

## **Gang Youth and Hustling: The Psychology of Survival**

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### I. INTRODUCTION

This paper will report the results of interviews and observations conducted among 22 youthful gang leaders in the city of Philadelphia. I first met the gang youth on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania. They were about to begin a training program which was jointly sponsored by the University and the Young Great Society, a Black community organization. The chief aim of the Urban Leadership Training Program was to train the young gang leaders for careers in community service. It was felt that the energies of gang youth could be channelled into positive neighborhood projects. My assignment was to provide an evaluation of the program, but during the research period, interest and concern extended to the subjects of gang delinquency, the effects of poverty, and other features of the community in which the gang leaders lived.

The participants of the Urban Leadership Training Program were leaders of five juvenile gangs in an area of West Philadelphia known as the Mantua area. Their ages ranged from 18 to 23 years. Each gang leader was a public school dropout. Their combined arrest records totalled more than 175 contacts with the law. Most of these arrests were for offenses involving violence, weapon use and assaultive behavior. Many in the group had served up to 36 months in state and local prisons. Their employment histories had been transitory and primarily unsuccessful. Planners of the Urban Leadership Training Program hoped

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to select program participants who had demonstrated leadership potential through their gang activities. Staff members of the Young Great Society contacted some of the more influential neighborhood gang leaders and discussed with them the purposes of the Urban Leadership Training Program. The gang leaders recruited members of their own groups to participate in the program.

During the process of researching the U.L.T. program, I had almost daily interactions with the gang leaders over an eight month period. A large proportion of time was spent in program sessions with the trainees, or accompanying them to and from various program events. Early in the program, I expressed a desire to become better acquainted with different aspects of gang life, but I waited for invitations by specific leaders before interviewing other members of their gangs. A reasonably good rapport was established with several of the gang leaders, and as a result, there were numerous invitations to join gang members at local bars, to participate in gang parties, and simply to "meet the fellows." The leaders typically introduced me as a friend who was writing a book about the Urban Leadership Training Program. The reception was warm and friendly, intermixed with some signs of suspicion, but in general, gang members responded to questions candidly and offered information generously. Introduction of the researcher by a well-respected gang member, together with my close ties with adult community leaders, facilitated discussions with gang members.

## II. HUSTLING AND THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

The theme of survival is an important one to the young men of the Urban Leadership Training Program. Few have experienced anything but severe economic deprivation throughout most of their lives. They were not accorded the comfort of material security during formative years, and they find themselves at the brink of adulthood without requisite education or training to compete successfully in the labor market. The harsh realities of ghetto existence have fostered in these young men a psychology of survival, as a functional adaptation to an uncompromising social environment.

U.L.T.: Survival, man, it's survival of the fittest. You do unto others before they do unto you, and only do it to them first.<sup>1</sup>

University: But you sound like we're in the wilderness, man.  
Student:

U.L.T.: But you got to do that to get what you need.

The need to "survive" felt deeply by these young men has led them into careers of illegal activities aimed at securing short-run material gain. Each man has his "hustle," some specialized illegal activity which helps him secure limited material wants.

Like, I haven't worked in a hell of a long time, you know, on a job. I have no means of getting no money without that knowledge that I know in the streets. My game is hustling, period. See, I'm a good flim-flam man, you know. I know various things about various different arts that you all just heard about and read about.

A variety of activities form the core of hustles for the U.L.T. gang leaders. A few pursue persistent patterns of thefts and burglaries. One fellow's hustle involves robbing the participants of illegal dice games. His specialty, a dangerous one, always involves the carrying of a gun and often its use. His enemies are not only the police, but also those organized criminal interests in the neighborhood who share in the profits from illegal gambling. "The Mafia has a permanent contract out on me, man." Other gang leaders are petty loan sharks or continuous gamblers. Many of the U.L.T. group sell marijuana and other drugs in limited quantities. Three gang leaders are procurers for prostitutes. They are, for the most part, "small-time" operators in the sense that they are not connected with organized criminal interests, their "take" is relatively small, and they run afoul of law-enforcement officials regularly. The victims of their activities are almost always fellow residents of Mantua.

Catch a man or woman coming down the street and they've been counting a little money, and I'd run up and take it from them, knock them down and go in their pocket and get all their money. You know, this kind of thing. And burglarize people's houses, you know, and it was a thing whereas, like, I mean, I had to survive and had to get to that money, and this is what I did to get to it.

There is a major contradiction in their tales of hustling activities. Often the listener is told that hustling is a great way for providing for wants, that one can hustle for all the money that one needs; most U.L.T. gang leaders enjoy bragging about their hustling skills. In contrast to this image, one often sensed that hustling was the mode of a desperate man, and that the rewards were small. Note the following explanation taken from an interview with James Bethal:

Like, your stomach get to griping at one end, your ribs get to meeting your backbone, and every time you go to the bathroom, you ain't doing nothing but shitting out water, Jack. Then it gets to the point whereas when you do go to the bathroom and that water won't

come out, your butt's all hard and sore, man, and you get to saying I got to get me some money to get me something to eat. When you try to get this money, you try to get enough to hold you over, to keep you from doing this for a while. But it just don't happen that way, man, like, you take off something or somebody and you only wind up getting \$20 out of the thing, and you got a half-assed room, the rent \$20—you got to give the scratch up right up. And you keep doing it. That's how these things go down. And when you want to dress, you want to see the fellows in a new pair of shoes or a nice suit or something, you want this for yourself, you rob people, break in their houses.

Bethal later told me that he would look for men in the neighborhood who would pay ten dollars to have somebody beat up. He described the way he used to get his victim when his objective was most vulnerable. Bethal felt little guilt about hurting this stranger. "See, as long as you get to that scratch, you ain't even worrying about it, man, and this is all there is to it."

Claude Brown, in his well-known autobiography, describes his career in hustling and particularly the impact of Reno, a twenty-one year old hustler who befriended Claude and promised to teach him all the tricks:

So I just started hanging out with Reno. Reno had said he was going to show me all the hustling tricks. After a few months, I quit my first job and just dealt pot. I decided I was going to be a hustler. We were going to start from way back, from all the old hustling tricks and come up to the modern-day stuff (Brown, 1965:159).

Many of the gang leaders related a similar story about an older person, usually in his twenties, and often a former member of his gang, who befriended them and gave instructions in the hustling arts. The hustler is a much admired adult figure to gang youths. Abrahams (1970), in his study of Black folklore taken from the streets of Philadelphia, noted the folk figure of "Shine" or "Sam Shine" who closely approximated the hustling ideal in terms of coolness, natural intelligence, and the ability to manipulate others. The "hustler," like the "bad nigger," as portrayed in folklore, is always related to the total experience of Black people in America, particularly the need to attend to one's wants without evoking a repressive response from the "man." One relied upon "Mother wit" to meet the demands of everyday life. The hustler breaks the white man's laws, but does not flaunt them in the same manner as the "bad nigger." He is confident, self-assured, and demonstrates (at least at the level of the myth) that one need not accept the dull and menial low status jobs which the white society leaves open to the Black man. Firestone (1969:788-801) has described the hustler's role in his study of adolescent drug users.

He achieved his goals by indirection, relying rather on persuasion and on a repertoire of manipulative techniques. . . . His idea was to get what he wanted through persuasion and ingratiation; to use the other fellow by deliberately outwitting him (Firestone, 1969:789).

Firestone suggests that the hustler sees himself as an "operator" who is completely skeptical of other persons' motives. Almost any relationship could be part of a "scheme" or lend itself to an angle. The "square" who is hard working, honest, and apparently virtuous, is ridiculed by the hustler, and yet the hustler suspects that "some squares were smarter than he, because they could enjoy all the forbidden pleasures which were his stock and trade, and maintain a reputation for respectability in the bargain" (*Ibid.*:790). A clear statement of this view can be seen in the following justification of one gang leader's continued hustling activities:

Well, the reason why I continue to do this is because, like, the same game's being played. In other words, like, there are whites and Blacks out there that's doing the same thing I'm doing, only they're doing it behind a desk. With a pen and a pencil, see? And this is what I'm coming to school for, to learn how to get at that top dollar. Right off the top, see, with a pen and a pencil.

The ideal of the hustler is perhaps best symbolized by the successful pimp. Firestone comments:

To be supported in idleness and luxury through the labors of one or more attractive 'chicks' who shoplifted or engaged in prostitution or both, and dutifully handed over the proceeds, was one of his favorite fantasies (*Ibid.*).

The U.L.T. gang leaders referred to some women as "whores," and described how pleasant life would be if their women would give them money whenever they demanded it. "If a whore ain't gonna give you that scratch, man—what good is she?"<sup>2</sup>

Ned Polsky (1967) notes that the term "hustler" has been applied to persons who make their living by betting against opponents in different types of pool or billiard games. The use of the terms "hustler" and "hustling" in poolroom argot antedates the application to prostitutes. It might be added that the term is often used to describe salesmen in a variety of industries. Polsky's description of the work situation of the poolroom hustler illustrates several characteristics of the role. He observes the hustlers want "fast action"; that is, they don't care how much money is at stake in one game, but rather, they want cash to change hands quickly. Deception is central to pool hustling. "The hustler exploits the fact to deceive his opponent as to his [the hustler's]

true level of skill" (*Ibid.*:54). However, the hustler must have "heart." He must play his best under pressure. Polsky is correct when he observes that the general role of the hustler applies to such diverse occupations as prostitution, pool playing, and a number of legitimate activities in sales and service. "As several parts of this study illustrate, hustling demands a continuous and complicated concern with how one is seen by others" (*Ibid.*:62).

The hustler can seldom produce or direct ideal scenes. He must depend upon being a continuously self-aware actor. He must manipulate how others evaluate him through his reactions to their evaluations and special behaviors designed to manipulate such evaluations. The "ideal cat," according to Firestone,

would always appear in public impeccably dressed, and would be able to sport a complete change of outfit several times a day. . . . Moreover, the 'cat' feels himself to be any man's equal. He is convinced that he can go anywhere and mingle easily with anyone (Firestone, 1969:791).

The hustler cultivates his ability to generate appropriate images given relatively poor resources. Most important is the ability to converse, to convince the other with a deft use of language. Many of the U.L.T. gang leaders took pride in their "gift of gab" which was required for successful hustling activities. Even if "hustles" involve thefts, burglaries or the use of weapons, as opposed to "cons" or confidence schemes, the ghetto hustler needs to be able to talk his way out of difficult situations, particularly those involving the police. The U.L.T. gang leaders felt that they were usually able to outwit the police by appearing "clean" and not suspicious. Moreover, the skills of impression management are applied not only in illegal activities but are equally useful in interactions with one's peers. The definition of personal style projected to significant others in the social milieu becomes an important part of the hustler's self-conception, although it appears that at times these young men see through their own carefully constructed public faces. The pain of such insight partially explains the frequent resort to alcohol and drugs among ghetto hustlers. Malcolm X, recalling his hustling days, observed:

For that matter, all the thousands of dollars I'd handled, and I had nothing. Just satisfying my cocaine habit alone cost me about twenty dollars a day. I guess another five dollars a day could have been added for reefers and plain tobacco, cigarettes that I smoked (Malcolm X, 1965:139).

### III. HUSTLING, GANG CAREERS, AND WORLD VIEWS

By age eighteen, most of these gang leaders no longer considered themselves active members of their gangs. Participation in gang conflicts was no longer considered appropriate behavior for them. Many privately confessed fears that continued involvement would almost certainly result in arrests and return to prison. They were keenly aware that law enforcement agencies would treat them as adults and thus impose harsher penalties for gang-related behavior. Several saw the futility of fighting over turfs which really belonged to no group of adolescents. Gang warfare, as perceived by these young men, had become more violent in recent years, and they no longer viewed the risks of gang conflict as glamorous and justifiable. They made a clear distinction between what was appropriate for themselves in the past and what was now unacceptable behavior. Few openly criticized gang members for continued fighting or disavowed their past involvement. They had simply "put down gang warring" and felt no great desire to pick it up again. The gang leaders felt more mature now, and looked forward to more worthwhile activities. Some of the group were married and had children. Although few expressed pressures to provide material support for their families, they were concerned about what images their children might have of them as parents.

I got a wife and two kids, man, you understand what I'm saying? I swear, I don't want my son growing up, Jack, and, like, I know my son won't grow up and it's going to be young cats say, 'Yeah, I know your father—he robbed a bank. I know your father, Jack—he used to rumble.'

Many of the group appeared eager to become involved in some positive activity in which they could take pride, and which might make others proud of them. Several of the gang leaders saw the training program as their last chance to accomplish something constructive with their lives.

Recognizing the nobility of these expressed intentions to benefit the community through the positive activities, it is important to assess the impact of the life histories of these young men upon their ability to make a meaningful new start. Kenneth Clark observed:

It is now generally understood that chronic and remedial social injustice corrodes and damages the human personality, thereby robbing it of its effectiveness, of its creativity, if not its actual humanity. No matter how desperately one seeks to deny it, this simple fact persists and intrudes itself (Clark, 1965:63).

The gang leaders of the U.L.T. program have spent a significant portion of their young lives fighting against the reality of social deprivation, which constrains their existence. As ghetto hustlers, they have developed social-psychological mechanisms which seemed to them appropriate to the task of personal survival. We need to explore the implications of their modes of adaptation in terms of their prospects for the future.

If the individual who emerges does not fit some ideal model of the community leader, or if he frightens us, the locus of criticism needs to be placed, not upon him, but at the origins of social inequities and injustices. These youthful gang leaders have not found the socially approved escape routes from poverty which are sparingly offered by the dominant white society.<sup>3</sup> They may remain an important source of indigenous leadership, but one must realistically look at who they are and what they may require before thrusting upon them missions and responsibilities for which they have not been properly prepared or motivated. It is as cruel to romanticize them now as it was to undervalue their abilities and potential in the past.

The gang leaders, not surprisingly, believe in strict determinism as an explanation of human behavior. Their life experiences teach that there is little area left open to the individual's ability to bring about personal change. "You get what your hand calls for," according to one gang leader. This is reminiscent of Miller's (1958) notion of fate as a *focal concern of lower class culture*.<sup>4</sup> Most often, the U.L.T. gang leaders used their deterministic view to explain away behavior of which they felt others might disapprove. Moreover, it seemed to constrain them from passing negative judgments about one another. If a fellow trainee missed classes, came to class "high" on drugs, or did not complete his assignments, this was excusable, or at least incapable of change. Matza and Sykes have also noted that "in effect, the delinquent approaches a 'billiard ball' conception of himself as helplessly propelled into new situations" (Matza and Sykes, 1970:290).

These young men understandably share a pragmatic and conservative view of the nature of humans. Theirs is a mirror image world reflecting the larger society, turning around maxims; for example, "Do unto others before they do unto you," is a first commandment. This view limits, in their eyes, the amount of change which they can expect to effect. Many of the trainees expressed an interest in working with younger gang members. They would talk with youthful associates and relate their own experiences, but few felt that this effort would have any effect. "They're going to do their thing, anyway, man. I never listened to nobody—why should they?"



One of the consequences of their deterministic model of human behavior is a refusal to make plans for the future. Deacon, the most eloquent spokesman of the group, saw the "Future as a distance," events that would happen without his control. Liebow has correctly observed that this "present-time" orientation may be *a realistic appraisal of the future from the street corner man's perspective.*

It is a future in which everything is uncertain except the ultimate destruction of his hopes and the eventual realization of his fears. The most he can reasonably look forward to is that these things do not come too soon (Liebow, 1967:66).

The street corner man, living on "the edge of both economic and psychological subsistence," expends his resources in supporting self-conceptions, from moment to moment. Planning—at least, the open announcement of future goals—makes the person vulnerable to possibilities of failures which are public and subject to the criticism of others. The experience of having been labelled a failure by school officials, employers, social control agents, and family members, conditions the individual against taking risks in terms of one's carefully protected self-images. Thus, the individual does not invest too much of his ego in any activity or aspiration. The U.L.T. gang leaders may continue to dream, but they are reluctant to make personal expectations public knowledge.

The gang leaders of the U.L.T. program often expressed fears that no matter how hopeful their prospects for success appeared, something, either within themselves or from the hostile "system," would snatch the rewards from them in the final analysis. Dreams and aspirations had "conned" them many times throughout their young lives, but they were determined not to be hurt by disappointments in the future.

The hustling life-style with its emphasis upon an individualistic orientation makes difficult the development of an awareness of the outer worlds. For example, there was much talk about the problems of racism and poverty, but the gang leaders evidenced little fundamental understanding of the structural constraints placed upon their advancement by the white society. Acquaintance with the goals and programs of well-known Black leaders appeared limited. Many confessed, for example, that they knew the name Malcolm X, but didn't know anything about his philosophy. They seemed strangely detached from militant Black organizations in their neighborhood. "I'm not too hip about that Black Panther program." The use of the word "program" did not reflect the sense of a political agenda, but rather a conception of the

Panther party as yet another short-run project started in Mantua to reach the gang youths. It was a program like the Job Corps or any number of other training projects. Some members had "tried out that brother thing, wearing dashikis and all, but I didn't dig it." Phrases borrowed from the Black Power movement were often used by the trainees, but their usage was far more consistent with a general reliance upon pat phrases in rhetorical style, rather than an understanding of contemporary Black ideology.

Towards the close of the U.L.T. Program, the curriculum focused on Black history and Black social movements. The gang leaders were excited about this "new material," and pleaded with lecturers to tell them more about their history. It is important to note that these gang leaders had left school long before courses in Black Studies were offered in public schools. Likewise, their limited reading ability decreased the likelihood that they might have read the classics of the Black social movement. What information they did possess was gained mostly from the mass media. Some were exposed to ethnic thought in prison, but their knowledge was limited and fragmentary. Middle-class Blacks, those who had gone to college or who held relatively important jobs, were treated with suspicion. "Did you grow up in the ghetto?" or "Are you real?" were frequent questions put to Black teachers. One fellow often used the word "colored folks" in class. Other classmates criticized his use of "colored," and told him to use the term "Black." He responded: "I know I should use 'Black,' but I ain't used to it. I got to practice, man." In general the group did not seem to have a high level of ethnic consciousness.

The gang leaders appeared not to have a well-defined sense of class consciousness because, as previously mentioned, their orientation, in contrast to their behavior, is essentially middle-class. In response to the question, "What is your idea of good architecture?", one leader described a suburban home with picture-windows and a green lawn.

Q: What do you see for yourself? What do you want?

U.L.T.: I just want to get everything I can and all I can. Really, when I finish, I want. . . . I expect, I expect a car here. I mean, I mean a big. . . . I want a big car, the biggest car I can get. Not going to own no Cadillac, though, because a Cadillac ain't nothing but a big, ugly mass. I don't want no Cadillac.

Q: Do you want some scratch [money]?

U.L.T.: Yeah. I want to be comfortable. Yeah I want some scratch.

The group spent much time discussing clothes and new musical gadgetry. Many members of the class could be described as "conspicuous consumers," frequently flaunting new possessions to fellow trainees.

The gang leaders offered verbal support for middle-class values. Deacon explained that he made sure that his four children received proper health care. "I take them to the clinic myself, man." In countless other situations, the U.L.T. gang leaders professed allegiance to middle-class norms. This verbal behavior might prove a puzzle to most gang theorists; they delighted in debunking middle-class respectability and showed "the focal concerns of lower-class culture" (Miller, 1958), but at the same time they gave support to many aspects of the dominant value system.

We have noted a skepticism of middle-class conformists by the U.L.T. gang leaders, but not a rejection of socially approved means of attaining material rewards. The gang leaders suspected that "the men with clean shirts and nice ties" had a superior hustle; most wished they could participate in that system. One gang leader explained: "I want a job, J-O-B. The best hustlers got steady jobs. Anybody who don't want a job is a fool, man."

The street corner setting allows participants to espouse generally approved social values without the threat that others will point to the discrepancy between verbalizations and actions. Liebow's notion of a "shadow system of values" provides for him an understanding of the street corner world:

Derivative, unsubstantial, and co-occurring with the parent system, it is as if the alternative value system is a shadow cast by the common value system in the distorting lower-class setting. Together, the two systems lie behind much that seems paradoxical and inconsistent, familiar and alien, to the middle-class observer from his one-system perspective (Liebow, 1967:213).

David Matza explains this process through his concept of neutralization (Matza, 1964:60-62). Matza further asserts that the subculture of delinquents receives cultural support from the conventional traditions. From the dialectic between conventional values and subterranean traditions in American life emerges the justification for the deviant's life style. The romantic theme of the ghetto man-child committing thefts to support his economically deprived family, as well as the heroic portrayal of gang as protector of women and children which were offered in several interviews with the gang leaders, would be viewed as "appeals to higher loyalties" in Matza's terms.

It is important to note that the delinquent does not necessarily repudiate the imperatives of the dominant normative system, despite his failure to follow them. Rather, the delinquent may see himself as caught up in a dilemma that must be resolved, unfortunately, at the cost of violating the law (Matza and Sykes, 1970:297).

This formulation is one way of interpreting the apparently large discrepancies between the words and deeds of the U.L.T. gang leaders. Their attack upon the dominant value system is viewed as subversion rather than open rebellion.

Because, look at school now—I think school's a hip thing; I wish I could be back there. I wish I could get right back. I think school is really it, man. . . . I got left down twice. I never got left down for not learning. I got left down because I never came. But it was never because I was stupid or anything. I had one white teacher, but he just didn't know how to relate to me. He just didn't know how to come out, you know—he wanted me to come to his level—he couldn't come down to mine—we couldn't meet each other half way (emphasis added).

Middle-class values are not repudiated by the U.L.T. gang leader; rather, he carries a set of definitions about social reality which explains his deviance and which partially attenuates feelings of failure.

The individualistic orientation of the U.L.T. gang leaders is reflected in their views of socio-economic deprivation. One student explained:

See, because like, positions and conditions and the way of life is, man, make you do these kinds of things. For a Black man, because it's really cold, man, out here, you know? It's cold, it's hard, but it's fair.

Most individuals in the gang leaders' world begin with limited resources. One succeeds over others by use of natural intelligence and learned skills, and each actor, in their view, is engaged in entrepreneurship, albeit of brute force in some instances. This orientation is further illustrated in the following exchange between a university student and a U.L.T. participant:

Student: I know you have been deprived and are impatient with the power structure. . . .

U.L.T.: Let me tell you something—I have never been denied cause I go out here and steal what I want, man, take what I want, man, and I get it, boy. Anything I want in life, I'm going to get. And I'm not going to let no fool tell me, well, look here, Jack, you can't do this here because it's against the law, and that kind of bullshit.

Another gang leader explained:

I can't understand why anyone doesn't have enough food to eat or good clothes to wear. If they want these things, they can always hustle.

From these quotes, deprivation can be viewed as an individual's failing; but through enterprise, one can alleviate the pains of economic scarcity.

It seems appropriate to raise the question of whether the value orientations of these young men, as they entered the U.L.T. program, are desirable from the point of view of Mantua residents. The U.L.T. gang leaders, by their own admission, are not dreamers; rather, they take pride in their "realistic" appraisal of social reality. Often the students referred to their world as a jungle. The consequences of such a world-view are grave indeed. Malcolm X observed:

As is the case in any jungle, the hustler's every waking hour is lived with both the practical and the subconscious knowledge that if he ever relaxes, if he ever slows down, the other hungry, restless foxes, ferrets, wolves and vultures out there with him won't hesitate to make him their prey (Malcolm X, 1965:109).

The psychology of survival, with its correlative conservative interpretation of social life, appears to be inconsistent with a theoretical focus upon qualitative social change or a humanistic approach towards interpersonal relations. The conversion of these young men to the mission of community leadership required that they become capable of "building more statelier missions," but the program proved to be yet another failure which only left the gang leaders alienated and cynical about community work in general.

The gang leaders often strike observers as free-spirited, blithe individuals. It appears that they have preserved a sense of independence despite encompassing pressures towards conformity in modern society. The gang leaders claim to be masters of their personal lives (although this is contrary to their deterministic conceptions of human actions), and they place a high priority on the maintenance of autonomy. This is illustrated by Deacon, who insisted that he would not get "hung up on belonging." The dark side of freedom is the profound lack of long-term and satisfying social attachments in one's life history.

But overall, I mean, like, my life ain't been no playtoy. I mean, I had to really get out there and get it myself. Cause, like, I was travelling so fast like, it was a hell of a thing.

Most people derive pleasure from attachments of family, commitments to work-careers, or an abiding sense of community; but the majority of the U.L.T. gang leaders at this moment in life had not experienced these attachments.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps only their gang provided a feeling of meaning for a brief time in their lives. One does not sense in these Philadelphia gang leaders a profound sense of community, or a deeply-felt ethnic pride. Their Blackness meant "being a failure for 450 years," or "being disappointed." The hustling life-style and its consequent psychology of survival leaves little room for commitments. The process of attaching oneself to others will be necessarily difficult for the hustler who had developed a pervasive suspicion of others' claims for his loyalty. Malcolm X writes:

What I was learning was the hustling society's first rule: that you never trusted anyone outside of your own close-mouthed circle, and that you selected with time and care before you made any intimates even among these (Malcolm X, 1965:85).

The central point is that the resulting orientations we observe in the world of the U.L.T. gang leaders may be viewed as one possible adaptation to the experiences of Black men reared in conditions of poverty and racism. They have entered the career world of the ghetto hustler, and have developed appropriate ideologies, value orientations, and psychological defense mechanisms that fit perfectly with a superstructure essentially based upon race privilege and relations governing private property. Even the mask of autonomy and personal freedom is rooted in ideas taken from the ideology of oppression and domination.<sup>6</sup> Tragically, the gang youth have partially internalized the world view of those who are ultimately responsible for the conditions of racism and poverty which have constrained their lives.

#### IV. THE PROGRAM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The Urban Leadership Training Program ended like so many similar efforts without the realization of program goals. And as is all too frequent, it was the lack of jobs at the end of the training which caused the breakdown rather than the misdeeds of the participants, although the community leaders blamed the gang youth for "hustling on the program." In a fundamental sense, the program itself was "another hustle," revealing that the gang youth were still vulnerable to broken dreams and that the superstructural conditions had not changed. After

the demise of the U.L.T. program, most of the gang leaders returned to the illegal activities which had sustained them before the start of the training. Some of the group experienced personal tailspins.

From its beginning, the U.L.T. program assumed a rather conventional nature. The slogan of the program was "Through Prosperity We Will Conquer," and the gang leaders were told to "play within the system." Political action was defined for them by the training staff as pressure upon political party committeemen; social action meant appeals to proper channels. All of this conventional approach to social participation was met with approval by the gang youth who were thinking about jobs, businesses and continued contact with "the big shots." None of these desired results was obtained. The gang youth were left bitter and disillusioned with the staff of the project.

Had program planners envisioned a more active role for the gang youth, the content of the training might have been different. The gang youth would have been asked to make personal sacrifices on behalf of fellow neighborhood residents. They might have been exposed to a broader range of social action. The content of the training would have openly attacked the conservative assumptions of their psychology of survival. Perhaps the gang youth might have been given a more accurate view of the etiology of conditions of internal colonization and racial oppression. We do not know for sure that this approach would have produced results much different from the U.L.T. program, but it is possible that the gang youth would have emerged better equipped to move towards democratic participation in the decisions affecting their lives.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. It is more than a little ironic that this key element of Spencerian sociology, long rejected by contemporary social scientists, finds expression in the context of the inner city ghetto. Moreover, the twist on the Biblical saying is fascinating.

2. Gordon (1972) points out that the "hustle" in its various forms contains the fundamental element of exploitation which is institutionalized in all social classes.

3. Many of these socially approved routes represent hustle with larger payoffs and different sets of costs. Consider the Robber Baron.

4. Given the emphasis in America upon individual competition and mobility, the concept of "fate" acts as a palliative as well as an explanation of the misery of the poor, but more importantly, it provides an explanation for the poor of why the rich became rich.

5. George Jackson wrote: "All my life I pretended with my folks, it was the thing in the street that was real" (Jackson, 1970:3).

6. See Maurice Boyd and Donald Worcester (1968).

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