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Résumé de l'article

Un groupe culturel considéré comme déviant, tel un club « banditiste » de motocyclistes, doit s'adapter à une diversité interne car un répertoire étendu de talents, attitudes et idées divergentes facilite ses réponses aux demandes disparates qui lui sont adressées. Même si cette variation entre les membres du groupe présente un avantage, elle doit souvent être déguisée afin de maintenir l'intégration nécessaire à la survie du groupe dans un environ hostile et ce besoin de camouflage varie selon le degré de menace perçu. Ce thème est examiné dans trois contextes différents : le cercle (clubhouse), le bar fréquenté par le groupe, et les rencontres violentes avec la société environnante.

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Intra-Group Diversity and How it is Managed by an Outlaw Motorcycle Club

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A deviant subculture such as an outlaw motorcycle club must be able to accommodate internal diversity because a repertoire of differing talents, ideas, and attitudes facilitates an adequate response to the disparate demands placed upon the organization. At the same time that intra-member variation is an asset, however, diversity frequently must be camouflaged in order to maintain the integration necessary to survive in a hostile environment. The need for camouflage varies in relation to the degree of perceived threat. This theme is examined in three different contexts: the clubhouse, the club bar, and violent encounters with outside society.

Un groupe culturel considéré comme déviant, tel un club « banditiste » de motocyclistes, doit s'adapter à une diversité interne car un répertoire étendu de talents, attitudes et idées divergentes, facilite ses réponses aux demandes disparates qui lui sont adressées. Même si cette variation entre les membres du groupe présente un avantage, elle doit souvent être déguisée afin de maintenir l'intégration nécessaire à la survie du groupe dans un environ hostile et ce besoin de camouflage varie selon le degré de menace perçu. Ce thème est examiné dans trois contextes différents: le cercle (clubhouse), *le bar fréquenté par le groupe, et les rencontres violentes avec la société environnante.*

Introduction

It is probably no coincidence that the discipline of anthropology is increasingly focusing upon diversity and its role within a group at a time that a number of societies around the world are having to decide what role cultural diversity will play in national life. There seems to be a growing recognition that diversity is not something to be minimized or eliminated in order to maintain group strength. Rather, diversity, if handled correctly, can be an asset. At the same time, however, under certain conditions, the full extent of diversity must be camouflaged in order to safeguard the image of a strong, tightly-knit group. The need for camouflage varies in relation to the degree of perceived threat from outside forces.

This paper examines the above thesis within the context of ethnographic data on the Rebel Motorcycle Club, an outlaw motorcycle group based in Edmonton, Alberta. An outlaw motorcycle group provides a vehicle for raising several interesting considerations relating to the role of diversity within groups. First, an outlaw motorcycle club is considered by most to be a deviant subculture. The term "motorcycle outlaw" has been popularized by the media to stereotype a category of social and criminal deviants whose

overzealous concern with "biking, booze, and broads" and whose threatening style of dress and demeanor represent both a lack of vested interest in the local community and a general hostility towards outsiders or "citizens." Thus the outlaw biker has become a symbol of individual freedom—freedom from the financial and family responsibilities which turn life into a rather dull routine for many middle-class North Americans.

Belonging to a deviant subculture does not mean, however, that freedom from middle-class conventions is equivalent to unbridled self interest within the deviant group. Paradoxically, because the group is deviant, it is frequently regarded as a threat and thus must maintain a constant vigil against attack. This requires a good deal of internal discipline and self-sacrifice on the part of members. In other words, deviance on one level produces conformity on another. Some might even argue that a deviant, voluntary group such as the Rebels provides the best context for the study of uniformity rather than diversity. Their argument is that if traditional anthropological ideas about cultural integration are still viable, it is within small groups rather than in society at large.

One of the major reasons the Rebels were chosen for study was to answer some of the questions raised by the above considerations. The primary objective was to determine whether a small, voluntary organization such as the Rebels can accommodate diversity, and if it can, how that diversity is handled so it is not disruptive. The study found that there is actually a good deal of diversity within the Rebels. Moreover, that diversity is positive in that it provides a repertoire of differing talents, ideas, and attitudes that aid the Rebels in their adjustment to a variety of differing circumstances. At the same time that diversity among members is an asset, however, it does have destructive potential if not kept within certain parameters. These parameters are created by a constant awareness on the part of club members that the outside world is hostile and that survival is dependent upon maintenance of common values and goals, included in the concept of "the brotherhood." It is this common commitment in the face of threat from the larger society which allows internal diversity to exist without disrupting the quality of interpersonal relations.

Thus we are dealing with a dynamic situation in which diversity and uniformity are both involved in a complex process by which club members, as individuals and as a group, attempt to define a meaningful lifestyle which balances individual freedom and group solidarity. The following ethnographic section describes this process as it is enacted in concrete situations. Before turning to the ethnographic section, however, some background information is required.

Outlaw motorcycle clubs have received continual attention from the media since they were stereotyped as social deviants in the fifties, as subcultures of violence in the sixties, and as vehicles of organized crime in the seventies. Yet outlaw motorcycle clubs remain an ethnographically unexplored phenomenon by virtue of a rigid system of border maintenance, maintained by a paramilitary organization, that makes contact difficult and infiltration hazardous. Consequently, it took three years of friendly association and participation in club activities such as club runs (excursions on Harleys) before the subject of a formal study could be broached. Fortunately, permission was granted. This allowed the ethnographer to tape record informant interviews and to administer questionnaires in order to fill out the data obtained by participant observation (Wolf 1981). The following ethnographic section does not attempt to summarize this research as a whole. It utilizes only that ethnographic data relevant to the theoretical problem outlined above.

The label "outlaw" technically designates a club that is not registered with the American Motorcycle Association (A.M.A.) or the Canadian Motorcycle Association (C.M.A.) the governing bodies for motorcycling in the United States and Canada, respectively. The A.M.A. and C.M.A. are themselves affiliated with the Federation Internationale Motorcycliste (F.I.M.), the international coordinating body for motorcycling whose headquarters are located in Paris, France. A motorcycle club that is registered with the C.M.A. or A.M.A. obtains a club charter from those parent bodies allowing the club and its members to participate in or sponsor sanctioned motorcycle—mainly competitive—events. Registration further aligns the club with the legal and judicial elements of the host society. Non-registered clubs are labelled "outlaw" and considered as the one percent deviant fringe that continues to tarnish the public image of both motorcycles and motorcyclists. The A.M.A.'s "one percenter" label was graciously accepted by the outlaw community with many members either adopting 1% badges or having the 1% logo tatooed on their shoulders as an uncompromising statement of where they stood on that particular issue.

Originally a post Second World War phenomenon largely confined to the west coast area of the United States, outlaw motorcycle clubs have

diffused into Canada (late 1950's), Australia (late 1960's), and more recently, into continental Europe (1974's). The Rebels M.C. arose from a political vacuum that was created in the City of Edmonton when police "surveillance" and subsequent legal action led to the demise of the then Coffin Cheaters M.C. and the Sinners M.C. The Rebels M.C., in conjunction with the Warlords M.C. (origin 1969), have since that time maintained a tight territorial rein—preventing the emergence of other outlaw clubs in the City of Edmonton.

From an organizational perspective the Rebels Motorcycle Club constitutes a formal voluntary association comprised of approximately twenty-five adult males ranging in age from twenty to thirty-six years. The Rebels M.C. operates within the parameters of a well-defined but flexible formal organization. The organizational cornerstones of the club include (i) a club charter in the form of a written constitution and (ii) a political structure made up of "officers of the club": president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, sergeant-at-arms, and road captain. In addition to their position-specific duties, these officers constitute a separate decision-making body referred to as an "executive board." Finally, there are (iii) rules and regulations which prescribe the formal structural elements and official mechanisms of control, codified in a book of rules.

Outlaw motorcycle clubs were observed to provide meaningful participation on three levels of sociocultural reality: institutional, interpersonal, and personal. On a personal level, the outlaw club provides a cultural ethos, including a set of core values, which makes it possible for a member to locate and declare himself as a distinct entity within a meaningful context. On an interpersonal level, a social network of highly committed individuals provides reinforcement for those core values and enables a member to express himself emotionally through the formation of intense bonds of friendship. On an institutional level of participation, core values and intense social bonds are given a medium of expression through formally organized activities. The effective integration of these three levels of participation transforms membership in an outlaw motorcycle club into a total lifestyle. The theme that underlies this collective participation is that by creating explicit institutional, interpersonal, and personal borders between themselves and the host community, individual members are able to establish a calculable and meaningful existence. For example, the intergroup opposition that underlies and is symbolized in much of the activities of the outlaw club, e.g., "bikers" versus "straight society," leads to intra-group cohesion in the form of the "brotherhood." While the social borders established within this subcultural frame of reference theoretically restrict a member's range of behavior, that same border-making process functions to enable members to reduce their world to knowable and appreciable proportions:

> I'd say [conventional] society stinks in a lot of respects. At least with the club I know what's happening. Whereas outside the club, I don't know what's happening. I don't know who to turn to and I don't know who not to (Caveman, Rebels M.C.).

Thus, members of the Rebels Motorcycle Club achieve a corporate identity by separating themselves structurally and emotionally from the larger society. However, the exigencies of adapting to an often hostile environment place disparate demands on the group. The behavioral latitude that is subsequently required to adapt to these different situations requires being able to draw upon a reservoir of diverse, often contradictory, cognitive patterns and behavioral repertoires from within the group. Yet, the Rebels M.C., whose manifest function is to provide a sense of intermember solidarity and group identity, must, if they are to beat the odds and survive, be able to give the appearance of complete unity of purpose and design. The dynamic nature of this requirement is the subject of the ethnographic section of this paper.

Ethnographic Observations

The primary theoretical message outlined above is that a successful social system—measured in terms of its ability to adapt—is one that includes processes that allow for the accommodation of diversity for it is this diversity which lends the group the necessary cognitive (ideational) and behavioral latitude to meet disparate, often conflicting, demands. At the same time, however, under conditions of outside threat, diversity must be camouflaged, and even transcended, in order to preserve the group. In line with this emphasis, the following ethnographic observations are organized around three types of situations which vary from least to most threatening vis-à-vis outside forces.

1) The Clubhouse: where different perceptions of group goals allow the club to change in an orderly fashion
2) The Club Bar: where different degrees of commitment to group goals allow the club to maintain a balance between border crossing

and border maintenance, but where differences among club members must be camouflaged

3) Violent Encounters with Outside Society: where differences in individual perception and commitment are transcended in a show of solidarity.

THE CLUBHOUSE

The Rebels M.C. clubhouse is located on a rented section of farmland along the south-eastern outskirts of the City of Edmonton. This proved to be an ideal location because, as one member expressed: "There's nothing out here but land, our clubhouse, our bikes and us. We can be as loud as we want, get as drunk as we want, get as stoned as we want, have as good a time as we want, doing what we fucking want, and nobody bothers us" (Tiny, Rebels M.C.). Within the isolated setting of the Rebels clubhouse, where displays of inter-member differences do not convey weakness to, and consequently invite threats from, an antagonistic environment, there exist both informal opportunities and institutionalized mechanisms for the expression of differences of opinion on a variety of matters. Variation manifests itself as members verbalize diverse theories of group culture; conflict may furthermore arise as members attempt to operationalize those diverse theories of group culture. Those close to the Rebels come to recognize that the club's operational paradigm (the conducting of affairs and the forming of policy) continually responds to both internal political influences (members acknowledge the presence of conservative, moderate, and extreme factions) and interpersonal pressures which are apparent in the day-to-day life of the club. Of particular interest are the disagreements between the extreme and conservative elements of the club that surfaced during various decision or policy making situations. For example, two members demonstrated variation in operationalizing their theories of group culture when they disagreed on the validity of a member's invitation to two outsiders to attend a party at the clubhouse. Ken, a six-year member and president of the club, had earlier given the ethnographer his version of group identity when asked if there were any rules related to guests coming out to the clubhouse:

> Yeah, we don't allow anyone out at the clubhouse unless he's on a motorcycle, or we definitely know is a biker, with an invitation and an escort by a member. We definitely don't want a hippie coming out and asking what's going on. If anyone came out there without an invitation or escort, they'd be told to take off, or whatever (Ken, President, Rebels M.C.).

The member who issued the invitation, Jack—a member of the conservative faction—felt that the two outsiders were eligible as guests insofar as they both rode bikes, had been friendly enough in the bar, were stopping over in Edmonton as part of a "righteous" 6,000 mile cross-country tour which had originated in St. Catharines, Ontario, and, as the member pointed out: "I'd like to see hospitality to bikers as our (the club's) first name." The member who challenged the invitation, Blues—an extreme one percenter—focused on the fact that one of the guests was riding a Kawasaki 900, a Japanese motorcycle. It is the American made Harley Davidson, with its long and venerated folk tradition, that prevails as the only motorcycle considered worthy of symbolizing the outlaw life-style. For Blues the presence of the Kawasaki was an ideological intrusion that was not about to be casually overlooked:

> I'm not going to have that piece of shit here! That's a racer's bike. You drive a Harley (Davidson) because you know where it's at as far as bikes go. I don't want that thing parked by my clubhouse. I drove out here to get away from that sort of crap (Blues, Rebels M.C.).

Although Jack and Blues both agreed that riding a Harley Davidson was a necessary criterion in order to be a member, or even a friend of the club, Blues, had gone one step further and had incorporated "riding a hog" (Harley Davidson) into his interpretation of what the group identity was all about. Blues had in effect drawn the club's social boundaries tighter than Jack.

It is expected that conflict which arises on the inter-individual level—in this case the result of two members differing in their perceptions of the group value system—will be resolved by the members concerned negotiating a compromise. If this process fails to settle the issue and the situation threatens to become volatile, an executive officer will enter the discussion as a third party and, if necessary, effect an arbitrary decision... ideally a decision that does not involve the creation of a losing party. In this instance Ken fulfilled his presidential function and regulated the conflict by acting as a mediator between the two opposing parties. In his role as primal leader (president), Ken exercised the judgement of King Solomon: the guest could stay but the bike couldn't. The compromise solution involved the guest parking the Japanese motorcycle in a ditch by the highway entrance, two hundred and fifty yards away from the clubhouse and beyond the view of the members.

If the nature of the issue giving rise to the conflict is such that is holds implications for the club as a whole, a parliamentary strategy will be implemented for its resolution. Within the controlled organizational setting of the group, such as club meetings taking place at the clubhouse, the Rebels Motorcycle Club is relatively isolated from threatening pressures emanating from outside groups. In the absence of external threat, the perception and behavioral expression of diversity does not have negative implications for either group or individual welfare. The parliamentary procedures enacted during weekly club meetings provide for the expression of differences in opinion, the elicitation of conflict through debate, and, finally, the reaching of consensus through a standardized decision making procedure in the form of voting.

During the course of participant-observation of the Rebels M.C., a situation arose which saw members take incompatible positions in regards to a fundamental issue concerning the club's future. The issue was whether or not the Rebels Motorcycle Club should form a chapter in the City of Red Deer. Members promoting expansion wanted to see the Rebels Motorcycle Club become a larger organization. They furthermore argued that a Rebel's chapter located in Red Deer—central Alberta—would deter the northward movement of the Grim Reapers Motorcycle Club, a notorious rival club based in southern Alberta:

> Bloody warfare threatens to explode over an attempt by a Calgary motorcycle gang to move into the city... Edmonton's Rebels Motorcycle Club has warned the interlopers their attempt to move into the city will be resisted... the Grim Reapers have already been involved in violence here... shots have been fired say police... The gangs are normally kept under surveillance by the R.C.M.P. (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and members of the city's elite task force. (Edmonton Sun, January 31, 1979)

The defensive strategy of establishing a chapter of the Rebels M.C. in Red Deer was opposed by those members who wished to promote the Rebels Motorcycle Club as a tightly-knit unit and who felt that expansion would result in the depletion of both material and personnel resources. When members failed to reach a consensus through informal discussions the matter was raised at a meeting, debated, and resolved through a formal voting procedure; expansion was rejected.

The parliamentary decision-making strategy, as it is enacted in the context of the Rebels M.C., is characterized by a number of features that mitigate the possible disruptive consequences of internal ideological conflict. Preceding the meeting, members will have inevitably engaged in an informal exchange of information concerning potential solutions to the problem at hand. These discussions were observed to take place in informal settings, under amiable circumstances, e.g., drinking or shooting pool together. As a result, there is minimal emotional hostility or aggression. Intermember differences come to be viewed as logical alternatives, as opposed to aberrations. These brainstorm sessions promote an undisciplined, sometimes humorous, but always creative exploration of "raw" ideas. The effects of these preparatory activities carry over to the formal meeting and serve to reduce the possibility of the members focusing on a we-versus-they distinction as opposed to a we-versus-the-problem orientation. Members are themselves aware of both the fact of variation and the inevitability of change:

Blues (Rebels M.C.): They're (new members) not living up to my (personal) expectations, but they're living up to my (club) ideals. We (older members) pretty well built the club; and they live up to the constitution and things like that, that we've laid down. But I'm not saying that they follow us a hundred percent; because then we'd never change, and we're always changing.

Ethnographer: Why do you feel that there would be no change?

Blues (Rebels M.C.): Because the idea of the club would get so monopolized that it wouldn't work. You wouldn't get any change and we would always be staying with the same horses... it just wouldn't work without new ideas and change.

Ethnographer: In that case, what, or who, decides what the purpose of the club is?

Blues (Rebels M.C.): It's something that is going on in the mind of each and every member.

During the course of the meeting, orderly communication of opinions is mediated by the president, providing each individual with an opportunity to speak, but avoiding the domination by any one individual or faction. The sergeant-at-arms enacts formalized procedures that ensure the orderly handling of any dispute that threatens to get out of hand. Finally, a formalized voting procedure provides due process for settling conflict. It should be emphasized that a formalized structure and process for decision making does not preclude a group style that is characterized by openness, candor, and general "bullshitting," that produces a relaxed and non-stressful environment.

For example, at one meeting, Indian began a pretence that he had gotten drunk during the mid-session beer break. Steve was the sergeant-at-arms at the time.

Steve (Rebels M.C.):	Are you drunk?
Indian (Rebels M.C.):	(Jokingly responds) Yeah, sure, why not!?
Steve (Rebels M.C.):	Good! That's a ten dollar fine. Pay up after the meeting!
Indian (Rebels M.C.):	Hey, wait a minute! I'm not drunk!
Steve (Rebels M.C.):	Glad to see that you've sobered up. You can stay for the meeting, but you still have a ten dollar fine to pay.

Members accept both the procedures involved in the parliamentary strategy, and the possibility that a *partial* agreement—a compromise solution with which none of the members are in complete accord—may have to serve as the basis for decision making.

> No one can stand there and say, "Well, this is what the club is all about, and that's that." Everything that happens to the club, or that the club does, is put to a vote. Everybody knows what is expected of them, but then everybody also has their say. You don't always get your way, but you always get your say. We work things out. It's put to a vote; majority rules (Raunch, Rebels M.C.).

Members furthermore recognize the fact that while certain club policies may lack total consensus, the club's survival—in an often hostile environment—depends on total commitment in carrying out those plans of action: "In many ways the club is like a safe. There may be a lot of loose change on the inside, but when the door to the safe opens, the Rebels come out as one" (Wee Albert, Rebels M.C.). Thus, members of the Rebels M.C. participate in moulding the group paradigm through an institutionalized framework (parliamentary strategy) wherein they are able to innovate, evaluate, and control group policies. Individual divergence in effect shapes the ongoing political rhetoric, forms the basis of social change, and is accepted as part of the group process.

THE CLUB BAR

An integral part of outlaw motorcycle club tradition is the establishment of a tavern as a regular drinking spot and rendez-vous point for club members: the "club bar." The club bar complements the "clubhouse," the locus of formal club functions and social activities, by providing an alternative focal point for informal group gatherings. While the clubhouse is the private domain of the Rebels M.C., the club bar is found in a public hotel (tavern). It is this aspect of contact with the public that allows the club bar to serve a number of unique functions in terms of the club and its members. Here potential novitiates can exhibit their prowess, demonstrate commitment to the subculture's ideals, experiment with and perhaps form lasting ties with the club.

The club bar thus functions as a buffer zone or point of cultural interface between the club and the host society. Recruiting new members requires a performance on the part of members which is dramatic enough to attract potential "strikers;" however, club members in the bar must continually negotiate their presence and behavioral style in terms of highly unpredictable and often hostile external variables. Carrying this off taxes the varied abilities of club members and does, in fact, aggravate differences in opinion concerning the desirability of trafficking with "citizens." For example, despite the privileges purveyed by management to the members in particular and club functions served by the bar in general, not all the Rebels evaluate their presence there in a positive sense: "They give us privileges and what not, which is bad in a way because our people start spending too much time in the bar" (Raunch, Rebels M.C.). Some members, such as Blues and Terrible Tom, boycotted the bar. Terrible Tom showed up at the club bar only once over a period of three years. Blues periodically avoided the club bar while actively lobbying against attendance there. On one occasion, this lobbying procedure led to a heated argument when Blues suggested certain members change their colours (club emblems) to read: "Corona Hotel M.C." Finally, the presence of members at the bar had been an issue of formal debate at club meetings:

> There are a few (members) that don't care for bars themselves. They don't like going to bars... We don't blame them cause you can't talk to nobody in them. The damn music is so loud... It's been brought up at club meetings lots of times, trying to get out of the bar, you know. But you can't do it. Let's face it! You've got (approximately) thirty guys and a lot of guys, including myself, want to go (Shultz, Rebels M.C.).

Before examining the rationale underlying this disparate attitude towards club bars, it is important to reiterate that some form of public contact, however limited, is necessary. The necessity arises from the fact that the Rebels M.C. is neither an economically self-sufficient nor a socially self-perpetuating unit. These reasons alone would

preclude total self-containment. Like all urban subcultures, the Rebels M.C. must ultimately rely on the organization and resources of the surrounding society. Thus, the only means by which the Rebels can actualize their ideology as an egalitarian undifferentiated society is to enter into limited interaction with the society whose lack of egalitarian organization is so despised by club members.

Negative sentiments expressed by some members result from two separate aspects of group dynamics that are endemic to urban subcultures. The first of these concerns the preservation of organizational integrity: "It's our own society." The maintenance of this organizational integrity requires the establishment of social structural boundaries between "straight society" and the club on institutional, interpersonal, and personal-value levels of participation. With respect to the preservation of these social structural boundaries, some members reasoned that increased interaction with the public would weaken the club as an integral unit by making it susceptible to outside influence. "I'd just as soon see no contact with them (the public). I don't care what they think of us. The more contact you have with them, the looser you are" (Raunch, Rebels M.C.).

The second concern involves maintaining an operational balance between vested group interests and the psychological needs of individual members. The danger here lies in individuals using the group as a reference in constructing their personal identities, i.e., the psychological payoffs of being a Rebel, yet failing to dedicate oneself and one's resources totally to the group, the brotherhood.

> Some of the members... mingle with the outside, with the citizens, more than they should. In the sense that they should be with their brothers. They should be learning what their brothers are all about, because they haven't learned that yet. (Blues, Rebels M.C.)

The paradoxical demands placed on the group by the requirement of organizational integrity (the maintenance of club boundaries), and the necessity of organizational perpetuity (the recruitment of new members), is solved by members who by virtue of disparate attitudes towards outsiders, enact two different types of roles in their presence. One group type might be metaphorically labelled "the wall." The wall is comprised of those Rebels who actively manipulate the harsh stereotype laid upon them by the dominant society in a manner that serves to reinforce the boundaries between the club and outsiders. The demands and dynamics of border maintenance received fairly explicit expression in the ideology of the group:

Ethnographer: Is there a common understanding that you avoid straights and hippies in the bar?

Raunch (Rebels M.C.): Yeah.

Ethnographer: Is it talked about?

Raunch (Rebels M.C.): Yeah. It's just generally understood that when you're sitting in the bar, you're not supposed to have any straights sitting around the table. If you've got a friend there, and a member doesn't want him there, all he's got to do is say so, and the guy has got to go, no exceptions.

The dialogue between several members that follows below took place in the Rebels M.C. club bar. The incident revolves around one member, Snake, who for personal reasons and with no particular success, attempted to introduce a degree of variation in the operational group identity concerning outsiders.

Killer (Rebels M.C.): Hey Snake, what kind of bike does your friend ride?

Snake (Rebels M.C.): He doesn't. He's a close friend of mine. He just plays the guitar.

Danny (Rebels M.C.): We don't give a shit! There's no room for him. Tell him to get lost!

An appropriate label for the other subgroup would be "the gate." The gate consists of those Rebels who selectively admit certain outsiders, and who "exoticize" their subcultural image and exploit the popular myth of outlaw biker prowess, adventure and brotherhood in an outgoing fashion: "You have to remember that before a biker strikes for the club, the club strikes for the biker" (Wee Albert, Rebels M.C.).

The reality or perceptual impact of the wall and the gate are best described by an outsider who encounters them. The outsider in this case was Walter Kowal, a graduate student in archaeology who was working his way through university by singing in a rock band. The band, named Lover, would on occasion play at the Kingsway Motor Inn, a one time Rebel bar.

Ethnographer: How did you originally make contact with the Rebels?

Walter K.: Well Tony, the drummer, he's a biker. You know, he has a biker mentality and he thinks they're great guys; it was no problem for him to fit right in. Armand (Rebels M.C.) bought dope from the bass player... so I got to know these guys but I was kept on a very removed level. I could get along with guys like Clayton, Tiny,

and Terrible Tom, but the rest I really didn't care to, because like I said, they tend to be too volatile; like you never knew what they were up to.

Ethnographer: How did you differentiate between the two groups? How would you decide which of the Rebels were approachable and which were not?

Walter K.: Just by their attitude. Most of these guys weren't too bad, but you could feel that you weren't welcome when you sat down at their table; and this was even after we'd (the band) had them over at several of our parties.

Ethnographer: Were you ever threatened?

Walter K.: I was never threatened physically by any of them, at any time. But it's just that you could tell. Like a guy, like Tiny, would sit down at the table, break a glass, and eat it. You know, eat the glass! He'd be entertaining and having fun with you all of the time. Whereas the other guys would sit there and remain aloof. They'd stay outside the whole thing. They wouldn't enter into the verbal banter or anything; they'd hang back. You would never know what they were saying, thinking, or anything.

Ethnographer: Aside from stonewalling you with these non-verbal cues (kinesics and proxemics), did you feel intimidated in any other way?

Walter K.: It was generally what you called the unapproachable group that got into the scraps. The guys I got along with generally didn't get involved in those things unless it looked like things were getting out of hand. So I didn't feel that they would be sort of explosive and do something weird just because I said something to them. Like Caveman, I saw him drop two guys coming into the doorway of the Kingsway. Those two guys never laid a finger on the sucker. Caveman just decimated them before they even hit the ground. And that intimidated me. Even though it wasn't his fault. They started hurling abuse at him, and he said something like, "You'd better leave for your own good," or something like that. They didn't, and all of a sudden, wham, bam, bam, bam, bam! I never saw anything so fast! I think what stands out most was the force of the blows. I mean I heard those things, and they were bone jarring; bummer! That sucker had arms on him that looked like legs. After that I maintained my social distance as it were. Like I said, that's terrifying. Like I figured, "Wow! Would that ever hurt!" Like "crunch!" There goes the nose... another operation.

In response to this ever-present threat of conflict, the mood and demeanor of the Rebels while drinking at the bar is noticeably different from drinking sessions held at the clubhouse. "Putting down brew" at the bar becomes more calculated in nature; that is, while some members may become totally "wasted," others in turn will become more reserved and attentive. They assume the task of constantly surveying the bar for potentially threatening situations into which their inebriated brothers may inadvertently fall. These members personify the image of gunslingers of a bygone era, waiting for some bounty hunter to make a foolish move:

> "Once you put on colors [club emblem signifying membership] you draw heat, sometimes fast, sometimes heavy. The cops you can predict; you learn fast where the lines are and where and when you can cross. But with citizens you never know... [when] some guy is going to try to waste you by running you off the road... in the bar you gotta expect everything from drunks who don't know what they're doing, to guys in kung fu... who do know what they're doing and can be tough as nails" [Jim, Rebels M.C.].

Ken, while discussing the nature and frequency of contact situations the club had with outsiders or "average citizens," stated that: "The average citizen is mostly the person you see in the bar. And as far as any contact goes, that's where it usually is. *And I would like to see it end*" (Ken, President, Rebels M.C.). However, any extreme policy of isolationism, while protecting intermember ties, would jeopardize the perpetuation of the club itself. Interestingly enough, then, if all members of the Rebels M.C. were one hundred percent committed to the core ideology of the group, i.e., the brotherhood, there would be problems. A comparative analysis of the history of the Warlords M.C. illustrates that the danger of such a situation developing can prove to be more real than hypothetical.

The Warlords emerged in 1968 largely through the organizational efforts of two ex-members of the then defunct Coffin Cheaters M.C. of Edmonton. By the early 1970's, the Warlords had consolidated their position as one of the two established outlaw clubs in the city with approximately fifteen members. However, the brotherhood ties that developed between members were so extreme as to

preclude any individual breaking into the club's tight-knit social network. It was during this time that the club had one prospect "strike" (attempt to become a member) for a period of two years before they rejected him. The Warlords subsequently developed a reputation of being largely unapproachable: "The Warlords are more a closed clique of guys who stick pretty much to themselves than they are a club. You don't see them around all that much" (Biker in a bar). The Warlords furthermore isolated themselves from interaction with other clubs in the province:

> Like they (Warlords) want to be a motorcycle club, but they want to be a motorcycle club strictly on their own, with nothing to do with other clubs. We've never once had the two clubs (Rebels and Warlords) come together for a run. Some of their members, like Rae, Dump, and them, come to our parties, drink with us sometimes, but that's about it (Wee Albert, Rebels M.C.).

In conjunction with this isolation from the larger biker community, the Warlords did not maintain a club bar. Rather, they restricted their drinking and socializing to their clubhouse (a member's home), or irregular visits to various bars that were often located on the outskirts of the city, e.g., the Airway Motor Inn. While contrasting the style of the two Edmonton clubs, a Warlord commented that: "We're different from the Rebels. We don't go around giving cardiac arrests to little old ladies on the street and we don't put on a show in bars." However, time, alternative commitments, and an internal conflict eventually took their cumulative toll. By 1975, Warlord membership was reduced to five. The Warlords Motorcycle Club was in serious danger of dying from internal atrophy and external threats:

> As far as I'm concerned, the Warlords aren't a club. I've met them three times, once without bikes, once without colors, and another time one of our members received an unsigned card from a supposed Warlord (Ace, President, Chosen Few M.C., Calgary, Alberta).

The Warlords saw the inevitable fate of their policy of isolation when Onion, a well-known biker who visited and had the respect of many Western Canadian clubs, turned down the overtures of the Warlords, to become a Rebel. The Warlords responded with a change in policy. In order to increase their exposure to the biker community, they began socializing at the Rebels' bar and set about establishing their own club bar by drinking regularly at the Capilano Motor Inn. Invitations to outside bikers to attend Warlord runs as guests were more readily given out. As a result of these initiatives, the Warlords M.C. incorporated two new members and had a third prospect striking for them, all within the space of four summer months of 1975. The Warlords furthermore accepted, for the first time, an invitation to join the Rebels M.C. and the Kings Crew M.C. of Calgary on a joint run on Labour Day weekend, 1975.

In summary, although the Warlords M.C. had always been a solid enough club in terms of their interpersonal commitments, i.e., the ideology of brotherhood, they became overcommitted to that ideology—overcommitted in the sense that they became inflexible with respect to maintaining outside contacts. What the Warlords failed to establish was a club bar which facilitates the formation of supportive bonds with the larger biker community in general, and provides a point of entry for prospective novitiates in particular.

The theoretical implications of the above comparative study of the Warlords M.C. and the Rebels M.C. is that the subcultural group's ability to both [1] establish a point of social-structural interface between itself and the larger society [club bar], and [2] maintain an operational balance between organizational integrity (border maintenance) and organizational perpetuity (border crossing) rests upon the phenomenon of intracultural diversity, i.e., intermember variation. The range of variation that is demanded in this instance extends beyond the diversification required by the division of roles to include the accommodation of conflicting role performance. In effect, the Rebels M.C. illustrated two different causal dimensions of diversity, one structural, the other psychological. Structural diversity pertains to a basic division of labor within the context of an integrated system of roles in order to accomplish a diversified set of tasks. The diversity that emanates from the psychological dimension stems from variation in individual needs and goals which the group serves as a collective response.

It is this very heterogeneity of goals that lends the group the necessary behavioral flexibility to meet disparate if not conflicting organizational demands. That is, individual differences in terms of both personal and group goals and values are not a social liability; rather, they provide operational flexibility.

A paradox arises, however, in that while inter-individual diversity may be an asset to a social system, the full recognition of that diversity on the part of members or outsiders may not be. The overt manifestation of intracultural diversity has different implications for both individual and group

welfare depending on the situational context in which it occurs. Subsequently, the expression and/or regulation of that diversity will vary accordingly. The Rebels are not entirely in control of the barroom situation. Unlike club events held within the confines of the clubhouse, the Rebels in the bar must continually negotiate their presence and behavioral style in terms of highly unpredictable external variables. Under these buffer zone conditions, normative procedures for regulating variation become inoperable; yet the overt expression of variation becomes intolerable. The potentially disruptive effects of perceived variation arise as a result of the negative implication it holds for:

i) the degree to which the Rebels appear vulnerable to outside threats;
ii) the extent to which the Rebels are successful in presenting a favorable impression to potential novitiates (strikers);
iii) members' own perceptions of group uniformity and solidarity.

These potentially disruptive effects of perceived variation are held in abeyance by members participating in the processes of joint ritual and collective symbolism. This symbolic camouflage allows the intended function of the bar to operate by giving the impression of complete uniformity to outsiders.

The Rebels mark off a section of the bar by joining together five or six tables in one corner in a manner which restricts access and provides some members with an overview of the rest of the bar. This territorial isolation is complemented by the Rebels' practice of draping their "leathers" [jackets] on the backs of their chairs. Mounted on the leathers are the club "colors," a white cracked skull on a black and red background. The visual effect for an outsider is a formidable wall of skulls. Despite the fact that the club may be incomplete since some members do not support the idea of a club bar, and despite the fact that factional issues may be under discussion, the outsider is not afforded a glimpse of internal club dynamics.

Even for club members, the effects of internal disagreements are minimized, in this context, by the constant awareness of external threat and by rules of conduct which encourage behavioral discretion and mutual participation in brotherhood-affirming activities such as conversation, shared meals, shooting pool, uninhibited drinking, and boisterous joking. Thus in the club bar, the Rebels find themselves walking the razor's edge between impression management and the authentic expression of group values.

Violent Encounters with Outside Society

Camouflaging cognitive and behavioral diversity within the club is generally sufficient to maintain an image of club solidarity for both bikers and outsiders present at the bar. This image of solidarity allows club members to suppress feelings of unease at being in a buffer zone; it also helps prevent outsiders from initiating rash actions against club members.

There are times, however, when the buffer zone truce is disrupted by active hostility between club members and outsiders. Although club members may not initiate or welcome violence, an occasional violent encounter with outside society is not without its ancillary benefits. It pulls the group together in a way that other group activities cannot.

The sociology of group dynamics has emphasized the fact that intra-group coherence is enhanced and inter-group boundaries made more salient by virtue of the presence of a hostile outgroup. In attempting to identify those forces that result in the persistence of cultural systems, anthropologist E.H. Spicer concluded that "the oppositional process is the essential factor in the formation and development of the persistent identity system" (1971:797). Focusing on personal psychodynamics, it is here proposed that cohesion is especially enhanced by violence. Violence, whether it is constructive or destructive, is for the individual a most powerful means of asserting personal identity. When an external threat requires collective violence on the part of the members of a group, individual and group identity are dramatically merged. Just such a social drama was created by the Canadian Airborne Regiment.

For nine years the Airborne Regiment was stationed at Canadian Forces Base Edmonton, Griesbach Barracks, located just north of Edmonton. The specially trained paratroop fighting force, which was then part of Mobile Command and numbered more than eight hundred, "... was probably the best-known component of the forces stationed in Edmonton with its high profile reputation as Canada's elite fighting force" (McMillan, 1977:A-3). The Canadian Airborne Regiment achieved international repute as a peace-keeping force as part of the United Nations task force in Cyprus. However, part of their local "high profile" included practicing their combat techniques in local bars.

The Airborne drank regularly at the Roslyn Hotel, located on the northern outskirts of Edmonton, while the Rebels had adopted the

Kingsway Inn as their club bar. In the winter of 1975 the Airborne began showing up at the Kingsway after one of their regiment had been hired as a bouncer. On Wednesday, March 5, thirty members of the Airborne's Francophone unit called One Commando (the Anglophone equivalent is called Two Commando), came to "drink." Three barroom fights later, the police were called to help a patron press charges and the Airborne were ushered outside. The Rebels considered the presence of the Airborne a territorial infringement, and were neither happy nor impressed as they watched the proceedings.

Two nights later, the member of the Airborne who was working as a bouncer at the Kingsway wanted to make room for his friends in the crowded confines of the bar. He picked up a chair that had a leather jacket on it, threw the jacket on the floor, and gave the chair to his friend. The jacket held Larry's (Rebels M.C.) colors. Larry, shooting pool at the time, came over and took the chair back. When the Airborne bouncer spit on Larry, Larry returned the courtesy and then proceeded to throw his adversary over a beer laden table. The other bouncers moved in and ushered the Airborne bouncer and Larry to the door. Larry wrestled the bouncer to the ground and then said: "Fuck you! You're a waste of time. I'm going back and finish my beer!" The Airborne bouncer, insulted, perhaps frightened, called the Forces Base for assistance.

The Rebels began to notice the gradual swelling in the number of Airborne present. They began arriving, two by two, groups of six, and finally a group of nine. Jim placed an emergency call to the clubhouse. At 11:45 p.m., Armand was entering the doorway at the same time as three Airborne. One of the Airborne, speaking in French, told the bouncer to "Call those asshole Rebels outside." Armand, a member of the Rebels M.C. who is bilingual, looked down at the Rebel skull patch on his own club tee-shirt, then said: "*Alors! C'est un Rebel*," and then proceeded to deck the startled Airborne. The band stopped as both groups scrambled to get outside into the fracas which moved to the parking lot. Management immediately locked the doors in order to protect the bar and its patrons. Although the Rebels were joined by a number of friends of the club, Rae (president of the Warlords M.C.) and one bouncer, they were still at a numerical disadvantage:

> Police say Saturday night's brawl, outside the Kingsway Avenue, involved about forty paratroopers from the Canadian Airborne Regiment, and twenty-three members of the Rebels Motorcycle Club (Edmonton Journal, March 13, 1975).

The Airborne had also brought with them an impressive collection of street fighting hardware, including karate equipment, a steel ball attached to a chain, a makeshift blackjack (a letter ball inside a sock), steel bars, and a baseball bat. But a small group that fights as a single unit has a decided advantage over a larger uncoordinated group. This is precisely what happened.

The Rebels attacked together, with the viciousness of cornered animals. They had shared too much together to think of deserting any of their brothers. It was now a brotherhood of survival, fighting with a vengeance. In the rush to get outside, the Saint, generally a reserved, soft-spoken, certainly not aggressive individual, found himself trapped with two Airborne in the exit way. With him he had a motorcycle battery that he had intended to trade to a friend of the club. Battery in hand, he swung wildly. The Airborne were again caught off guard, and crumpled next to the doorway. Ken, leading the way, fell when struck by a ball and chain. Clayton was slashed on the shoulder while trying to help him. Rae, of the Warlords M.C., had found an old hockey stick in the parking lot and swung at the chain-wielding Airborne, breaking both ribs and resolve.

The Airborne began to disperse as they saw a number of their fellows being beaten. These were not raw recruits but personnel that had completed their training in unarmed combat, weaponry, parachuting, and other special skills ranging from rappelling to riot control. However, they had not yet endured and shared enough as a group to cement the ties of comradeship that result in members presuming, and acting upon, a principle of self-sacrifice. The bonds of brotherhood certainly do not just happen, nor can they be "trained" for; they must be forged over time through open communication and shared experiences. The commitment that results precludes any alternative that hints of compromise by way of desertion: "They just wouldn't stick together" (Jim, Rebels M.C.). "They were out to shut us down and rough us up. For us, it was survival. We were out to maim. We were going after them with our bare hands and doing something about it. They broke and ran" (Wee Albert, Rebels M.C.). The actual fighting lasted approximately fifteen minutes. The results:

> Thirteen Soldiers Hurt in Brawl with Gang
>
> A brawl early Sunday morning between members of a motorcycle gang and soldiers from the Canadian Airborne Regiment at Namao sent thirteen of the soldiers to hospital for treatment of minor injuries. The brawl, on

streets near the Kingsway Inn... apparently started as a personal argument, then spread to the streets, said an Armed Forces spokesman... Most of the soldiers were treated for lacerations at the base hospital at Namao (Edmonton Journal, March 10, 1975).

In order to prevent any further incidents the management of the Kingsway Motor Inn proceeded to ban from its premises anybody who even remotely looked like a biker. The process of establishing a different club bar began anew; but the confrontation was over.

For the Rebels the brotherhood had been reaffirmed. Each member had taken extreme risk, and made personal sacrifices for the group:

> I thought, "Well, this is it!" I looked at all the hardware those guys were carrying, and I thought, 'Well, this is it! I'm probably not going to be able to walk for a month!' There must have been at least fifty-five of them. I don't think they expected us to fight against those odds, but we went at them, swinging, kicking, clawing with anything we could find. I got a boot in the head and went down with sore ribs, but that was about it (Onion, Rebels M.C.).

Whether the process is desperate, heroic, or banal doesn't really matter; the brotherhood emerges as a necessary condition of life. Loyalty arises out of the midst of danger, out of the tension and apprehension of possible injury, mutiliation, or worse.

As a result of extensive media coverage and articulation by the members themselves—from mutual praise to joking references—the "Battle of the Kingsway" became part of Rebel folklore. The Kingsway incident emerged as a historical referent that serves to vitalize and confirm a collective identity based upon brotherhood.

Conclusion

Informal observation and formal testing of the Rebels Motorcycle Club indicates that intracultural diversity emanates from inter-member variation in the form of diverse personal orientations towards the group's core ideology:

1. Members have different perceptions of group goals.
2. Members are committed to group goals to varying degrees.
3. Members have distinct personal goals that they hope to achieve through group participation; or alternatively they hope to maintain these goals despite group participation.

In effect, members have different theories of group culture. Much of the group tension and organization dynamics that result focus upon the process of negotiation as members—each with his own unique theory of group culture—attempt to bring the group into alignment with what they feel it ought to be. The intracultural heterogeneity that becomes evident in the form of both ideational and behavioral variation is not a social liability but a social asset because it provides a degree of operational flexibility. In fact, intracultural diversity is a vital resource, like variations in a gene pool, that lies at the core of social system adaptability and change.

At the same time that internal diversity is an asset, however, it is a potential threat to group survival unless handled properly. In order to maintain the image of solidarity essential to an organization on the fringes of society, as in the case of the Rebels M.C., the full extent of diversity must, in some situations, be camouflaged or otherwise compensated for. The need for compensation varies in relation to the degree of presumed threat from outsiders. This situation is summarized in Table 1.

In the context of the clubhouse, under conditions of security, club members are encouraged to air their differences, to negotiate an ongoing identity, and to engage in controlled self expression. There seems to be a tacit understanding that these processes are healthy and that a variety of viewpoints contributes to a better-informed decision-making process. Internal diversity is channelled in formal clubhouse meetings by procedures for conducting business. There are rules to facilitate negotiation and compromise of contentious issues and rules for overcoming an impasse (via the vote) should compromise fail.

In the context of the club bar, a buffer zone in which the club interfaces with the larger society, the situation is more tense. Diversity in commitment and social skills is essential in that it allows some club members to interact with outsiders and thus perpetuate the club by attracting new recruits. Internal diversity must, however, be camouflaged so that it is not taken as a sign of weakness by hostile outsiders. Consequently, some of the freedom of expression typical of the clubhouse is curtailed and mechanisms of symbolic camouflage, such as "showing of the colors" provide outsiders with a glimpse of what appears to be a tightly integrated group. Symbolic camouflage also helps reaffirm identity for club members and ease the anxiety that stems from being in a buffer zone.

Integration receives its most dramatic expression when the group is provoked to violent encounter with outside forces. In this situation, although diversity in fighting skills is valued, other

Table 1
Role of Internal Diversity in Situations Characterized by Varying Degrees of Threat

	Situation of minimal threat (clubhouse)	Situation of moderate threat (club bar)	Situation of substantial threat (violent encounters with outside society)
Advantage of internal diversity	Variety of view-points contributes to a better-informed decision-making process	Diversity in commitment and social skills allows some members to frequent the club bar and thus perpetuate the club by attracting new recruits	Diversity in fighting skills valued
Compensating mechanisms for channelling, disguising, or transcending internal diversity	Group procedures for discussion, negotiation, compromise, and final resolution (such as a vote) formulated	Diversity in opinions and behavior regulated so internal dissension does not erupt; image of solidarity promoted by symbolic mechanisms such as "showing of the colors"	Other kinds of diversity transcended in a collective show of force

kinds of diversity are transcended in a collective show of force which radically reaffirms group solidarity and helps enforce protective boundaries between the club and the outside world.

Variation, in the form of diverse theories of group culture on the part of club members, and differential attempts by club members to operationalize these theories of group culture, are here viewed as natural, and frequently beneficial, aspects of group life. This does not mean that all organizations are the same, however. The strength of an organization can be measured in terms of: (1) the organization's capacity to accommodate variation and conflict and still maintain its basic elements or relationships, and (2) the ease and rapidity with which the organization returns to a state of operational equilibrium after absorbing an incident of conflict.

In brief, groups assume different faces, depending upon the circumstances. In some situations, diversity is encouraged while in other situations, uniformity is required. Diversity and uniformity are opposites only in a logical sense. In a social sense, they are both part of a single process by which groups attempt to adapt to a dynamic and changing world.

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