mothers should have more help with children so they can go out and get a paid job	75	13	12
I have more energy than most other people my age	55	32	13
Sometimes I do things that are a bit risky	74	16	10
I'm not sure how close I want to get to other people	56	32	12

Generally the urban ATSI youth were divided on whether the law treats people fairly or not with 37 (31%) agreeing, 58 (49%) disagreeing and 20% not answering the question. Over half (55%) agreed that they sometimes do something risky for fun with 24% disagreeing with this statement and 20 per cent not providing a response (see Table 4). These data should be interpreted in conjunction with the items presented earlier reflecting their poor appraisal of police and attitudes to law-breaking (see Table 1).

TABLE 3. Percentage responses of the urban Aboriginal cohort to items reflecting attitudes to punishment (n=119).

STATEMENTS	AGREE %	DISAGREE %	NA %
If it doesn't affect me then I don't care what happens to them	50	34	17
They should be punished	65	16	19
They should be made to fix things up again	74	10	16
They should not be punished. People should try and understand why they did it	45	33	22
People should try and understand why that person did it but also punish them	72	10	18

There are a number of questions within the Sibling Study instrument that elicit responses on self-report delinquency of peers or self. For this sub-sample, 61 per cent of the respondents report that their friends have done something against the law (with 20% not providing an answer). Of the total sample, 11 per cent suggest that their peers have broken the law once or twice, 14% respond that it is between three and five times and 35 per cent indicate that their friends have broken the law six or more times (with 40% no response or not applicable on this question).

TABLE 4. Percentage responses of the urban Aboriginal cohort to items reflecting attitudes to the law and risk-taking (n=119).

STATEMENTS	AGREE %	DISAGREE %	NA %
Law treats people fairly	31	49	20
Do something risky for fun	55	24	20

The self-reported delinquency of the respondents is given is Table 5. Between 30 and 50 per cent report status offences (like driving unlicensed or skipping school); around 40 per cent report being involved in drug-related

behaviours (using marijuana or purchasing alcohol); over one-third report being involved in a violent offence (like a group fight); and over one-third concede stealing or property offences.

TABLE 5. Percentage responses of the urban Aboriginal cohort to the Australian Self-report Delinquency Scale statements (n=119).

STATEMENTS	YES %	NO %	NO ANSWER %
drink drive	14	73	13
race cars	10	76	14
took car	24	62	14
stole from car/bike	15	71	14
stole bike	18	67	15
R-rated film	24	61	15
drive unreg car	18	69	13
drive unlicensed	36	50	13
not kept promise	53	34	13
bought alcohol	45	41	13
drink alcohol pub etc	38	49	13
not paid entrance fee	28	57	15
skipped class/wagged school	55	33	13
run away from home	32	55	13
shoplifted	42	45	13
stole less than $10	36	50	13
stole $10 or more	39	48	13
been late	64	17	19
break enter steal	36	48	16
stolen from dispenser	24	61	15
damaged other's property	33	55	13
damaged property by fire	13	71	16
damaged public property	28	60	13
damaged school property	36	50	13
graffiti in public place	31	55	14
gone against parents	61	24	14
been in group fight	48	39	13
beat someone up	38	50	13
used weapon in fight	15	72	13
forced someone to give things	25	61	13
used marijuana or hash	44	44	13
used ecstasy, acid, speed	11	75	14
used medication for fun	15	71	14
forced someone to do sex thing	3	82	14
used telephone for tricks	28	57	15
made nasty phone calls	19	66	15
told a lie to someone	72	14	13

In this cohort there were 43 (36%) who had been to a police station to receive a serious warning by the police and 41 (35%) who had attended court because of something they did. The age at which they first had been to court for the one-third who responded that they had ranged from 10 years to 16 years. Thirty-four (29%) had been to a watchhouse and 28 (24%) had been in a detention centre and the number of times that the one-quarter who had been in detention ranged from one to 17 times, with most of those with detention experience (12% of total sub-sample) having been once or twice.

TABLE 6.   Percentage responses of the urban Aboriginal cohort to items about contact with the juvenile justice system (n=119).

STATEMENTS	YES %	NO %	NA %
Been given a serious warning from police	36	51	13
Been to a court attendance	35	55	10
Been to a watchhouse	29	61	10
Been in a detention centre	24	67	9

The young people were also asked whether they had been a victim of crime with 11 (9%) responding that they had, 69 per cent who had not and 22 per cent who did not complete this question. When asked if anything bad had happened to them in the past, ie something that affected them for a long time, 16 (13%) responded that this was the case with 55 per cent saying that they had not had such an experience and 32 per cent failing to answer this item.

TABLE 7.   Percentage responses of the urban Aboriginal cohort to items about victimisation (n=119).

STATEMENTS	YES %	NO %	NA %
Been a victim of crime	9	69	22
Something bad happened in past	13	55	32

Overall, these data describe a cohort that includes slightly more males and a slightly younger profile than for the overall Sibling Study respondents. Most in the urban Aboriginal sub-sample lived with adult carers and have parents with low education and high unemployment. Most identify fairly strongly with their Aboriginality and do not feel part of the Australian community — they feel separate from the mainstream.

While only preliminary analysis has been performed, the findings suggest that Aboriginal youth are present rather than future oriented but are realistic in their views. They are honest with their parents, believe that peers are important, believe that they are generally outgoing, are concerned with how others view them and yet have a strong sense of self. These beliefs are counterbalanced by a lack of trust in others and the view that they don't seek help readily. They seek active rather than passive pursuits, and tend to engage in risk taking or reckless behaviours.

This young urban Aboriginal cohort felt that punishment was necessary but that it was important to find out why an act was committed and that restitution should form part of the punishment. Generally these youth were divided on whether the law treats people fairly or not. Most respondents report that their friends have done something against the law, with over one-third indicating that their friends have broken the law six or more times. The self-reported delinquency of the respondents show that between 30 and 50 per cent report status offences (like driving unlicensed or skipping school); around 40 per cent report being involved in drug-related behaviours (using marijuana or purchasing alcohol); over one-third report being involved in a violent offence (like a group fight); and over one-third concede stealing or property offences. The policy and theoretical implications of these preliminary findings are discussed below.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This research has both policy oriented and theoretical outcomes. It is relevant and contributes to the prevention of criminal behaviour. In policy terms the objective of the research is the generation of detailed information which can readily be used as a basis for initiatives to be instituted at the community level. The study will also provide practical information useful to the Commonwealth in developing its national crime prevention strategy, particularly with respect to the concerns of the Aboriginal community. The objective of these practical initiatives is the mitigation of factors which elevate juvenile delinquency and the promotion of factors which reduce delinquency. In practice this would mean that the findings emerging from the research will provide local authorities with a greater awareness and understanding of the factors of community infrastructure (ecology) implicated in raising or lowering delinquency rates.

These data need to be addressed in more detail than the descriptive picture provided here. However, there is firstly confirmatory data on comparative disadvantage, on the extent of extended family networks and relatively high levels of self-report offending in certain predicted categories for the Aboriginal cohort. The data presented here confirm some patterns of contemporary economic and family structures within Aboriginal Australia. Aboriginal families tend to be female-headed, fluid, younger adults, more children, often multi-generational and multiple families within the one household, lower levels of education and employment and where child-rearing responsibilities are shared, with about one-third living in urban areas (Daly & Smith 1996; Madden 1995). More importantly, the data suggest two areas to explore further with respect to policy options: that there is evidence for an 'oppositional culture' operating; and that elements of restorative justice are of significance to young urban Aboriginal people.

Restorative justice, republican or communitarian approaches have gained credence in recent years for they place crime and criminals in a social rather than a legal context, attempt to empower those who are marginalised, are community oriented, offer a victim focus, recognise the harms done by incarceration, and account for the harm done rather than only focusing on law-breaking (La Prairie 1995). While restorative justice 'programs' like family group or community accountability conferences will not address the inequalities and oppressions for Aboriginal youth, they do go some way to providing opportunities to exercise measures of control and to operate in culturally appropriate ways (Braithwaite & Mugford 1994). It is clear from The Sibling Study data that Aboriginal youth do see relations with others as paramount and that outcomes addressing these factors are strongly indicated (Sauve 1996).

Like other indigenous cultures, Aboriginal society is based on the collective (not individual), it is restorative (not retribütive) and it has a decentralised (not centralised) structure (see Consedine 1995). 'There is resistance by Aboriginal people to conforming and obeying the laws of white Australian society when they do not have a stake in it' (Miller 1993, 19). While more sophisticated and comparative analysis is requiredon our data, it seems that there is evidence to suggest that aspects of an 'oppositional culture' are present.

A recent investigation of the cultural capital hypothesis (Johnson et al 1995) suggests that geographical factors (where born), historical factors (related to slavery) and family status (parents on welfare) were significant. However, these 'variables disappeared once statistical controls for a range of human capital (education and marital status and social status (race, skin tone and criminal record) variables are incorporated into the model' (1995, 15). In particular these authors found that a combination of race plus skin tone (that is an obviously black person) meant less likelihood of work, and hence support

that 'the crime epidemic is related, in part, to the fact that the kinds of personal resources and so-called mediating institutions that once encouraged young men to pursue mainstream avenues of economic and social mobility, and that discouraged them from engaging in dysfunctional behavior, are no longer effective or available in inner-city communities' (Johnson et al 1995, 15).

Sherman's works on sanctions (1993) notes that punishments have 'opposite or different effects in different social settings, on different kinds of offenders and offenses, and at different levels of analysis. This pattern is found in different populations at the individual level of analysis as well as at the micro level (small group), macro level (large collectivity), and simultaneously across levels' (1993, 449). Sanctions are more effective for particular (conforming) personality types, more effective for the employed, better at deterring older people, and more effective when the law is judged as fair (see Blackwell et al 1994). Sherman (1993) draws on economic theory, political science and sociology to state that there may be crime as political protest, crime because of a breakdown of legitimacy and crime as a result of alienation. He goes on to note that opportunity and displacement also occur where often both property and predatory crimes are within group.

Defiance theory (Sherman 1993) is not just about crime and punishment. It incorporates 'the conduct of everyday discourse with alienated persons who react with indignation to any hint of social disapproval' (1993, 466). The Sibling Study data show that disrespect for the police and from the police is prevalent for ATSI youth, and that this has been found elsewhere with drug use (Brady 1992). 'Defiance is the net increase in the prevalence, incidence, or seriousness of future offending against a sanctioning community caused by a proud, shameless reaction to the administration of a criminal sanction' (Sherman 1993, 459) and it can be specific (individual) or general (collective level) and direct (against punishment agent) or indirect (displaced).

Peer networks and support from family and friends is vitally important (Thornberry et al 1994; Rankin & Kern 1994). Indeed there is some evidence for a peer-cluster theory (see Gorman & White 1995) operating where specific offence categories are engaged in but not others. For Aboriginal youth it is important not to stand out or speak up (Muecke 1992). 'Greed, or failure to share property, is an element which articulates stories throughout Aboriginal Australia, forming a major element of Aboriginal ideology and standing directly in opposition to English common law which gives priority to the possessor of property' (Muecke 1992, 156). While this perspective is often described as 'romantic' or frozen in a traditional past, the urban youth responding to the Sibling Study instrument reflect these views about the importance of the group over that of the individual.

Aboriginal law (in its broadest sense) is not just about wrongdoing, but encompasses rules for interacting with others and the environment on a daily basis, for defining and sanctioning wrongdoing and for higher order concerns — a prescription for religion, punishment, relationships and daily life (McLaughlin 1996; Dudgeon & Oxenham 1989). So that reciprocity, religion and the ultimate significance of the group are three factors within the Law and culture that are totally at odds with Anglo-Celtic criminal justice (McLaughlin 1996; Beckett 1991; Birdsall 1991). The surviving commonalities involve sets of behaviours and beliefs, importance of kinship ties, ethic of sharing, socialisation practices, use of Aboriginal language or Aboriginal English, and mobility patterns based on regional or social networks (Smith 1992).

Social interaction theories stress that status or honour is weighed against display of violence generally to 'impress' a third party; while cultural theories (like differential association) imply that the offender comes from a violent milieu in which 'values are derived from a culture that promotes disputatiousness' (La Vigne 1994, 110). From the Sibling Study cohort it would appear that both these approaches are operating: there are elevated levels of

violence, some of which can be related to traditional social control mechanisms or ways of relating to others; and there is also strong peer and family honour linked with rites of passage and involving spending time in courts, watchhouses or detention centres.

Within these Sibling Study data there is scope to explore further the proximal causes of crime to include situational crime prevention or rational choice-opportunity approaches. Qualitative data have been collected from youth in detention centres and, in the future, these will enable an examination of the 'sequential dependencies within and between elements' of offences or 'the situational contingencies — situated motives; opportunities in terms of settings, victims and targets; the presence of co-offenders; and facilitators' and so on (Cornish 1994, 156). It is posited that some of these situational factors will differ for the ATSI youth, particularly the presence of peers and the settings in which offences occur and that these must be explored if we are to arrive at workable crime prevention and control solutions.

To advance our understanding it is also important to investigate within group differences, especially as they may relate to offending versus non-offending, rather than continually focusing on majority and minority cultures (Mann 1993; Free 1996). The Sibling Study will achieve this in-group analyses but the results are not reported here. In particular, a second CRC funded study is currently exploring influences to offending and non-offending paying particular attention to peer networks.

Few attempts have been made 'to assess comprehensively ... the nature of Aboriginality — the differing kinds of character, personality, ideologies, activities and structural locations of Aborigines, or of the different kinds of ethos exhibited by Aboriginal communities and groups' (Thiele 1984, 166). While the enormous diversity within Aboriginal societies in Australia must be acknowledged (geographically, socially, educationally, aspirationally, and so on) there is an 'otherness' that has been and continues to be created and

developed, not only built on a traditional past, not only added to by the experience of colonisation but also exhibited and developing in the contemporary setting.

In returning to over-representation we concur that 'patterns of policing black and other minority communities are associated (1) with historical relations between the communities, (2) with whether the black population in a state or country is perceived as threatening to public order, and (3) with factors such as the level of participation of minorities in the political structure of the area' (Hudson 1996, xiii). But both the official statistics and self-report studies show greater victimisation for blacks and that there is likely to be a hidden rate of victimisation that is not taken seriously by authorities so that 'black neighbourhoods may be over-controlled, but they are under-protected' (Hudson 1996, xiv; see also Jefferson 1988; Di Iulio 1994; Tracy 1987). There is some evidence within the Sibling Study data that this 'under-protection' is operating and this will be explored more fully in the future.

We have yet to explore in detail the findings from the ecological elements of The Sibling Study data as they relate to Aboriginal youth in particular. However, there does seem to be some evidence that 'extracommunity dynamics' — neighbourhood change, prevalence of delinquent gangs, law enforcement practices, level of social service, 'broken window' etc may be operating in the urban areas surveyed (see Bursik & Grasmick 1995).

The Sibling Study has also returned psychology to the study of crime (Andrews and Bonta 1994). In recent empirical work on the personality-crime link, it has been demonstrated that low constraint and high negative emotionality were the most significant personality traits for both black and white youths (Caspi et al 1994). 'The positive correlations with Negative Emotionality suggested that delinquent adolescents were prone to respond to frustrating events with strong negative emotions, to feel stressed or harassed,

and to approach interpersonal relationships with an adversarial attitude. The negative correlations with Constraint suggested that delinquent adolescents were likely to be impulsive, danger-seeking, and rejecting of conventional values' (Caspi et al 1994, 185). Here, it is clear that elevated self-esteem and a sense of independence operates alongside strong support from peers and family.

The life-course approach to delinquency is an important development in social control theories for it does take into account the social structure and social processes, it emphasises the continuities of behaviours, and it also stresses the significance of potential change. But if we accept that there is an oppositional culture (cf Groves & Corrado 1993) operating for Aboriginal youth then policies that essentially are assimilationist (that is trying to instil adherence to social goals and attachment to social institutions) will ultimately fail.

A final area to explored in our future analysis of the data for the Aboriginal cohort is an examination of the public health approach to violence so that risk factors like structural and cultural, criminogenic commodities, and situational conditions are isolated to show how many incidents of violence are 'accidental' because of the convergence of these factors. Recent studies (Wilson 1988; Atkinson 1990) are placing emphasis on the violence occurring within Aboriginal communities and the 'under-protection' alluded to above (Hudson 1996). The public health approach recommends public education rather than resorting to the law, early intervention where possible, changing the broader cultural and social structures and manipulating the environment to reduce the injury from violence risk (Moore 1995). By taking a public health approach we create a new window on the problem (by engaging local doctors and hospitals); we provide new or more extensive data (methods and research from epidemiology); and we encourage a new constituency to be interested in solving crime problems (not just relying on the criminal justice system).

*   The initial Sibling Study Consortium and the grant applicants are:
     Professor John Western, Professor Ross Homel, Professor Paul Wilson,
     Dr David Brereton and Professor Ian O'Connor. This report was
     prepared for the Consortium by Ms Robyn Lincoln.

1.   The Sibling Study has been funded by the Australian Research Council
     Collaborative Grants; personnel and infrastructural support from the
     Research and Coordination Division of the Queensland Criminal Justice
     Commission; the current Criminology Research Council grant (3/94-95);
     and a subsequent Criminology Research Council grant (18/96-97).
     Additional funding for the second wave of data collection has been
     awarded by the ARC Collaborative Grants; the CJC, the Queensland
     Corrective Services Commission and the Queensland Department of
     Justice.

2.   A more complete description of The Sibling Study cohorts, the
     questionnaire and scales utilised, and the sampling procedures is
     contained in the Codebook produced by the Consortium.

3.   It must be stressed that a condition of gathering the urban Aboriginal
     data in this method was that no results would be released publicly until
     they have been reviewed by the Aboriginal consultants to the project.

4.   Data reported here are descriptive only of the Aboriginal cohort and no
     comparisons with the other sub-samples are offered. However,
     preliminary analysis has already been conducted on these comparisons
     and some indication will be noted in the conclusions/policy
     implications.

5.   A copy of the Sibling Study questionnaire instrument is available from
     the Consortium project office.

6.   In these preliminary data it should be noted that a 'no answer' response
     includes 'not applicable' responses or in some cases uncodable
     responses.

7.   Further analyses on the personality and attitudinal scales is being carried
     out for a subsequent CRC grant analysing influences on offending and
     especially peer networks.

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