## EDITOR'S FORUM

## RASCALS IN PARADISE: URBAN GANGS IN
## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Nand E. Hart Nibbrig
*George Mason University*
*Fairfax, Virginia*

This article identifies indignation, a sense of injustice growing out of Papua New Guinea's colonial past and continuing into the present, as a basis for urban gang activity there. This sense of injustice grows out of violated personal expectations regarding benefits and opportunities associated with urban life. Unfulfilled expectations lead gang members, called Rascals, to redistribute opportunities through gang activities. In other words, as the supply of labor is unable to be absorbed by the formal structures, workers move to the nonformal structures --that is, gangs--where the demand for labor is greater. The very use of the term "Rascals" by Papua New Guinea's urban youth gangs itself captures the normative deviance that accompanies the shift into the informal sector.

Urban gang activity in Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, began to be noticed in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In retrospect a pattern of expanded activities and organizational change has come to characterize the growth and institutional viability of these urban gangs, whose members are collectively called Rascals. The term "Rascals" was used first during the early 1960s to describe youth gangs in the Port Moresby area and was appropriated by urban gangs themselves as a badge of notoriety and respect (Dorney 1990:301). Rascals now exist in virtually all urban areas of this relatively new Melanesian country.[1]

Though describing the emergence of urban gangs in the rapidly growing areas surrounding Port Moresby is easy, stating much categorically about Rascalism is more difficult. At this juncture we know pre-

cious little about one of the most important social movements occurring in this resource-rich and socially complex island state (Harris 1988b). Nevertheless, our knowledge and information base has grown over the last fifteen years so that we may now begin to speculate about the sources of Rascalism, why Rascalism is important, what may affect its growth, and how this fledgling country will be able to cope with Rascalism and the transforming effects of rapid urbanization in its cities (Mannur 1987; Munro 1987).

Most observers agree that gang activity in Papua New Guinea has increased in the last ten years. Yet those same observers admit this conclusion rests on inadequate data (Clifford, Morauta, and Stuart 1984: ii). For example, crime levels and criminal activities connected with Rascals are difficult to assess accurately, because most authoritative studies of law and order reveal that the police understate the crime rate throughout the country (Morauta 1986:6; Dinnen 1986:85; Taison 1986). Police crime statistics contradict the general perception in the community that things have gotten much worse, not better (Morauta 1986:28-44). This suggests that at best police information on criminal activities is suspect; more likely it is seriously flawed. One close observer estimated that less than 3 percent of breaking and entering cases resulted in arrests (Harris 1988b:20-21). As murky as our factual lenses are, we can still assert that urban crime and related urban gang activity appear to be increasing. Correspondingly, the police seem to have little or no impact on what urban gangs do.

This article seeks to identify the sources of Rascalism in Port Moresby, describe organizational change within the gangs and link these changes with changes in Rascal activities, and finally speculate on the future of Papua New Guinea's urban gangs. Although there are multiple reasons for the development of urban gangs (Dinnen 1986:81), what is stressed here is the significance of the nation's recent colonial past and the sense of injustice or indignation that continues to fuel the activities of young men adversely affected by the modern cash economy.

This is also a time of crisis for the new indigenous elite who assumed the instruments of government after what appeared to be Australia's hasty retreat from its brief colonizing mission. This still-nascent elite appears still to lack an authority replacement capacity--that is, the power to effectively enforce authority--especially with regards Papua New Guinea's urban masses. We know from experience elsewhere that the urbanization process not only loosens existing traditional structures, but also inhibits the development of emerging modern institutions.[2]

Knowledge of this contemporary context, underpinned by reference

to a recent colonial past, enables us to approach an understanding of the emergence and growth of urban gangs in Port Moresby and in other cities as well. Framing the discussion in this way further illuminates the adaptive capacities of Rascal organization and the indignation driving that process. Indignation--the internalization of historic wrongs, a heightened sense of injustice--is the emotion that provides the bridge from the social psychological state of relative deprivation to its political expression. Seen from this perspective, Rascalism also takes on a comparative dimension and provides insight into male youth behavior in urban contexts around the globe.

### Rascal Activities and Organizational Complexity

Since the late 1950s and early 1960s, Rascal activity in and around Port Moresby has increased to the point that in 1985 a national emergency was declared. As the scope of the gangs' activities has grown, so have their capacities to organize and direct those activities. Rascals, along with the army, constitute one of the few viable interethnic organizations in a country continually threatened by ethnic separatism and the centrifugal pulls of regionalism as evidenced by the Bougainville crisis, which threatens the economic viability of the national economy (Larmour n.d.). But it was not always that way. In the earliest phases of gang formation, Rascals came together haphazardly and for short periods of time to engage in ad hoc petty street crime, vandalism, and mutual protection (Harris 1988b:4). Gang leadership likewise took on an ad hoc character befitting the discontinuous formation of gangs themselves. That is to say, leadership during the early stages of gang formation appeared to be changeable and prevailed only as long as individuals were able to dominate others and remain active in matters at hand.

This pattern of domination is reminiscent of the traditional role of the big-man in many, if not most, of the traditional societies that still constitute approximately 80 percent of Papua New Guinea's human landscape (Chowning 1977:42-46). The gang leader, like the traditional big-man, was involved not only in dominating others, but in sharing as well. Thus, the gang leader is a modern restatement of a traditional system of authority. Having command over physical resources, themselves perishable and not consumable by an individual, he distributes these resources as a means to maintain power and press obligations on others (Griffin 1988).

Yet, in the earliest days of gang formation in Port Moresby, there were few if any organizational structures to speak of, either to perpetuate

leadership or to give individual gangs what we have come to recognize as a source of their strength: organizational adaptability and internal coherence. If organization follows function, then the weak, loose organizational structures characteristic of the early 1960s correspond to what Rascals were about: the acquisition of self-esteem for members and formation of an organizational basis for occasional forays into the world of street crime to acquire food, cash, and beer. The consumption of alcohol, especially beer, in short time came to define manhood. In retrospect drinking seems to be linked with the explosion of Rascal activity in the early 1960s.[3]

Noticeable changes in Rascal activities appeared between 1968 and 1975 in Port Moresby and its neighboring communities of Boroko, Gehrehu, Cordons, and Hohola. Although acquiring reliable crime-rate statistics is difficult at best, the number of children charged with breaking and entering appears to have suddenly escalated (Harris 1988b:11). Rascals not only increased the volume of their activities, they expanded the scope well beyond the settlement areas in and around Port Moresby, a clear indication that Rascals were into more lucrative hunting grounds, the "better neighborhoods." This sounded a warning that no part of the Port Moresby area would be safe from organized criminal activities.

The movement into more affluent and respectable neighborhoods seemed motivated less by aggressiveness and more by potential economic gain. This change in the locale of *"bisnis"* activities was based on commercial calculation, itself an indication of growing sophistication among the leadership, and set the stage for more concerted, if ill-planned, attacks on Rascal organizations by the police constabularies. To some the police themselves constitute part of the problem of containing criminal activities. The police were not prepared for independence, especially for the rapid urban development so characteristic of a new nation's capital, and certainly not prepared for the rise of organized urban gangs (Clifford, Morauta, and Stuart 1984:28-44).

Looking back, it appears that as long as confined within the boundaries of native settlements and as long as the victims were nationals, Rascal criminal activities excited little alarm from the privileged. This changed, however, when Rascals expanded the scope and contagion of their activities, generating in turn pressures for containment from individual and institutional sources of community power.[4] One has to impute some degree of rationality here. The move outside settlement areas was willful, organized, and calculated. What is difficult to ascertain are the details in the calculation to expand the boundaries of their

activities without incurring the additional attention and costs of intense police response as a result of pressures from the more privileged segments of society.[5]

The movement of gang activities out of the settlement areas prompted important changes in the organizational structures as well as changes in the organization of task-force activities. Rascal assault units had to adapt to new urban turf. Expansion made new demands on gang leadership also. It necessitated the creation of more clearly defined and formalized leadership structures. Increased risks begged for more calculation and prediction of likely outcomes, including estimating the character and quality of the police response. New command hierarchies emerged during this phase of organizational development, ones that were more flexible, disciplined, and specialized (Dorney 1990:304).

Recruitment patterns also reflected the expansion of Rascal activity into more affluent sectors of the community. During this period the social base of Port Moresby's gangs enlarged to include young men from "better homes," what in Papua New Guinea would be called "middle class." Male youths of higher social status who had the security of a home life and prospects for a future were attracted to Rascalism (Griffin 1988), whereas earlier recruits were drawn predominantly from urban settlement villages, the lowest rung on Port Moresby's social ladder. What explains this change in recruitment pattern, and what was the significance of this change?

Middle-class youths were attracted to Rascalism for several reasons. One was the sheer excitement of "running with the boys," a practice called "wilding" in the recent attacks by urban youths on unsuspecting joggers in New York City's Central Park (Sturz 1989). The main attractions, however, were that crime was beginning to pay and that the accompanying risks were acceptable, particularly in view of police ineptitude. The *raison d'être* of Rascal formation--ethnic and male bonding--and mutual benefit were joined to and then superseded by the impulse to commercialism. Commercialism, *bisnis,* appears to be driving and transforming virtually all structures of Rascal organization, including the social backgrounds of members. The money economy, colonialism's lasting contribution to measuring status and privilege, became enmeshed with the growth and ultimately the direction of urban gangs. Opportunities to obtain valuables were not lost, for instance, on male students at the University of Papua New Guinea, who sought to augment their stipends with occasional Rascal forays into the compound where the largely expatriate faculty was housed.[6]

The inclusion of recruits from higher-status families has benefited

Rascals in several ways. The new entrants brought a degree of sophistication about business and commerce that had not been a part of gang activities previously. These recruits also brought a familiarity with and entrée to the legitimate business community. In business, as in other life ventures, having the right connections often means the difference between struggling and succeeding. Such was the impact of extending the social base of Rascal membership; it made a difference in the "bottom line." Had this change not occurred, gangs in the Port Moresby area would have been severely limited both in their ability to generate new profitable ventures and to pose additional challenges to the government to contain them (Harris 1988b:16).

The late 1970s marked a period of rapid expansion in Rascal activity and with it a surge in deference from various segments of the community. Money and its promise of greater access to the "good" life had become the driving force that attracted larger numbers to Rascal membership. Regardless of their successes, however, Rascals remained outsiders. If a discernible, though begrudging respect was accorded them from the legions of young men who shared a sense of alienation and separation from the established norms, as well as from many who constituted the establishment, collectively Rascals remained marginal and effectively blocked from the higher rungs of achievement and status. Thus, an unmistakable indignation drove them and added intensity to their activities. They seemed to have expressed that indignation "constructively" by channeling their energies into stronger and more flexible organizations.

### The 1980s and Beyond

As the 1980s began there seemed to be a correspondence between Rascal organization and the character of their activities. Better organization paid dividends that counted: expanded operations with greater profits. Likewise, gang membership grew during the early 1980s, accompanied by horizontal integration. Smaller gangs were absorbed by larger ones and, as a result, by the mid-1980s there were fewer, though larger, gangs, with more recruits.

Rascal organization was also being integrated vertically. Defined hierarchical lines of authority were increasingly evident (Harris 1988b: 16). As these internal changes took place, Rascal activities expanded with little regard for police interference. Rascals began to sense that they were relatively immune from police intrusions and to see that organization and planning paid dividends. The community at large also

began to believe that Rascals could come and go as they pleased. This led to the routinization of criminal activities, which in turn resulted in the government declaring a national emergency in 1985.

The belief that anyone at anytime could be victimized by urban gangs hung like pall over the national capital. Chain fences, burglar alarms, and large dogs patrolling homes soon became part of the urban landscape. A siege mentality spread to virtually all areas of the city. The home of Rabbie Namaliu prior to his becoming prime minister had been robbed and sacked on several occasions. This only heightened the impression that no one was beyond the pale of Rascal intent (Griffin 1988). Victims and potential victims adjusted to the situation in various ways. Most appeared to be coping with the imminent danger. But appearances are often deceiving. There was a social and psychological toll from living in such conditions. Periodically the government was pressured to "do something" about crime. Such an atmosphere hastened plans to leave the country for some. In any case, economic and social development were hampered.

There is a circularity in this situation as well. As Rascals continued to rationalize their organizational structures and improve the efficiency of planning operations, the more success they achieved. The community itself became complicit in shaping the myth of invincibility surrounding Rascal gangs as it acknowledged this success and adapted to what it believes to be "inevitable." This lends further support to the "realistic" appraisal of local constabulary forces that they are not equipped to combat Rascal criminal activities and that people will have to rely on their own devices for protection and security.

### Continued Shifts in Rascal Activities

Breaking and entering remains the staple Rascal criminal activity. More recently, however, vehicular theft has increased, indicating a shift in commercial ventures. More vehicles are being stolen and broken down for parts then sold to a growing vehicular-parts market. This under-standably adds to the police burden of apprehension and enforcement. Rascal leaders seem to be aware that adding to the authorities' already overtaxed capacities helps them remain one step ahead of the police (Harris 1988a).

It did not take long for Rascals to widen their distribution outlets for stolen goods nationally and internationally. It is not easy to gain a clear sense of this network, but a few things are clear enough. Rascals have been able to use local businesspeople to "fence" their stolen goods; in a

few instances they have used outlets owned and operated by gang members themselves to sell directly to the public (Dorney 1990:304). As is often the case when gangs expand to new territories, turf wars ensue, Where powerful gangs set about to consolidate smaller and presumably weaker gangs, inevitable clashes for territorial and economic dominance result. As commerce, profits, and territorial aggrandizement merge, the stimulus for intergang rivalry all too often develops into destructive gang wars. Thus, the gangs achieve among themselves what the police were not able to accomplish: their own destruction.

During this period of gang expansion and consolidation "payback" crimes between rival gangs reached a peak. Paybacks have deep cultural roots in Papua New Guinea's traditional societies (Dorney 1990: 304). The crossover to gang retribution was made easier given its historical and cultural familiarity. When one gang's territory, members, or someone related to them was "violated," those concerned would often feel obliged to seek violent retribution, frequently in the form of rape.[7] The ability to establish control over an enemy's women amounts to establishing dominance (Griffin 1988). Rape is not unusual in Papua New Guinea, but now it has become a Rascal trademark in the public's mind, especially pack rapes.

### Indignation as a Moral Basis of Rascalism

The question remains: Why did urban gangs first emerge in Port Moresby and only later in the other main cities--Goroka, Lae, Madang, Mt. Hagen, and Wewak? Blocked mobility and relative deprivation are among the most significant reasons. Sociological and psychological explanations assist us in understanding the factors that create mounting frustration and aggressive behaviors. But these explanations do not go far enough in bridging the gap between living with feelings of deprivation and giving those feelings an outward, political expression. I suggest that indignation, a strongly felt sense of the utter unfairness of life directed at those who share disproportionately in its rewards, a feeling of being unjustly excluded from life's benefits, bridges the two domains and emotively drives Rascal behavior.

To more fully appreciate this, one must examine the changes wrought from Papua New Guinea's colonial past, especially those aspects cementing a status-conscious society with structural inequalities. The introduction of a money economy, the suppression of warfare, the institutionalization of Western-style education, and the penetration of both traditional and urban society by a bewildering number of missionaries

--all set the social and economic parameters for the emergence of a new nation-state in 1975 and along with it the rise of urban gangs (Griffin, Nelson, and Firth 1979:140). Highlighting aspects of Papua New Guinea's recent colonial past helps us understand certain social conditions that have contributed to Rascalism and shaped its character. Relatedly, we might gain insight into the question of under what conditions Rascalism will persist into the future.

One view of the causes of Rascalism advocates that it is best understood as an urban phenomenon, in this case involving primarily male youths, and is seen worldwide (Bruntin 1988). According to this generalized view, the fact that Rascals break laws is less significant than the fact that laws have been constructed to hold urban youths in place. Additionally, such laws reveal more about their creators than about the groups they are intended to restrain. This view of Rascalism rejects the notion that Papua New Guinea is unique and asserts that the development of urban gangs is a remnant of a recent colonial past, pure and simple.

Furthermore, carrying this perspective further, there is in Rascalism something present in all male-driven youth cultures. Papua New Guinea, like many if not most Melanesian societies, is male-dominated, both in its traditional and modern sectors. That is to say, men regard women as inferior and seek to exclude them from the reaches of male privilege (Chowning 1977:58-59). Young males grow up and, like most males, want to "find themselves" and make their mark "where the action is." Furthermore, new arrivals to the urban scene quickly sense that they have new strengths, both physical and mental. They try new endeavors and experiment with making a new life for themselves, something bourgeois society encourages and admires in its own youths but rejects in youths of others.

Before long, however, these young males realize that places like Port Moresby are alien to them and that this new world, one dominated by a money economy, is not what they had anticipated. They run headlong into existing social, economic, and political structures and the values that underpin them. They find themselves in an unwelcomed learning process. Some learn quickly that the existing economic structures are "oppressive" and that they are either ill equipped educationally to enter the urban workplace or that there are no jobs regardless of how well equipped they are. In a word, they learn rapidly and apparently all too well that they have little or no chance of being absorbed and integrated into urban life as it is set up and administered. They have little in common with these structures or the people who benefit from them. This

argument suggests that little has changed from what used to exist when Australia ruled what has become Papua New Guinea. Ted Wolfers echoed Frantz Fanon's (1963:30) insightful observation--about the colonial world as a world of compartments--when he stated: "the fact of belonging or not belonging to a particular group has tended to determine the range of opportunities open to each individual, the roles he or she might play and his or her status" (Wolfers 1975:2). Wolfers's observation, it might be argued, applies to a postcolonial world as well. In any event the implication is clear: little has changed in independent Papua New Guinea save the integration of indigenous elite and international and business classes. There is no mystery here; "blocked" urban youth perceive a less-than-desirable future for themselves.

According to this view, Rascalism corresponds to other social phenomena found worldwide. It is caused by the frustrations of being denied the benefits of modern urban society. So interpreted, Rascalism is little more than a response of youthful males to the hostility of an urban setting by which they have been attracted and rejected.

I agree with much in this view of Rascalism, especially the notion that a hostile urban environment both attracts and repels many who are drawn to it.[8] Blocked mobility is part of the cornerstone on which to build an understanding of the rise of Rascalism. I do not agree, however, that Rascalism is little more than an urban phenomenon derived from similarities with male-driven societies the world over, especially in Third World countries. The point is overdrawn and as such misses an opportunity to investigate the historical and social underpinnings that give Rascalism its own identity and integrity as a social phenomenon. For that we will have to reassess aspects of Papua New Guinea's colonial past that have recombined to form new structures perpetuating Rascalism.

## Making Money, Saving Souls, and Exploration: Colonialism in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea's recent colonial past, especially the period of Australian dominion and tutelage 1884-1974, provides the context for understanding those forces that have stimulated, shaped, and furthered the indignation that continues to fuel Rascalism (Wolfers 1975:8). Much of the impulse to form urban gangs stems from this colonial past and complements male dominance and blocked mobility as explanations of Rascal behavior.

As an Australian colony, what is now Papua New Guinea was a caste

society first and foremost. This singular factor not only defined race and status relations within Australia's only colony (if one overlooks the subjugation of its own aboriginal people), but also continues to impress its legacy on access to the cash economy (Wolfers 1975:8).

Port Moresby, the nation's capital and largest city, was founded as a colonial town in 1885 and was described appropriately by one observer at the time as little more than a European society with a slight Australian flavor, not unlike any of the several remote British colonial communities.[9] As in other European colonial centers, virtually all indigenous Papuans were scrupulously restrained from access to the money economy and for the most part consigned by law to the hardship of indentured plantation labor. A visitor today would be struck by the resilience of much of Australian colonialism in present-day Port Moresby. Just as in the past, the modern cash economy appears to be the playground of the European expatriate community, high government officialdom, and, since independence in 1975, the new indigenous bureaucratic and entrepreneurial elite (Connell and Curtain 1982:467-470). In sharp contrast to these groups are the majority of people, who walk without shoes and remain at modernity's doorstep (Oram 1976:28).

From the time of Port Moresby's founding as a most unlikely location for a colonial capital, native Papuans were considered the lowest rung on the social ladder, even lower than nonnative "colored" immigrants. Virtually all movement of indigenous people was tightly controlled within the immediate Port Moresby area (Oram 1976:39). Most migrants attracted to the area were males who spent a short time in the colonial capital and who returned to their traditional villages when enough money was earned or when "pushed" to more secure places (Connell and Curtain 1982:467-470). This phenomenon of movement from rural traditional settings to the urban center, a cumulative process (May 1977:21), has been the unending source of recruits to Port Moresby's underclass--and to the various urban gangs.

An assumption prevails in Port Moresby that migrants from the Highlands are more prone to violence and aggressive behavior, largely because aggressiveness is part of Highland culture.[10] A better explanation may be that they tend to be more aggressive because they follow in the wake of migrants from the central and gulf provinces. Highlanders may be prone to more violence less by their inherent cultural tendencies than by the fact that they are even more removed from the modern cash economy than their closer-in neighbors (Harris 1988a). A kind of urban stacking occurs, with the last to arrive pushed even further to the urban periphery.

When World War II engulfed the Pacific, Port Moresby was a little port city in the south of what was then the Territory of Papua. It had for all intents and purposes the appearance of an Australian town, with a largely resident population who enjoyed the exceptional privileges found in their homeland. On the other hand, indigenous Papuans were rigidly segregated and excluded from the town itself. In 1914 the Native Labour Regulations had been established to restrict native mobility as much as possible. Curfews prohibited native Papuans from remaining in town after 7 P.M. without written permission from employers; no indigenous Papuan could be on the premises of an employer after 9 P.M. In part this was to curtail gambling, but the real intent lay much deeper: to control any behavior deemed unsuitable to whites. A fine and imprisonment were the costs for breaching these regulations.

Native Papuans were presumed to be racially inferior even by some of the most enlightened Europeans. This assumption, coupled with the fact that the native Papuans constituted a servant class, confirmed self-serving beliefs that their privileges were somehow justified. These "racist" sentiments cemented the status of master and servant, setting the course for social relations that in some respects endures today. Sexual fears bordering on hysteria further rigidified relations between European and native groups. From the mid-1920s onward, sexual assaults by outcast males became an ever-present preoccupation of settler Europeans in Port Moresby. This white male hysteria so common after the 1920s was linked directly to the increased presence of white women (Inglis 1974:22-23).

White Australians saw themselves surrounded by a hostile black world. Not unlike white settlers in Africa, they clearly let it be known that while they were in Papua they would not be submerged or encumbered by that predicament. They were in Papua, not among Papuans. When contemporary migrants come to urban centers like Port Moresby, they find much in common with their historical kith and kin (Inglis 1974:47-48).

In summary, Port Moresby in its early days was a white Australian town with a preponderance of men. When European women began arriving in appreciable numbers in the 1920s, a white male hysteria developed surrounding their safety. Laws to protect white women subjected indigenous Papuans, largely males, to increasing regulation: of their mobility in and around Port Moresby, of the circumstances under which they could remain in town, of what they could wear and how they could comport themselves. Historical parallels with race relations in the American South and contemporary South Africa are striking and

help us recognize a source of indignation that colors underclass perceptions of their condition.

Colonial Port Moresby crystalized into two separate and self-conscious communities: separate and unequal, European/white and native/black, rich and poor (Larmour 1990). Outcast migrant males locked out of urban opportunity drew deeply from the well of historical oppression, Some were convinced for a variety of reasons to accept the status quo; others, the subjects of this article, did not. We owe a debt to Bruce Harris when he suggested that to fail to examine the sources of indignation among Rascals is to fail to understand what continues to fuel their activities (Harris 1988a). Understanding the political and historical context of Rascalism at once helps us identify Rascalism as an urban expression and gives it its special identity.

### The Future of Urban Gangs in Papua New Guinea

It is one thing to piece together a description of gang development in the greater Port Moresby area and make warrantable assertions about the multiple sources of them. It is another to predict the future of urban gangs in a country laboring under the strains of economic and political development. Nevertheless, we can build upon what we know and suggest the factors that will condition this development over time.

Harris sketches three possible futures of Rascalism: (1) the continuation of present patterns of criminal activities, the "organized-crime scenario"; (2) the development of Rascalism into social protest movements, the "revolution scenario"; and (3) the emergence of alliances between the political and economic elite in various parts of the country, the "political co-optation" scenario (Harris 1988a). While there may be manifestations of each of these scenarios in the future, the organized-crime scenario appears most likely to dominate. This future will also be conditioned by the economic viability of the country as a whole, the rate of urban migration, as well as the perception of corruption within officialdom.[11] Rascals have demonstrated the ability to develop suitable organizational responses to their growing criminal activities. This should continue, albeit manifesting adaptations to new and profitable ventures.

Economic and financial limits will affect the character of these ventures as well. The kinds of criminal activities will depend on how much money people have to spend on what Rascals produce. While the economic future of Papua New Guinea is projected optimistically at times, it is still a developing country with enormous problems. Regardless of

how sophisticated Rascal distribution systems have become, the sale of stolen goods will be limited by the number of people who can afford them. At this point most stolen goods are probably dismantled, packed, and sent to Australia (Griffin 1988).

If the most optimistic projections concerning Papua New Guinea's economic benefits from mineral exploitation are realized, it is plausible that Rascals will benefit correspondingly. With increased public and private wealth, with the continued weakness of government control over what occurs within the economic realm, Rascal activities are likely to flourish. Either way, criminal activities are likely to continue. There will always be an underside to capitalism and underclass groups to respond to the opportunities this underside provides.

Less clear is whether Rascals will develop either the inclination for or the linkages with existing political organizations for mutual benefit or co-optation into the political system. There is scant evidence that Rascals played an important role in any of the elections over the past several years (Griffin 1988). Elections in Papua New Guinea appear to be remarkably well run under the circumstances, despite problems associated with a relatively new electoral system.[12] But the question is hardly settled. There may still be opportunities for Rascals to merge politically and sustain relationships with political organizations over time. That will depend on other factors: the perceived legitimacy of elections and the people who run them, the resources of politicians to co-opt gangs, and the level of ethnic competition in national and provincial elections. Lastly, if Harris's provocative observation is correct-- that Rascals have developed highly organized and sophisticated organizations over time--then it is unlikely that the Rascals will allow themselves to be swallowed up by the political machines and dubious ambitions of politicians, or participate in any enterprise that would reduce their power and influence. It is not too farfetched to speculate that, instead, Rascal organizations may themselves swallow up those political  parties.

Much of this argument hinges on the growing sophistication of Rascal leaders and their demonstrated abilities to adapt and expand their enterprises. Demonstrating "street smarts" is different than demonstrating the capacity to forge sophisticated political alliances. In the end commercial self-interest may dictate that conducting business as usual is more advantageous than absorbing the additional costs of close association with the political community.

The revolution scenario has its own appeal and logic as well. This scenario correctly assumes that Rascals constitute one of the few pan-eth-

nic organizations in Papua New Guinea. It assumes as well that in the event of the disintegration of the political order, Rascals will be among the few organizations left to fill the political vacuum. Herein lies its plausibility. If the national government is immobilized, a kind of warlordism may emerge to take advantage of such a situation. The frequent problems of governance--threat of preexisting cultural, linguistic, and religious divisions hardening into political structures; ministerial corruption (Dorney 1990:220-227); frequent change of government; and emergence of irredentist movements--all suggest windows of opportunity for Rascalism. If political authority breaks down, Rascals could be among those seizing such an opportunity (Larmour n.d.); what they might do remains a matter of conjecture.

While Rascals evidence an awareness of how the political system works and have demonstrated an ability to take advantage of it, there is little to suggest that they have developed a coherent political consciousness or ideology that could be imposed in the event of an institutional breakdown of the capacity to govern. As sophisticated as Rascals have become, it is difficult to imagine that they would be able to cope with total system disintegration and the new demands this would entail (Griffin 1975). More likely, the governing system will hold, adapt, change over time, and maintain sufficient legitimacy to continue political and economic development. In the end not only Papua New Guinea's future, but the future opportunities of Rascals as well, will be determined by how the national government manages the financial bonanza from its mineral exploitation, the periodic irredentist movements that are bound to continue, how governing elites manage these opportunities, and the resulting social transformations. The future of Rascalism may lie less in the hands of the Rascals and more in the hands of constituted public authority.

## Conclusion

Relations between urban gangs and governing institutions are essentially about authority. As such the emergence of Rascalism in Papua New Guinea's urban areas reveals not merely an urban crisis but a systemic crisis as well. That is to say, weak authority institutions coupled with severely restricted operational capacities break down the moral fabric of the new order. Police inability to maintain effective law and order is an example of the state's operational weakness. This weak authority seems to have been fatally joined with the failed personal expectations of the many youths pushed and pulled by the bright lights

of urban Port Moresby. This is the "mechanism" for the deeply felt indignation described here. For indignation to occur something has to be violated (Shklar 1990:83-126). That something was personal expectations, first by a colonial system that allocated advantage and disadvantage via a status system based on skin color and national origin and then by a weak state authority that failed to secure law and order in its urban centers. This results in a deepening sense of injustice and moral outrage (Shklar 1990:87).

From this perspective urban gangs are the predictable outcomes of systemic rigidities. Accordingly, their emergence and expansion provides insights into how they adapt to the new order. Hence we see functional rationality in their behavior, Adding to the state's burden of delivering a secure urban environment is the additional burden of finding use in the mainstream economy for the skills gained by Rascals in the informal underground economy, which not only continues to expand but, as suggested here, also stimulates changes in Rascal organization, providing some gang members with management and leadership skills.

The passing of colonial authority in 1975 involved, among other things, the loss of systematic political control in Papua New Guinea's urban centers. The last ten to fifteen years have revealed the failure as an authoritative replacement of the succeeding indigenous political elite to substitute functionally for the political control previously linked to Australian colonial hegemony (Dorney 1990:319-328). On reflection it seems as if, following the transfer of governing authority in 1975, the fragile social bonds, held together and imposed by Australian *kiaps* (patrol officers), were loosened by Australia's hasty withdrawal from its colonial mandate, which then produced a crisis in hegemony (Dinnen 1986:86-87). The old patron/client relations fostered a weak and somewhat ill-prepared indigenous elite who assumed the framework, if not the substance, of an imposed authority system. The rapid removal of that colonial authority system set off changes in all authority relations: by the weakening of the hegemonic status subordination; by the social dispersion captured under the rubric of urban drift; by the lack of authoritative replacement capacities of newly elected governing elites; and by changes in community and social structures associated with urbanization, which weakened traditional and patriarchical authority.[13]

These changes in greater Port Moresby began in the early 1960s and were fully expressed in the early 1980s. As the pace of urban drift accelerated, it became increasingly difficult for the new civil authority to

deliver educational and social services to a growing urban lower stratum. All of these changes conspired to weaken connections between the lower strata and new governing hierarchies. In contrast with life in traditional settings, urban life took on a more ambiguous aspect, a redistribution of claims to authority. This is the context, fueled by a sense of injustice, in which an analysis of Rascalism must be situated.

The sense of injustice and indignation grows out of the violation of personal expectations regarding urban life. So Rascals redistribute opportunities through gang activities. In other words, the supply of labor moves away from formal structures and towards the nonformal--gangs--where demand for their labor is greater. The very term "Rascals" itself captures both the normative in response to expectations and the behavioral deviance that accompanies the shift into the informal economy.

More research is needed and should concentrate on the process by which indignation arises and why urban gangs form. Correspondingly, research should concentrate on how leadership emerges from this process or is constrained by it. The cognitive maps of Rascals should be studied: how they describe and interpret their social realities, and how these perceptions become part of the conceptual building blocks by which they react to feelings of outrage against violations of personal expectations in these fragile urban environments.

But caution is warranted as well. Rascals are socialized imperfectly in the economic and social order. They may themselves be transitional and reproducible outcomes of that social order. As such, we cannot claim a better understanding of all of the consequences of their activities. They have at best an imprecise awareness of aspects of the wider society and as such have limited capacities for ascertaining and predicting outcomes. Like many of us, they see society through the bottom of broken bottles.

What we are witnessing is an attempt on the part of institutions of authority, themselves weakly rooted, to replace the order established under Australia's tutelage and control those whom they attempt to regulate. The enduring question is whether this Melanesian country occupying half of a kangaroo-shaped island will do so without its own destruction.

## NOTES

1. Melanesia runs from New Guinea to Fiji. The term means "black islands" and refers to "racial" characteristics of most of their people (see Larmour n.d.).

2. For an insightful discussion on urbanization and inequality in Melanesia, see Connell and Curtain 1982.

3. For the best discussion of the effects of alcohol on social development in Papua New Guinea, see Marshall 1982.

4. There is little reason to assume, as many do, that the rich and privileged are victimized more than poorer residents of settlement villages. See Morauta 1986:10.

5. Robert Clark, who has done extensive research on Basque nationalism, reminded me that urban gangs--not unlike insurgent organizations--confront similar tactical decisions.

6. The author, while a Fulbright Professor at the University of Papua New Guinea, lived in the faculty compound for several months in 1988.

7. For an account of the history of mistreatment and abuse of women in Papua New Guinea, see Kivung, Doiwa, and Cox 1985.

8. See May 1977:1-26 for an informed discussion of internal migratory patterns in Papua New Guinea.

9. Professor James Griffin stressed to the author that a "balanced" history of Australia's colonialism is yet to be written.

10. See Counts 1990, especially her discussion of the findings of the Papua New Guinea Law Reform Commission on the relation between modernization and social change and domestic violence.

11. There is considerable agreement that the pace of urban development will continue unabated. Some suggest that urbanization should be encouraged (for example, R. Ward 1977; M. Ward 1977).

12. See Lucas 1988. The author participated in the seminar.

13. See Morauta 1986: 13-17 for a discussion of the state in modern Papua New Guinea.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bruntin, Brian
  1988  Interview, Law School, University of Papua New Guinea, Waigani, June.

Chowning, Ann
  1977  *An Introduction to the Peoples and Cultures of Melanesia.* Menlo Park, Calif.: Cummings.

Clifford, William, Louise Morauta, and Barry Stuart
  1984  *Law and Order in Papua New Guinea.* Vol. 1, *Report and Recommendations.* Port Moresby: Institute of National Affairs and Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research.

Connell, John, and Richard Curtain
  1982  "Urbanization and Inequality in Melanesia." In *Melanesia: Beyond Diversity,* ed. R. J. May and Hank Nelson, 461-499. Canberra: Australian National University.

Counts, Dorothy Ayers
  1990 "Domestic Violence in Oceania: A Conclusion." *Pacific Studies* 13, no. 3:
      225-254.

Dinnen, Sinclair
  1986 "Perspectives on Law and Order." In *Perspectives on Law and Order,* ed. Louise
      Morauta, 76-89. Canberra: Australian National University.

Dorney, Sean
  1990 *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics, and History since 1975.* Australia: Random
      House.

Fanon, Frantz
  1963 *The Wretched of the Earth.* New York: Grove Press.

Griffin, James
  1975 "Ethnonationalism and Integration: An Optimistic View." *Meanjin Quarterly,*
      Spring 1975: 240-249.
  1988 Interview, Department of History, University of Papua New Guinea, July.

Griffin, James, Hank Nelson, and Stewart Firth
  1979 *Papua New Guinea: A Political History.* Richmond, Austral.: Heinemann Edu-
      cation al.

Harris, Bruce
  1988a Interview, Institute for Applied Social and Economic Research, Waigani, July.
  1988b *The Rise of Rascalism.* IASER Discussion Paper, no. 54. Boroko: Institute of
      Applied Social and Economic Research.

Inglis, Amirah
  1974 *The White Women's Protection Ordinance: Sexual Anxiety and Politics in Papua.*
      London: Sussex University Press.

Kivung, Peri, Maria Doiwa, and Susan Cox
  1985 "Women and Crime: Women and Violence." In *From Rhetoric to Reality?* ed.
      Peter King, Wendy Lee, and Vincent Warakai, 74-80. Boroko: University of
      Papua New Guinea Press.

Larmour, Peter
  1990 "Race, Ethnicity, and Class in the Bougainville Rebellion." Paper presented to
      the Research Committee on Ethnicity and Politics of the International Political
      Science Association, Brigham Young University-Hawaii, 9-10 August.
  n.d. "Ethnicity and Decentralization in Melanesia." *Pacific Viewpoint,* forthcoming.

Lucas, Luke
  1988 Report to the Electoral Reform Seminar, Port Moresby, 21-23 June.

Marshall, Mac
  1982 *Through A Glass Darkly: Beer and Modernization in Papua New Guinea.* IASER
      Monograph, no. 18. Boroko: Institute of Applied Social and Economic Research.

Mannurr, H. G.
  1987 "Employment and Unemployment in Papua New Guinea." *Yagl-Ambu* 14, no. 1
      (March): 26-55.

May, Ron, ed.
  1977   *Change and Movement.* Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977.

Morauta, Louise, ed.
  1986   *Law and Order in a Changing Society.* Political and Social Change Monograph, no. 6. Canberra: Australian National University.

Munro, Nancy
  1987 "The Social Demography of Non-Citizens in Papua New Guinea." *Yagl-Ambu* 14, no. 1 (March): 566-580.

Oram, N. D.
  1976 *Colonial Town to Melanesian City: Port Moresby 1884-1974.* Canberra: Australian National University Press.

Shklar, Judith N.
  1990   *The Faces of Injustice.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sturz, Elizabeth L.
  1989 "What Kids Who Aren't Wolves Say about Wilding." *The New York Times,* 1 May, p. A-17.

Tasion, David
  1986   "Rape: The Facts behind the Terror." Papua New Guinea *Post-Courier,* 13 Nov.

Ward, Marion W.
  1977 "Urbanization-Threat or Promise?" In *Change and Movement,* 52-70. *See* May 1977.

Ward, R. G.
  1977 "Internal Migration and Urbanization." In *Change and Movement,* 27-51. *See* May 1977.

Wolfers, Edward P.
  1975 *Race Relations and Colonial Rule in Papua New Guinea.* Sydney: Australia Book Co.