# Crime as Play and Excitement : A Conceptual Analysis of Japanese Bosozoku (Motorcycle Gangs)

# CRIME AS PLAY AND EXCITEMENT: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF JAPANESE *BOSOZOKU* (MOTORCYCLE GANGS)[1]

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This paper presents a conceptual and research framework for a study of Japanese *bosozoku* (motorcycle gangs). The general idea in the research will be to show that certain of the activities and delinquencies of *bosozoku* can be meaningfully analyzed as a form of "play". In the conceptual and research framework, four key concepts ("control," "social type," "flow, "drama") are employed in constructing a holistic picture of *bosozoku* activities, which consists of descriptions of three aspects of *bosozoku* phenomenon (societal, group, individual). The description will be based on the analysis of data of a research to be carried out by means of two methods: social type analysis and ethnography. A general hypothesis based on a review of three types of literature (sociological studies on crime and delinquency, criminological works treating relationships between crime and play, and studies of play) will guide the research. In essence, the general hypothesis argues that certain of deviant behaviors are regulated by playful definitions of the situation, which have a considerable capacity to impose meaning on human life. It also argues that attenuated societal social control is, to a large extent, responsible for the proliferation of such playful deviant behaviors.

"It seems peculiar that modern analysts have stopped assuming that 'evil' can be fun and see gang delinquency as arising only when boys are driven away from 'good'." Bordua made this comment in 1961 at the end of his thoughtful review of sociological theories of gang delinquency. The academic scene does not seem to have changed much in the following two decades:[3] Even the boys depicted in so-called youth-culture theory of delinquency (Vaz ed., 1967) look like too obsessive or innocent to enjoy fun in "evil" (Cf. Scott and Vaz, 1963, pp. 332–335). During the same period, the word *"asobigata-hiko"* (play-type-delinquency) has been introduced into the vocabularies of the Japanese mass media and academic literature. It refers to the apparent playfulness of substantial portion of delinquencies committed by Japanese

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3.  A notable exception is an article by Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1978).

adolescents. The delinquencies of *bosozoku* (motorcycle gangs; literally 'out of control tribe' or 'mad racing tribe') are often said to be a typical example of the *asobigata-hiko*.

## I. PROBLEM

In the early 1970, the political youth movement in Japan related to campus strife and anti-government movements subsided after the upsurge of *shinsayoku* (new leftist) movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The radical student activists with Molotov cocktails and iron pipes symbolized the new leftist movement. After the upsurge of the new leftist movement and the failure of the mass mobilization against the second revision of Japan-U.S. Security Pact in 1970, political apathy and indifference spread across university campuses. During this period, what appeared to be a new type of youth movement absorbed a segment of youth population. This population had quite different characteristics from the youth population from which student activists in the 1960s and early 1970s were recruited. The bizzare fashion of the participants in this seemingly new type of youth movement, namely the black leather jackets and "regent cuts (greased back hair style)" of motorcycle gangs, schocked and offended adults. The loud exhaust noise emitted from their motorcycles without mufflers heightened antipathy of the adults against the motorcycle gangs.

Actually, however, motorcycle gang was not an emergent phenomenon in the early 1970s. There had existed motorcycle gangs since the mid-1950s. The motorcycle gangs of the mid–1950s and 1960s shared many activities in common with recent motorcycle gangs; e.g., driving motorcycle or automobiles amid dense traffic, zigzagging at high speeds, and driving vehicles in a group for touring. However, contemporary gangs differ from earlier gangs in some crucial respects.

When motorcycle gang first appeared in the mid–1950s, those youth who drove motorcycles in a group were not members of clearly defined groups. They often defined themselves as "*otokichi*" (auto bike mania), and an encounter in a certain place was enough reason for joint driving. It was the public and mass media that imputed the (assumed) characteristics of collective enterprise by giving the label "*kaminari-zoku*" (thunder tribe). This label derived from the loud exhaust noise emitted from their motorcycles without muflers. Those youth who were called *kaminari-zoku* were in most cases either sons of wealthy families or auto-mechanics. They had access to motorcycles that were still too expensive for ordinary youth. During this period, their delinquencies were limited to violations of traffic regulations and other minor offenses.

Since the mid–1960s, motorization in Japan advanced, and automobiles as well as motorcycles came to be used by gangs. Three names were applied to the gangs during this period: "thrill-*zoku*", "circuit-*zoku*", "Mach-*zoku*." A relatively large number of youth from various socioeconomic backgrounds joined in the gang activities. Toward the end of this period, there occurred several incidents in which a large number of groups and audiences watching gang activities (the number of the audiences varied

from a few hundreds to about one thousand) gathered in parks and streets.   These incidents were easily suppressed by the police force and did not grow into mob scenes.

During the five years from 1967 to 1972, several incidents occurred in some western prefectures, in which motorcycle gangs and their audience grew into mobs destroying the cars and stores.   The most flagrant of these incidents was the *"Toyama Jiken"* (*Toyama* Incident) in 1972, in which over 3,000 observers joined in the mob and 1,104 peple were arrested.   Since this incident, the attention of the mass media has been attracted to the motorcycle gangs, and the name *bosozoku* (out of control tribe) has come into wide use.   Many incidents of this kind followed after the incident in many cities throughout Japan, and the number of youth joining *bosozoku* groups has increased. The groups come to have relatively articulated organizational arrangements (many of them have subsections such as *shineitai* (bodyguards) and *tokkotai* (Kamikaze party) ). Even intergroup confederations come to be formed.   The number of members was estimated at about 40,600 in 1981, while it was estimated at about 12,500 in 1973. (The number of groups was estimate at about 750 in 1980.)   Along with the increase in the number of gang members, more and more *bosozoku* members have come to commit offenses such as violent offenses and glue-sniffing as well as offenses related to traffic regulations.   Now *bosozoku* are overrepresented in many categories of serious offenses (e.g., violent offenses, assembly with weapons).[4]

While I was carrying out several criminological researches in Japanese correctional institutions (two training schools and one juvenile prison), I had the opportunity to interview some ten *bosozoku* members.   I am now planning to carry out a more systematic investigation concerning *bosozoku*.   The central task of the research will be to interpret the meaning of recent *bosozoku* activities through a holistic description of *bosozoku*.   There are two salient characteristics of *bosozoku* activities which any analysis should take into consideration.   First, most of the *bosozoku* members engage in gang activities and related delinquencies for the pursuit of excitement, kicks, fun and thrills, rather than from consideration of gain and profit.   Their delinqencies are said to be a typical example of an emergent delinquent pattern in Japan since the late 1960s: i.e., *"asobigata-hiko"* (play-type-delinquency).   Second, most *bosozoku* members are adolescents between the age 16 and 19.   Most of them detach themselves from the activities and become conventional adults when they become 20 or 21 years old.   A quite similar tendency, namely, the curvelinear relationship between age and many categories of delinquencies, has been noted by many criminologists.   This is called "maturational reform", because a delinquent's physical, personality, and social "maturation" are regarded as causal to his reform (Cf. Wootton, 1959, Ch. 5).

I will base my conceptual and research framework for the research mainly on empirical knowledges and theoretical insights included in sociological theories of crime

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4. I have drawn my remarks on the history of *bosozoku* primarily from the works by Thamura (1980), Nakabe (1979), Goto (1980) and *Keisatsu-Hakusho* (White Paper on the police) (1979, 1981).

and delinquency. A review of sociological theories of crime and delinquency reveals that although what are called "social control models" seem to offer some clues to understand *bosozoku* activities and to explain the above two characteristics, we have to add some modifications to the models in order to make explicit the full implication of *bosozoku* activities.

## II. Review of the literature

### A. Problems of Recent Social Control Theories.

Modern sociological approaches to crime and delinquency can be classified into three fundamental perspectives (Kornhauser, 1978; Hirshi, 1969): 1) cultural deviance models, 2) strain models, 3) social control models. Cultural deviance models (e.g., Sutherland, Sellin, Miller) explain deviant behaviors in terms of conformity to a set of standards of subculture, which are not accepted by a larger or more powerful society. According to strain models (e.g., Merton), deviances are behavioral expression of the frustrated wants and needs, resulting from incongruity between culturally induced aspirations and socially distributed legitimate means. Social control models (e.g., Durkheim, Thrasher, Hirshi) explain deviant behaviors in terms of the balance between motive forces to delinquency and constrains of various social control mechanisms (e.g., socialization, coercion, stake in conformity) which counteract the motive forces.

As cogently argued by Kornhauser (1978), the basic assumptions underlying these three perspectives are incompatible, so that mixed models (e.g., Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin) are destined to failure. For example, while pure cultural deviance models assume that the uniform outcome of socialization is perfect conformity, control models assume that socialization can never be perfect. Therefore, one must choose a set of basic assumptions from one of these three perspectives. Recent criminological studies reviewed by Kornhauser (1978) indicate that social control models have the most consistent theoretical scheme and the highest empirical validity. In addition, social control models offer the most cogent explanations for the two crucial characteristics of *bosozoku*: i.e., 1) playfulness of their activities (e.g., Thrasher, 1927; Tannenbaum, 1938); 2) maturational reform (e.g., Thrasher, 1927, pp. 35–37, 242; Matza, 1964, pp. 22–26; Hirshi, 1969, pp. 6–7; Toby and Liebman, undated; Briar and Piliavian, 1965, p. 43). Strain models fail to offer satisfactory explanations for the playfulness because of the models assume "frustrated wants and needs". Both strain models and cultural deviance models fail to explain maturational reform of *bosozoku* adequately because they assume that the conditions built into their models are causative factors of delinquency (e.g., poverty). These factors usually do not change during adolescence or at the attainment of adulthood (Matza, 1964; Hirshi, 1969, pp. 6–7).

Therefore, my choice in this research is the basic assumptions of social control models. In essence, social control models assume that there are tendencies in society, culture, and personality systems, which both facilitate and couteract socal disorganization and

resultant deviant behaviors. Thus, although complete social organization is never pos-
sible, it is also inconceivable that a society becomes an aggregate of autonomous
subcultures, some of which are organized on the basis of purely deviant values.
According to social control models, man is more or less capable of resisting cultural
definitons of the situation and of creating his ownversion of definitions of the situa-
tion. Also, no society can ever supply the conditions of perfect socialization. Thus,
socialization (either, societal or subcultural) can never be perfect. Social control
models also assume that a distinctive nature of modern societies is the incorporation of
subgroups into the larger society through participation in nation-wide consumer markets,
economic and political institutions, and communication systems. As a result,
subcultures can never attain full autonomy. On the contrary, societal culture and
subcultures share much in common. Commonalities between societal culture and subcul-
tures also derive from universal human conditions. Because people must everywhere
live in groups, cooperation is an essential condition of human existence. Therefore,
there are some limits to the variability of cultural and subcultural values. People in
any society and subgroup must have basic sacred values which prescribe cooperation
and safe association and proscribe the behaviors jeopardizing safe association. These
sacred values constitute the core of criminal law. Hence, any relatively enduring
subgroup cannot develop guiding values which are purely oppositional to the sacred
values implied in criminl law.

On the other hand, scarcity is also given in the human condition: Relative to
wants, the means available for their gratification are always scarce. Also, because
wants can be gratified only at the cost of foregoing the gratification of other wants,
everyone has unfulfilled wants. These wants may be translated into deviant actions.
But, usually social controls, internal ones (e.g., stakes in conformity) and/or external
ones (e.g., supervision), deter the behavioral translations. Therefore, deviant
behaviors are not, as cultural deviance models argue, the outcome of conformity to
purely deviant standards of autonomous subcultures. Nor are they direct behavioral
expressions of frustrated wants and needs which are differentially distributed among
different segments of population, as strain models argue. Deviant behaviors result from
weak control due to attenuated social control or defective socialization, or from
pressures stronger than counteracting social controls.

On the basis of these basic assumptions, we can offer tentative and general
explanations to the two salient characteristics of *bosozoku*. First, playfulness of their
activities can be explained in terms of their liberation from ordinary social control
mechanisms (Cf. Thrasher, 1927; Tanenbaum, 1938). Second, their "maturational
reform" can be explained in terms of vitalization or revialization of their bonds with
several institutions (e.g., family, job) due to the transition from "interstitial" stage of
adolescence (Thrasher, 1927, p. 80) to adulthood. In adult-life, an accumulative
process of commitment to conventional social relationships and increasing stakes in
conformity make it difficult for adults to engage in *bosozoku* activities. At the same

time, the activities are conceived of as "kid's stuff", thus gratifications deriving form the activities decrease. In addition, costs of deviant behaviors increase, because penal law instead of juvenile law is applied to them. In other words, their deviant behaviors are no more 'delinquency': they are 'crimes.' (In this regard, it should be noted that the clearance rate in Japan is pretty high — about 60% for all offenses, and about 90% for most serious offenses (e.g., 96% for homicide in 1981).

But, social control models are not a unitary system of theory: All of social control models are not based on the above-mentioned assumptions. These assumptions are abstractions from the explicit and implicit arguments invarious versions of social control models and classic theories of social change on which control theorists base their arguments.[5] There are several disagreements between different versions of social control models. Among these disagreements, a disgreement between earlier versions of social control models (Durkheim, Thrasher) and recent versions of social control models (Hirshi, Toby, Kornhauser) is crucial, and gives an important clue to the understanding of one of the salient characteristics of *bosozoku*: playfulness.[6] While earlier versions give careful consideration to various implications and consequences of control for individual psyche and behaviors, recent versions tend to reduce motivation to the factors which an individual takes into account in his narrowly construed cost/benefit calculation. Recent control theorists equate the effectiveness of normative means with their capacity to gurantee sufficient amount of rewards for overcoming the temptations to resort to nonnormative means, which are said to be usually quicker and easier ways to satisfy needs. Thus, an individual's commitment to conformity is sometimes conceptualized as "stakes in conformity" by social control theorists (e.g., Toby). Some of them even use such terms as "costs and benefits" explicitly in their arguments about the relationship between social control and individuals (e.g., Hirshi, 1977; Kornhauser, 1978).[7] It follows from their arguments that social order is viable to the extent that society induces conformity through the manipulation of costs (e.g., penal sanction, loss of prestige) and benefits (e.g., monetary gain) that accrue from conformity to or deviation from conventional norms. So far, so good. But, this reliance on cost/benefit formula diverts the attention of recent control theorists from another significance of social control, which was analyzed deliberately by earlier control theorists: the capability of some control mechanisms to impose meaning on human life. The arguments

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5. My summary of the basic assumptions of social control models drew heavily from Kornhauser's (1978) thoughtful review of sociological theories of crime and delinquency (especially, Chs. 1, 2, and 6 of her book.

6. Throughout this article, the words "playful" and "ludic" are used in a very general sense: i.e., "pertain to play.". They are not necessarily used as antonyms of "serious" (Cf. Huizinga, 1950; Goffman, 1961; Csikszentmihalyi, 1981).

7. Here, I am symplifying the arguments by recent control theorists. Some of them often use the words "cost" and "benefit" in very general senses (e.g., Hirshi, Kornhauser). Some other theorists' works are too short to enable us to single out their assumptions about determinants of human behaviors (e.g., Toby, Reiss, Briar and Piliavin). Still, however, their arguments tend to lead to a kind of economic utility calculation pardigm, especially in the case of operationalization for empirical research (Cf. Hirshi, 1969).

of recent control theorists often give us an impression that deviant behaviors are random movements of individuals, which are unregulated by any rules or norms except the logic of individual cost/benefit calculation. Hirshi, one of the recent control theorists, argued that "normlessness, and not a system of norms, is at the root of nornormative behaviors" (1969, p. 198). Such an attribution of randomness to deviant behaviors may be explained partly by the recent control theorists' overreaction against the excessively normative view of deviant behaviors presented by cultural deviance theorists. Or it may be based on their recognition that the social order of modern society is based either on a exchange solution which is aimed at constructing mutually benefitial relations, or on a coercive solution through threats and punishments, rather than on normative solutions through commitment to ideal values.

In the criminological literature, recent control theorists have revived a proactive image of Man by stressing individuals active calculation of costs and benefits of behavioral alternatives. This contribution is an important remedy for the "oversocialized" image of man, which stresses behavior according to culturally given standards of conduct, as in the works of cultural deviance theorists (Cf. Bordua, 1961; Wrong, 1961; Gouldner, 1970, pp. 395–396). But, the value of this contribution should be discounted, if we consider another implication of the recent control theorists' model of human nature. If Man truly behaves only according to utilitarian consideration, he will be vulnerable to changes in costs and benefits of behavioral alternatives. Also, he wil be easily at the mercy of his own desires. Similarly, a social relationship based solely on utilitarian consideration is fragile and precarious (Cf. Ekeh, 1974, pp. 200–203; Sahlins, 1972, Ch. 5; Hardin, 1982, Ch. 13). As suggested by Durkheim (1951), in his study on egoistic and anomic suicide, deviant behaviors of such men are obsessive rather than playful (Cf. Pope, 1976, Ch. 4). Once liberated from any normative social controls, Man cannot find meaning in his life, because nothing guides his behaviors except utilitarian considerations which is inherently vulnerable to changes in external conditions. It is doubtful whether playful behaviors of *bosozoku* can be viewed as such obsessive behaviors. (It is also inconceivable that the *bosozoku* member with such human nature can attain maturational reform and maintain a stable life as a conventional adult suddenly at the age of 20 or 21.) Nor do they seem to be guided by purely normative social controls of an autonomous subculture. It seems that some kind of control mechanism, which is different from both a purely individual definitions of the situation (e.g., utilitarian consideration) and a purely cultural or subcultural definitions of the situation (e.g., subcultural standards) regulate their playful behaviors and impose meaningon their lives.[8]

The same conclusion is drawn from a review of criminological literature which treats or touches on the issue of the relationship between crime and play.

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8. It must be different from a purely individual definitions of the situation, because it must be communicable among *bosozoku* members.

B. "Crime and Play" in Criminological Literature.

Fun, thrills, kicks, excitement, make-believe, fantasy... These words have long been in the vocabulary of criminological literature. They are all related to the concept of "play." Actually, we can find many references to the concept of play in combination with these words in the criminological literature.

First, in the arguments of Chicago school sociologists (Shaw and McKay, Thrasher, Tannenbaum), the initial stage of a delinquent career in a disorganized slum begins in association with a play group: The initial stage of delinquency *is* play. At this stage, there is little differentiation between delinquency and other playful activities. They are interchangeable. In this formulation of therelationship between crime and play, the play quality of delinquencies is explained in terms of the undifferentiated mentality of children. Shaw and Mckay and Tannenbaum argue that delinquency becomes a more serious business through differentiation and habituation to the criminal way of life after the initial stage (Shaw et al., 1938, p. 355; Tannenbaum, 1938, pp. 13– 17, 52–62). Thrasher, however, treats the role of fantasies and [make-believe in gang activities in mid- and late adolescence, as well. Also, the interview recoords of delinquents recorded by Shaw and McKay indicate that "thrills" and "kicks" play important roles in delinquencies in mid- and late adolescence (e.g., Shaw, 1931, Ch. 8).

Second, many other studies on delinquency based on first-hand observations of real-life situations of delinquents in their teens and early twenties refer to the concept of play and other related concepts (e.g., Yablonsky, 1970; Finestone, 1957; Short and Strodtbeck, 1974; Downes, 1966; Sherif and Sherif, 1964). For example, Finestone employs Huizinga's descriptive definition of play (i.e., "voluntary", "not ordinary or real," "secludedness and limitedness") in describing generic feature of the life of colored users of heroine in their late teens and twenties in Chicago. Yablonsky emphasizes the role of fantasies about group size and turf for the self-esteem and "senseless violence" of violent gangs in New York.

Third, we can find several works which refer to various kinds of "leisure values" regulating delinquent behaviors (e.g., Matza and Sykes, 1961; Matza, 1964; Berger, 1963; Miller, 1958; Vaz ed., 1967). For example, Matza and Sykes (1961) argue that the values of lower class delinquents (i.e., concern for adenture, excitement, disdain for regular hard work, desire for quick financial success, verbal and physical aggression demonstrating toughness and masculnity) are essentially the same as those of "the gentlemen of leisure" depicted by Veblen. It is pointed out that these "subterranean values" are not peculiar to lower class subculture, but are shared with the middle class society. While the expressions of the subetrranean values are mostly limited to socially approved contexts (e.g., leisure time) in the case of middle class people, delinquents live by these values at inappropriate times and often translate them into action. Miller's description of six "focal concerns" of lower class culture (trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate, autonomy) shares much in common with Matza and Sykes's description of subterranean values. Similarly, in so-called "youth-culture theories of

delinquenciy" (Vaz ed., 1967), there are many references to the youth subculture values which resemble the subterrancean values. (These theories edited by Vaz (1967) include descriptions of playful activities and delinquencies of youth with various socioeconomic backgrounds.)[9]

These three categories of criminological studies share an assumption as to the playful quality of delinquencies. They all assume that there is some regularity in playful delinquencies. In other words, they all agree that playful delinquencies are not the same as what is implied in the word "playground chaos." Playful delinquencies do not seem to be equivalent to total "normlessness," but they seems to be regulated by some control mechanism. The theorists' views diverge, however, when they try to identify the source of regularity. On the one hand, the first and second categories of theorists attribute regularity to collective behavior process and primary group process which pervade among adolescents due to attenuated social control on them. The attenuation of social control is said to, in turn, derive from lack of indigenous community organization in slum areas, or from ineffective control by parents or other adults who are responsible for the socialization of adolescents. (They are the consequences of culture conflict between immigrant and host cultures or development of "age-segregation" of adolescence in modern industrialized societies.) On the other hand, the third category of theorists attribute it to the control capacity of subcultural values.

This seeming disagreement, nonetheless, dissolves when we examine two assumptions in the third category of studies: 1) content of subcultural values, and 2) age segregation of adolescence. First, although the assumption of subcultural values makes the third category of studies look like cultural deviance models, a careful examination of what they call "values" reveales that the values are quite different from the values which can sustain an autonomous and enduring subsociety. The "values" are more like "make-believe ideology" which is frequently found in interaction settings among gang boys, such as "sounding" (Cf. Matza, 1964 passim). They are highly situation-specific, and influence adolescents' behaviors mainly in peer interaction setting.[10] In fact, most of the third category of works point out that

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9.  Aside from these theory-oriented works, there has been a recurrent argument in folk theories of delinquency that a majority of delinquencies are mere "unguided play." This argument has often been directly translated into delinquency prevention programs in which a lot of recreational facilities are constructed (Cf. Kett, 1977, pp. 225–227). The naivete of such programs was criticized by Tappan (1949, pp. 148–154). (see also Sherif and Sherif, 1964, p. 283; Yablonsky, 1970, p. 85; McKay, 1949, p. 38.)

10. Precarious nature of deinquent "values" or "ideology" can be demonstrated by a comparison between the delinquent "values" and values in other types of youthful subcultures. Several follow-up studies of former student activists (Demerath et al., 1971; Krauss, 1974; Fendrich, 1974) show that a considerable portion of them retain the activist values in their adult lives. Although there is no comparable follow-up study of former-delinquents, several follow-up studies (Cf. Cline, 1980) and a comparative analysis of youthful subcultures (Matza, 1961) suggest that the delinquent "ideology" is specific to adolescence. It seems that the difference is based on a difference between activist ideology and delinquent ideology, as to their relationship to the sacred values for coopreation and safe human association.

delinquencies are episodical, rather than habitual, in the lives of so-called delinquents.[11] Second, most of the third category of works, like the first and second categories of works, regard the age segregation of adolescence as an important precondition for delinquents' involvement in peer interaction and/or their attachment to subcultural "values". In other words, the third category of works assume that the social control on adolescents must be attenuated in order that the adolescents can translate the "values" into action.

The above discussion suggests that the disagreement between the first and second categories of works and the third category of works is not essential, and that most of the literature treating relationships between crime and play are in line with the basic assumtions of social control models. It is obvious that the discussion in this section leads to the same conclusion reached in the previous section. The discusson in this section also suggests two crucial characteristics of the control mechanism regulating playful delinquencies. First, the control mechanism seems to be highly situation – specific and closely related to collective behavior process and primary group process. Second, the control mechanism is also related to a societal cultural pattern. As cogently argued by Berger (1963) and Matza (1964), what are called "subterranean values" and "youth culture" are not peculiar to subsocieties of delinquents or to youth population. They are weaved into several cultural themes in a societal cultural pattern, which is often called "popular culture" or "mass culture" (Cf. Yablonsky, 1970, p. 246, 259, pp. 269–270; Willis, 1978; Hebdige, 1979; Goffman, 1967; Thrasher, 1925, Ch. 6; Cohen, 1955, p. 140).

### III. General hypothesis: social control and playful deviant behaviors

A general hypothesis to be presented in this section is based on the foregoing discussions in this article and on a review of the literature on play. The hypothesis can be summarized as follows:

> Attenuated societal social control leads to greater opportunity and temptation to enage in exploratory and playful behaviors. Playful definitions of the situation which underlie such behaviors are not solely individual definitions of the situation. Playful definitions of the situation are different from both of a purely individual definition of the situation and a purely cultural (or official) definition of the situation. Playful definitions of the situation have their own internal structure, and control capability (luidic control), which is qualitatively different from conventional and official definitions of the situation emboddied in societal social control. The control capability of playful definitons of the situation is inherently precarious, but can

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While activist ideology is closely related to such sacred values or humanitarian values, which have high degree of universality, delinquent ideology is not. In these regards, too, delinquent ideology is destined to "make-believe ideology."

11. Miller (1958) is peculiar in this point. He argues that there are inherent relationships between the 'focal concerns' and delinquent. He also argues that focal concerns are equally supported by lower-class adults. But his notion of 'focal concerns' is quite ambiguous. His statement of 'focal concerns' includes both descriptions of the life-style of lower-class people and what are supposed to be behind the life-style (e.g., values, attitudes): We can hardly distinguish independent variables from dependent variables.

have a considerable impact on behavior, which is not inferior to the impacts of societal social control. A playful definition of the situation may be more complelling than conventional and official definitions in many cases, because of its capacity to impose meaning on human life. Moreover, playful definitions of the situation often give us far greater opportunities for "flow experiences" and for spontaneous involvement which is apparently free from "conformity" to official definition of the situation.

A restriction on the space of this article does not allow me to present the general hypothesis in its complete form. The general hypothesis consists of discussions of the following four issues:

> Characteristics of the control mechanism in playful delinquencies (ludic control).
> Relationships between the ludic control and personality structure.
> Relationships among the ludic control, societal values and popular culture.
> Relationships among societal social control, collective behavior process and commercialization.

**Control mechanism in playful delinquencies**. One of the important conclusions derived from a review of studies on play is that play does not mean "total normlessness" (Cf. Caillois, 1961, p. 33, 55). Usually, a set of rules or a "frame" (a set of ideas which are more general than fixed and rigid formula or rules) (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974; Basso, 1979, p. 14) regulate play. The control function of the rules (or frame) of play can be called "ludic control". The transition from ordinary life to a context of play does not mean a replacement of a set of rules by another set of rules of the same quality. Ludic control is often quite different from ordinary social control mechanisms. First, it can secure spontaneous involvement or "conformity" more often than ordinary social control mechanisms, although the involvement and conformity is highly situation-specific and inherently precarious. Second, to submit oneself to ludic control is intrinsically rewarding. Excessive preoccupation with external rewards accompanying play, such as monetary gain from gambling (or "introduction of extrinsic rewards into an intrinsically rewarding activity" (DeCharm, 1968; Deci, 1975) ) destroys the essence of play; i.e., fun (Cf. Geertz, 1973, Ch. 15).

I assume that playful delinquencies are essentially regulated by a kind of ludic control. If this assumption is correct, we can see the reasons why cultural deviance models and recent control models fail to account for playful delinquencies adequately. Cultural deviance models fail because of their juxtaposition of ordinary social control mechanisms with ludic control. Recent cotrol models fail because of their view of deviant behaviors as outcomes of "total normlessness" and their theoretical preoccupation with extrinsic rewards accruing from conformity to or deviation from norms.[12]

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12.  A recently published book entitled *Crime as Play* (Richard et al., 1979) is based on a fundamental confusion between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards in play (see a critial review of this book by Csikszentmihalyi, 1980)

**The ludic control and personality sturcture.** In the apex of a plafyul delinquency, one's ego, superego, and id are merged into one, but one still holds the feeling of control of one's own action and the environment (Cf. Geertz, 1973, pp. 420–421; Turner, 1969, pp. 52–52; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, pp. 44–46). The delinquent can have both legitimacy and gratification. Legitimacy is derived from his spontaneous involvement in the normative demands of the ludic control. Gratification derives from intrinsic pleasure in delinquent acts,[13] or intrinsic rewards in play elements in the  delinquency. In some case, gratification may also come from the feeling of "mastery over environment," "personal causation," or "flow experience" (White, 1960; DeCharm, 1968; Deci, 1975; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), based on the recognition that he defied and overcame the restraints or challenges of legal regulations and sanctions (Cf. Thrasher, 1927, p. 39; Csikszentmihyalyi and Larson, 1978).[14]

In psychoanalytic theories, legitimacy is mainly related to supergo, and gratification is mainly related to id. In ordinary life, the demands of these two components of a personality are often mutually irreconciable. Especially in the case of gratificaions deriving from violations of legal rules, there is usually a severe conflict between superego and id. In the case of a plafyul delinquency, however, deviant behaviors are legitimatized by a "make-believe ideology" or a playful definiton of the situation. In its extreme form, the plafyul definition of the situaion says, "This is play. The rules of the play should be observed above anything else. Everything based on the rules are right. Everything that goes against the rules or everything that damages the enjoyment of the play is wrong." (Bateson, 1972; Basso, 1979, p. 42; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 46). (Cultural deviance models fail to account for playful delinquencies adequately because of their view of delinquency as outcome of complete socialization to deviant values (i.e., overemphasis on superego) (Bordua, 1961; Wrong, 1961), and

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13.  Certain behaviors re intrinsically pleasurable and at the same time tend to jeopardize safe human association (e.g., rape). They are so tempting that they must be legally prohibited and sanctioned. Crime is often pleasurable because it is a liberation of such behavioral tendencies or natural ("animal") inpulses. But liberation of such natural impulses can be really playful as human behaviors only when the liberation is supported by legitimatizing function of play farme whih enables us to be liberated from cognitive inhibition on the behaviors, as well (see Freud's argument about "fore-pleasure" function of joke (Freud, 1960, pp. 135–138) ).

14.  Quite often, youthful cultures assume anti-bourgeois character (Matza, 1961, p. 106; Berger, 1963, pp. 339–340). According to Berger, this characteristic is based on the belief that the powers, privileges and immunities of aristocratic life and the passion, desperation, and anarchy of life into depths are both preferable to the calculated moderation and mediocrity inherent in bourgeois definition of maturity and responsibility (Berger, 1963, p. 340). His argument suggests that although most people basically subscribe to the basic sacred values and maintainance of social order, actual persons who are responsible for the maintainance of the social order (usually middle class people) tend to be identified with the negative aspects of the management and consequences of an existent social order: e.g., distributive inequality, suppression of human potentiality (Cf. Matza, 1964, p. 101). In addition, the middle-class people's "stake" in conformity tend to be interpreted as manifestations of their personality dispositions such as mediocrity and timidity: Their "stake" in conformity does not look like "stake" in gambling at all.

recent control models fail because of their overemphasis on individual self-interest seeking.)

**Ludic control, societal values, and popular culture.** Although they are "make-believe ideology" if seen in the context of ordinary life, deviant values related to the ludic control in playful delinquencies have compelling reality and a kind of sacredness within the context of play. It is sometimes argued that "sacred values" have far greater capacity to impose meaning on human life than "utilitarian values" based on individual cost/benefit calculation (Cf. Nisbet and Perin, 1977; Wheelis, 1958). In modern societies, more and more people come to feel deprived of institutional affiliations which provide mystical meaning and values to their lives and the events around them. This is because traditional sacred values (e.g., religious values) are losing their sacred and mystical quality, and people's lives come to be guided by utilitarian considerations (Klapp, 1969; Irwin, 1977; Fromm, 1941; Wheelis, 1958). For such people,a playful definition of the situation with sacred quality may be more compelling than conventional and official definitions.

The sacredness of deviant values within the context of play may be prepared in the process in which ideal values gain their clarity and saliency. Ideal values cannot attain their clarity and saliency merely by the presentation of their abstract conents. They can often attain them most effectively by their presentation in contrast to images of "evils" oppositional to the ideal values (Cf. Durkheim, 1948, Ch. 2; Erickson, 1966; Douglas, 1966). The very definition of man as a "moral being" centers in the primal negative of command, "thou shalt not" (Burke, 1966, pp. 9–13, Ch. 7; Babcock, 1978, p. 18). In an alchemy of human mind, these oppositional or deviant values often attain some attractiveness and even assume some characteristics as "values" (Burke, 1966, p. 13). Also, in an alchemy of popular culture (Cf. Douglas, 1966; Geertz, 1973, pp. 419–421), ideal values and such deviant values are sometims weaved into paradoxical cultural themes such as images of villain-type-hero or *picaro* and "subterranean values" (Cf. Goffman, 1967, pp. 149–270; Babcock, 1978, pp. 95–116). During the process, deviant values may coopt sacredness of ideal values, as in the case of emphasis on manliness and courage in gang activities. In a play context, negative aspects of deviant values may be temporarily neutralized and ignored, and the coopted sacredness in deviant values may be accentuated. For the fiat of playful definitions of the situation is more congruent with the deviant values than with ordinary ideal values.

**Societal social control, collective behaviros, and commercialization.** From a soceital point of view, the main effect of imposed norms is not the special deterrent effect on the individuals who are themselves sanctioned  Rather, the main effect of the imposed norms is to transform ideal norms into the widespread conviction that such norms actually regulate conduct — the perception that others conform to norms and that one would be pathological if he did not so (Durkheim, 1933, Ch. 2; 1938, Ch.

3). In many cases, however, there is a gap between ideal norms and actual enforcement, and there are usually a certain degree of latitude in the individual's interpretations of norms, and a certain degree of discretion in actual enforcement. To the extent that the difference between the ideal norm and actual enforcement is great, then the opportunity and temptation to engage in exploratory and playful behavior is great, because costs of deviant behaviors are lowered and opportunity for creation of individual definitions of the situation becomes great. When such exploratory behaviors or "exploratory gestures" (Cohen, 1955, p. 60) pass without serious sanctions, they may be imitated at the mass level.[15] The increase in the number of participants in an exploratory behaviors lowers the cost of participation and leads to a greater size of exploratory gestures as collective behaviors (Granovetter, 1978). At the same time, exploratory gestures, which originally began as mimicry of less risky matters (adopting a posture, haricut or style), may lead to craving for further fun and kicks deriving from more and more risky behaviors (Thrasher, 1927, p. 82; Csiszentmihalyi, 1975, pp. 138–139).

Such deviant behaviors may be partly based on anxiety or "identity deprivation" (Klapp, 1969, p. 319) of people who are deprived of firm affiliation with tranditional institutions (e.g., religion, family). Those who feel alienated from traditional institutions may seek "alternative reality" in expressive leisure activities or in other kinds of social movements (Roszack, 1969; Klapp, 1969; Irwin, 1977). But, there is also a possibility that the deviant behaviors are a more carefree "quest for new experience" and creation of individual definition of the situation, which are made possible by liberation from restraints of official or cultural definitions of the situation[16] (Cf. Thomas, 1967, Chs. 3, 4; Thrasher, 1927, Ch. 5; Irwin, 1977).

Popular culture in modern societies, especially in urban societies, tends to encourage and reward the eccentricity or stylistic innovations in such deviant behaviors (Park, 1914/15, pp. 607–609; Wagner, 1975, pp. 60–63). Some playful deviant behaviors may be unwitting consequences of developing consumerism and commercialism. (Probably, it is also the case with motorcycle gang phenomenon in Japan.) Such deviant behaviors may lead to critical social changes, especially in urban areas. For, while a temporary deviation from rules of ordinary life within a boundary of play, ritual, and festivals is embedded in a rather tight social network in the case of

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15. In a sense, this is a reversal of Cohen's explanation of the role of "exploratory gestures" in delinquency. In the case of Cohen (1955), he assumed that motivations for deviant behaviors (i.e., status frustration) were there beforehand and that the "exploratory gestures" vitalize and affirm the motivations. But, it is also possible that mere mimicry of exploratory gestures" by others in minimal way allow youngsters to discover that various kinds of deviant behaviors and risk taking are "fun" and intrinsically rewarding. (This and other discussions in this section heavily drew from Dr. Suttles's suggestions.)
16. It is my impression that some of the youth culture theory of delinquency and other works treating the "moratorium" nature of adolescence in relation to delinquency (e.g., Bloch and Niederhoffer, 1958; Matza, 1964) tend to overemphasize the anxiety elements in playful delinquency.

a rural or tribal societies, it is often not the case with urban societies. In urban areas, people can share playful experiences in urban "scenes" (Irwin, 1977) where they do not have to worry about aftermath of deviations within play context to their crucial social relationship in ordinary life context. In such a case, deviant expression found in playful situations such as violation of rules of propriety in joking performances (Radcliff-Brown, 1952; Basso, 1979) or role reversal in festivals or rituals (Turner, 1974 b; Ladurie, 1979) may not be any more mere outlets of frustrations or pure fantasy, which is supportive rather than subversive for existing social structure (cf. Davis, 1975; Turner, (1974 a).[17] (In other words, in the case of tribal and rural communities, play itself often supports social control mechanism in ordinary life context.)

But the revolutionary and innovative potentiality of the deviant behaviors are often conventionalized and coopted in the process of commercialization of symbols and cultural artifacts included in the deviant behaviors, as in the case of hippie movement and the punk rock movement (Hebdige, 1979, Ch. 6). Through the commercialization, the revolutionary and innovative potentiality is contained within segregated leisure activities which are less threatening to the existent social order.[18] Also, a mass level adoption of stylistic innovation leads to the neutralization of novelty and revolutionary potentiality (Irwin, 1977; Turner, 1974 a, b). Some people soon come to be dissatistied with such a stylistic innovation which has become "tame", and seek and create new types of stylistic innovation (Hebdige, 1979). Or they may try to create a boundary between "elite" or "radical" innovators and mere imitators or followers (Suttles, 1977). Thus, stylistic innovations and their conventionalizations or institutionalization form continuous cycles (Turner, 1974 a, b; Hebdige, 1979).

## IV. A CONCEPTUAL AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

### A. Four Key Concepts as Sensitizing Concepts

The general hypotheis stated in the previous section is too abstract to be translated into a research framework for an analysis of *bosozoku* activities. Moreover, there are few ready-made research or conceptual tools to verify the hypothesis. Therefore, my research will be exploratory. In addition, it should be noted that the general hypothesis is derived from the literature which is based on research in Western socio-economic settings – particularly the U.S. Caution should be taken in examining the validity of resultant hypotheses in a quite different sociocultural context: i.e., Japan. In such a research, priority should be given to "naturalistic" research based on first-hand observations of *bosozoku*.

Therefore, key concepts implied in the foregoing sections will be "sensitizing

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17. Also, performances in playful activities of a group may not be influenced by a hierarchical order of the group, as Whyte described in his famous account of bowling sessions among Norton gang members. In this context, "near-group" character of delinquent gangs is important (Yablonsky, 1970; Downes, 1967): delinquent gangs tend to be formed on the basis of vague membership and inarticulate group structure.

18. This discussion is based on Dr. Csikszentmihalyi's suggestions.

concepts" which provide a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances (rather than as "definitive concepts" which serve as a means of clearly identifying the individual instance of the class and the make-up of that instance that is covered by the concept) (Blumer, 1940, 1954).

The following are short summaries of each concept.

**Control.** Analytical distinction between "social control" and "personal control" is made. Social control refers to the capacity of a society to regulate itself according to desired principles and values (Janowitz, 1976, 1977). Personal control refers to the ability of ego to regulate a whole personality structure and to maintain meaningful and productive relationships with others (Erickson, 1963; Janowitz, 1978).

**Social Type.** A distinction between "societal social type" and "indigenous social type" is asserted. Societal social type refers to the folk typifications of persons at the social level. They are frequently found in mass media and popular culture (e.g., "Play-boy", "Smart Operator") (Cf. Park, 1914/15; Klapp, 1962; Sarbin, 1969). Indigenous social type refers to folk typifications of persons within a group or community (.e.g., "rat" and "politican" in prison community). They are freqently found in gossip and informal conversations (Cf. Strong, 1940; Schrag, 1944; Wirth, 1928).

**Flow.** Flow refers to the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1974, 1975; Turner, 1974 b).

**Drama.** Drama refers to meanings and themes in social behaviors and cultural patterns, which are made highly conspicuous in episodic and bracketed occasions (Cf. Turner, 1974 a; Goffman, 1959, 1974; Duncan, 1968).

B.   Three Levels of Analysis

**Societal level.** Societal social contorl on Japanese adolescents and the characteristics of *bosozoku* as a societal social type will be the key issues in an analysis at the societal level. It seems that transitions of the labels applied to motorcycle gangs reflect the changes in the social control on Japanese adolescents and societal reaction against the adolescents who indicate stylistic variations. Investigations of the changes in the number of participants in motorcycle gangs, the activities of the gangs, social backgrounds of the participants, and the treatments of motorcycle gang phenomenon by the mass media, will be required to clarify this issue. Collection of demographic data on Japanese adolescents is also important. I assume that motorcycle gang activities can be treated as a type of collective behavior (i.e., an expressive social movement (Cf. Finestone, 1957)) which reflect the attenuation of social control on Japanese adolescents due to age-segregation (cf. Glaser, 1978) and developing affluence and consumerism in postwar Japan. The labels applied to the motorcycle gangs (*kaminari-zoku* → Mach-*zoku*, Thrill-*zoku*, Circuit-*zoku*, → *bosozoku*) seems to reflect the public feelings against the youthful stylistic variation and deviant behaviors. In other words,

*bosozoku* is a "villain" social type in a societal drama in contemporary Japan.

**Goup level.** In a group level analysis, group social control and characteristics of indigenous social types will becme crucial issues. Intensive ethnographic surveys of one or two *bosozoku* groups will be appropriate for an analysis at this level. "Thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the general characteristics of the groups and their major activities (e.g., social backgrounds of the members, group size, organizational arrangement) is most important for the analysis at this level, and this will become the major data treatment. I assume that indigenous social types cluster around several "axes of life" of a group (guiding principles of collective life; Strong, 1940). The axes of life will represent a mechanism of group social control and characteristics of the playful definitions of the situation guiding group activities. For example, some indigenous social types seem to cluster around an axis of "*senpai-kohai*" (senior-junior) relationship, which reflects a hierarchical relationship among gang members.

It seems that the themes of the axes of life and *bosozoku* activities are meaningfully conceptualized as a dramatization of their lives in everyday life. They seem to tell the experience and portray values, themes, and relations which are underplayed and repressed in *bosozoku* members' real (i.e., everyday, weekday) life, as a kind of "metasocial commentary" (Geertz, 1973, Ch. 13; MacAloon and Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Delinquencies committed by *bosozoku* seem to be, in large part, byproduct of this dramatization.

**Individiual level.** At the individual level, subjective experiences of individual *bosozoku* members becomes the central issue. They will meaningfully analyzed in terms of the concept of "flow". I assume that playful definitions of the situation regulating *bosozoku* activities are accepted enthusiastically by gang members and give great impact on their behaiviors because those definitions can impose meaning on their lives through flow experiences (Cf. Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1978).

Indivdual differences in flow experiences are also important. It is inconceivable that a *tokkotaicho* (leader of the Kamikaze party) of *bosozoku*, who takes great risks in intergroup battles, has the same quality of flow experience as that experienced by a *heitai* (soldier), who is subject to commands of the leader. Resources and rewards specific to playful interactional settings of *bosozoku* activities seem to be allocated differently according to indigenous social types.

The dramatization of personality is another crucial issue in an analysis at this level. Indigenous social types are highly dramatized roles on the theatrical stages or "frames" (Goffman, 1974) of *bosozoku* activities. Such personality displays as courage, manliness are emphasized and exaggerated. An examination of the distance between the dramatized personality and the self-image of a *bosozoku* member in everyday life will offer a key to understand the meanings of *bosozoku* for him.

## C. Two Methods

As is obvious from the foregoing discussion, major methods in this research will be social type analysis and ethnographic survey. An assumption underlying the analysis of the data to be collected by means of these methods will be that a detailed description assumption derives from the central task of this research: i.e., interpretation and understanding of *bosozoku* activities. Therefore, although the general hypothesis presented in this article suggests general guidelines as to research topic, the statements in a completed research monograph will not take the form of presentations of a series of specific hypotheses and results of the examinations of the specific hypotheses.

## V. CONCLUDING REMARKS: AN OPTIONAL RESEARCH TOPIC

Although the central task of this research will be to construct a holistic picture of *bosozoku* activities and interpretations of their meanings, an analysis of the process of "mautrational reform" or the process of disengagement from play will add important information to this picture. Namely, to examine the changes in the social bonds between *bosozoku* members and several institutions (e.g., family, school, community) before, during, and after their involvement in *bosozoku*, through an intensive investiation of life histories of a few *bosozoku* members, will become a critical test of the interpretations in the holistic picture. I assume that the whole process of involvement and disengagement from *bosozoku* activities has a symbolic significance of transition from late adolescence to early adulthood for many *bosozoku* members, especially for those who are deeply committed in *bosozoku*. In other words, this process may be characterized as a kind of *rite de passage*.[19]

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19.  An examination of this process will also be  useful for an  examination of  the validity of an assumption implied in a group of criminological literature called "labelling perspectives" or "societal reaction perspectives": i.e., irreversible status degradation.  While the process of social typification included in the  creation of societal social type of *bosozoku* has many characteristics of status degraduation or negative labelling, most *bosozoku* members eventually become conventional adults. It seems that what might be called the process of "de-labelling" or "counter-labelling" (Rotenberg, 1974; Goode, 1978, pp. 280–282) is proceeding during and after the involvement in *bosozoku* activities. This research topic is optional because the severe limitations of resources and time of this research may make it impossible to collect detailed life history data, which will be highly time-consuming.

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