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**Document Title: Female Gang Involvement in a Midwestern City:  
Correlates, Nature and Meanings**

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**Document No.: 179979**

**Date Received: December 28, 1999**

**Award Number: 96-IJ-CX-0005**

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96-TS-CX-0005

179979

FEMALE GANG INVOLVEMENT IN A MIDWESTERN CITY:  
CORRELATES, NATURE AND MEANINGS

by

Jody Ann Miller

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A Dissertation Presented to the  
FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(Sociology)

December 1996

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee—Barry Glassner, Malcolm Klein, and Philippa Levine—for their support, encouragement, guidance, patience, and for the intellectual growth I experienced through my interactions with each of them. Cheryl Maxson was also wonderfully supportive of me throughout the project, generously fielding telephone calls about obscure questions, helping me negotiate and interpret revisions, and guiding me, along with my committee members, toward more rigorous scholarship.

Financial support for the project was provided by the National Institute of Justice, in the form of an Assistant Attorney General's Dissertation Fellowship Award. Thanks to Winnie Reed at the NIJ who oversaw the project, and to Eli Heitz and Letty Baz at USC for their administrative expertise and support. I also received a Haynes Dissertation Fellowship Award through USC for the academic year 1994-1995 which contributed additional support to the project.

Seven months of negotiating with the Institutional Review Board at USC was a nightmare, but out of the struggle came two hidden blessings: the opportunity to work with C. Ronald Huff and Jodi Rice. Ron is, as Cheryl Maxson dubbed him, "the nicest man in the gang field." He served as my on-site supervisor in Columbus, and was more than willing to assist when I called on him, putting me in touch with people in the field, making phone calls on my behalf, and calming my nerves about how to take on what felt like the monumental task of writing the dissertation. He also introduced me to Jodi Rice.

Jodi served as the youth advocate on my project, and we met several times during the data-gathering phase to discuss its progress. My meetings with Jodi always left me feeling invigorated. She was generous with her time, and talking with her gave me greater insight into working and communicating with adolescents. She is a woman I truly admire.

A number of individuals at local agencies facilitated my contact with the young women I interviewed. I owe a debt of gratitude to Carol Johnson and Anne Japinko at Rosemont Center, Jane Carter, Joanne Carter, John Cerbi and Walt Wheeler at the Detention Center, and Duane Casares at Directions for Youth. In addition, I



appreciate the time Lieutenant Bowditch and Detective Alexander with the Columbus Police Department were willing to spend with me discussing the project. Thanks also to Lori Reed for assistance in transcribing audio tapes, and Tommie Vales for gathering census tract data, and for data entry and analysis.

There are a number of additional people to thank, who have touched my life in various ways over the course of the project. Thanks to Marty Schwartz and Ruth Peterson for their presence in my life. Both are models of what I hope to become in mentoring, encouraging and supporting students. Spending time with Tari Vales and Veronica Fluker provided me with insight into what it's like to be a young woman negotiating in the world today. They taught me about resiliency and courage; they were also a lot of fun. I have wonderful friends to thank, who supported me through personal crises and encouraged my work when I struggled: Julie Pinyan, Ameena Uvais, Carlos Royal, Greg Stiers, Michael Fairchild, Linda Fairchild, Kim Huisman, Fahim Uvais, Vik Dhawan, Linda Schmidt, and most of all my mother.

Finally, I want to thank the young women I interviewed. Though a few remained suspicious of me, most were generous with their time and thoughts, some amazingly

so. Each girl touched my life and expanded my understanding of the world. I still laugh out loud every time I read the transcript of my interview with Traci, may she never lose her silly playful side. More than anything, I see these young women as amazingly resourceful, though not always in productive ways, in buildings lives and identities in a dangerous and sometimes hostile world. To borrow from my friend Tari, "you gotta give 'em their props."

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This project is a weaving together of two specific interests and one social concern. My interests are in the changing nature of gangs resulting from their emergence and growth in new cities, and the place and meanings of gang affiliation among young women in these contexts. My concern is with the detrimental effects recent punitive crime policies are having in the lives of young people: these policies are resulting in a disregard for the social and economic contexts that cause youth crime and gang participation. We are in a time of change as scholars studying gangs. The 1980s and 1990s have witnessed monumental national growth both in gangs, and in the renewed academic study of gangs (Hagedorn, 1988; Huff, 1990; Klein, 1995; Spergel, 1995). Female gang involvement, which until recently was stereotyped or ignored, has also garnered new interest among researchers thanks in part to the work of feminist scholars, who have struggled to bring the study of women's lives more fully into the academic world (for recent work on female gang involvement see Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Campbell, 1984a; Chesney-Lind, 1993; Fishman, 1988; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Lauderback et al., 1992; Moore,

1991; for an overview of the goals and accomplishments of feminist scholarship see Harding, 1987).

We are in a time, then, in which gangs, gang scholarship, and interest in young women's gang involvement have proliferated. These changes also come at a time of intense increase in punitiveness within the juvenile and criminal justice systems and within public discourse. This punitive shift has been witnessed by a widening of social control in inner-city communities and communities of color, and toward juvenile delinquents in particular (Krisberg et al., 1986; Mauer, 1993; Scheingold, 1984; Tonry, 1995). The handling of gangs and gang members (or those perceived to be gang members) by the juvenile and criminal justice systems has shifted as well (Klein, 1993; Klein and Maxson, 1989; Molina, 1993), with the social control of youths of color often accomplished through the application of the label "gang member."<sup>1</sup>

Combined with this punitiveness within the system is a corollary increase in media and popular attention in the "new violent female offender," vividly reflected in recent, often sensationalized attention given to girls in gangs (Chesney-Lind, 1993). As this attention illustrates, female involvement in gangs has become a specific public concern. In a February 1990 story on ABC World News Tonight about female gang involvement, Diane Sawyer began with the

following lead-in:

Traditionally in neighborhoods where gang violence is a way of life, young women have stayed out of the fighting. No more. In the past year or two, police from New York to Los Angeles have had to confront the emergence of female gangs, and an equally deadly kind of female violence.

News correspondent Karen Burnes went on to elaborate:

In defiance and in defense, they have broken away from male gangs, creating a language, a stylé, and a culture outsiders cannot penetrate. They roam the streets staking out territory, dealing drugs, and asserting their strength and independence. In ten years, the FBI says arrests of women for violent crimes have increased by 41 percent, almost twice as much as violent crimes by men. Cops on the street say women are often more violent, more brutal than men. And they say much of their crime is now related to gang activity.

The public concern surrounding girls in gangs is not just about their supposed "violent nature" but as importantly their violation of appropriate femininity and its effects on their roles as mothers. During the same story, news correspondent Burnes concluded by suggesting that what is perhaps most "disturbing" about the presumed rise in female gangs is that "many of these girls are now mothers, raising a generation nurtured on violence and hate."

The danger of this sensationalized focus on gangs, and female gang involvement in particular, is that "virtually everything we learn about what's really happening comes from only two urban institutions--police and media--both with powerful, self-interested motives" (Moore, 1991: 1). As a



result, gang policy is rarely based on strategies which are grounded in an assessment of the causes of gang affiliation. Policy tends to be measures taken with little thought given to the sources of gangs within communities (Spergel and Curry, 1993). The current thrust in gang policy is toward gang suppression and deterrence at the expense of prevention, rehabilitation and efforts to change the social and economic conditions that make gangs viable options for more and more youths today (Hagedorn, 1991; Klein, 1993). Given these punitive contexts, the increased public concern with girls in gangs makes academic research about female gang involvement all the more imperative today.

Before I turn to a discussion of how female gang involvement has fared in the academic arena, I need to review major definitional debates within the field concerning what constitutes a gang, and also to describe my position within this debate. Given the punitive contexts described above, it is not surprising that official definitions of gangs tend to be narrow, focusing specifically on criminal involvement. Scholars range in their views on gang definitions. Horowitz (1990) suggests that establishing specific criteria to determine what constitutes a gang may close down debate and overlook the variations that exist across gangs. This is an important point, especially given evidence of the diversification of gangs, in part resulting from their

proliferation (Spergel and Curry, 1993; Huff, 1993; Klein and Maxson, 1996). However, in order to build comprehensive and comparable data about gangs across contexts, it is necessary to have some amount of standardization in our definitions. The goal, in my view, is to adopt a definition that is flexible enough to capture differences that may emerge across gangs and gang cities, while providing some means of assuring that we are examining similar phenomena.

Probably the major debate in the field is whether criminal involvement should be part of this definition. Klein's (1971) definition of a gang is one of the most influential and longstanding. He suggests that the term gang refer to a group of youths who:

(a) are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others in their neighborhood, (b) recognize themselves as a denotable group (almost invariably with a group name) and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of [illegal] incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighborhood residents and/or enforcement agencies. (Klein, 1971: 13)

One critique of this approach is that a potential outcome of gang activity (crime) is part of the definition, and as such is tautological (Short, 1990; Bursik and Grasmick, 1995). However, defining gangs as groups that are involved in crime does not preclude examination of variations in criminal involvement, including the types, extent or seriousness of illegal activities. Instead it highlights that crime is a focal point of the group, and one that

results in recognition (see also Decker, 1996). Indeed, research that has defined gang involvement based on self-nomination without specifying crime as a defining feature has nonetheless consistently found serious criminal involvement as a feature that distinguishes gangs from other groups of youths (Fagan, 1990; Thornberry et al., 1993; Winfree et al., 1992).

Perhaps the more significant epistemological issue is that when crime is a defining feature of what constitutes a gang, this privileges and dwells on one negative characteristic of the group while downplaying other positive elements, and overlooks its similarities to other social groups. Short notes that "many gangs who commit delinquent acts are not so much criminally inclined as concerned about such matters as participation in youth culture, and getting by" (Short in Klein, 1995: 26). This is a serious critique, especially given the punitive law enforcement emphasis on crime as the defining feature of gangs. When gangs are defined simply as criminal groups they will be treated as such, regardless of the complexities of gang involvement that expand beyond crime.

For the purpose of this study, my own position is one that is influenced by these critiques but nonetheless includes criminal involvement as a defining feature of the group. There is overwhelming empirical evidence that

criminal involvement is one of the features of youth gangs (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Esbensen et al., 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993; Fagan, 1990; Thornberry et al., 1993; Winfree et al., 1992), and members themselves characterize their groups as such. However, they also resist this characterization when it becomes totalizing. I believe it is possible in gang research to recognize the empirical relationship of street gangs to crime without reifying this connection. This means not emphasizing crime to the exclusion of other elements of gangs that make them noteworthy (for example, the meanings and functions they serve in youths' lives), and it also means examining and highlighting the ways in which gang youths resist attempts to reduce their groups simply to criminal enterprises. In this project I will do both, while nonetheless defining youth gangs as groups that, by definition, are involved in crime.

Specifically, my definition of a gang for the purpose of this project is a partial adaptation of Klein's. A gang is a group of youths who recognize themselves as a denotable group and apply the term "gang" to describe their group, and one that defines itself as criminally involved. Because of my emphasis on gangs in an emergent city (see below), I believe Klein's criteria that the group must be recognized by others in the neighborhood as such and have solicited negative responses by law enforcement, if applied

stringently, might overlook those groups that are newly emerging.<sup>2</sup> Thus this is not a criteria I have adopted.

Turning the focus back to female gang involvement specifically, when one looks at the academic arena, the emphasis on gangs as a principally male phenomenon has been a longstanding tradition in the academic study of gangs (for critiques of gender bias in gang research see Campbell, 1984a, 1990a, 1990b; Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1992; Taylor, 1993). Exclusive focus on male gang involvement has been common (see for example Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955; Hagedorn, 1988; Jankowski, 1991; Moore, 1978; Padilla, 1992; Short and Strodbeck, 1965; Spergel, 1964; Vigil, 1988), and even when researchers have discussed female participation in gangs, they have often gained their information from male gang members, rather than the female participants themselves (Campbell, 1990a).

Most traditional gang research has emphasized the auxiliary and peripheral nature of girls' gang involvement, and has often resulted in an almost exclusive emphasis on their sexuality and sexual activities with male gang members (Campbell, 1984a). Their relative lack of participation in serious delinquency has been noted (Miller, 1975), along with their use as carriers of weapons, as decoys or spies for infiltrating rival gangs, as sexual outlets for male gang members, as instigators or provokers of conflict between male

gangs, and as cat fighters, fighting one another for the attention of male gang members (for a fuller discussion, see Campbell, 1984a). It is likely that these research findings are as much a reflection of the frameworks applied to gangs by male researchers and male academics as they are a reflection of the nature of girls' gang participation prior to and into the 1980s (Campbell, 1990a). The few studies during this time that focused on female gang involvement from the perspectives of the girls in gangs provide evidence that young women's roles in these groups were probably broader than most of the literature reflects (Bowker and Klein, 1983; Brown, 1977; Fishman, 1988; Moore, 1991).

The study of young women's participation in gangs, then, has a history of marginalization and invisibility (see Campbell, 1984a, 1990a, 1990b; Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1992; Moore and Hagedorn, 1996; Taylor, 1993). Overlooking girls' involvement in gangs or depicting them only as peripheral members has meant a failure to examine the significance of gang life for the females involved (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1992: 49). This is despite evidence suggesting that females approximate anywhere from ten to 38 percent of gang members (Campbell, 1984a; Chesney-Lind, 1993; Esbensen, 1996; Family and Youth Services Bureau, 1993; Fagan, 1990; Klein, 1971; Miller, 1975; Moore, 1991), that female gang participation may be increasing

(Fagan, 1990; Spergel and Curry, 1993; Taylor, 1993), and that in some urban areas, upwards of one fifth of girls report gang affiliations (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Winfree et.al., 1992).

These numbers should make even the most male-oriented gang scholars take pause. Young women are participating in gangs in large numbers; without an understanding of the significance of gangs in their lives, we cannot hope to develop policy that can effectively meet the needs of these young women. Thus, now more than ever we need to work at providing an accurate picture of the causes, nature and meanings of female gang involvement, to shape public policy in constructive ways, rather than allowing it to continue a course of reactionary response to stereotypes and 'malign neglect'<sup>3</sup> of the true causes of gang involvement among young people in general, and young women in particular. This is a formidable task, but one that is being undertaken with greater frequency than ever (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Campbell, 1984a; Chesney-Lind, 1993; Harris, 1988; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Lauderback et al., 1992; Moore, 1991; Quicker, 1983; Taylor, 1993).

My study adds yet another layer to this critically important project. The goals of the study are to provide a detailed picture of female gang membership, and in particular to focus on a city in which gangs are a relatively new

phenomenon. The project is the first prong of a larger study comparing female gang involvement across cities with differing socioeconomic and cultural contexts, and with differing histories of gangs. The focus of this text is Columbus, Ohio. The project includes comparative survey interviews with 21 gang members and 25 non-gang girls, census tract analyses for both groups, and in-depth interviews with the gang members. It explores the correlates of gang involvement among girls, the life contexts shaping their participation in gangs and the meanings they attribute to it, the structures and activities of these gangs and girls' roles within them.

I chose Columbus because it is a city in contrast to the typical gang city of the past. As I will discuss in detail in chapter three, Columbus was chosen as one of my sites for two very specific reasons. First, it is a city in which gangs are a relatively new phenomenon--with their emergence dated around 1986. Second, it is a city that is thriving economically, experiencing both population and economic growth in the last decade. This is in contrast to the many cities which have been devastated by the multiple effects of deindustrialization, including population and job loss among central city residents, outmigration of the middle classes, and the deterioration of social support networks (see Hagedorn, 1988; Wilson, 1987). Columbus is important



in part because it is representative of a more recent pattern. We are in a new era when it comes to gangs. They have emerged in numerous cities, suburbs, towns and even some rural areas across the United States--places that do not necessarily have many of the deep problems usually associated with gangs, most notably entrenched urban "underclass" conditions like those described above.

Given the proliferation of gang involvement across the U.S. into more and smaller cities, and the flood of new studies on gangs, a number of scholars have expressed concern with the "totalizing" effects of some research, which fails to examine the complex causes, meanings and forms of gangs and gang participation (Hagedorn, 1994; Moore and Hagedorn, 1996; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995). If we hope for a comprehensive understanding of female gang involvement, we need to look multiply at the life contexts of girls in gangs, the meanings they attribute to their gang involvement and their roles within gangs, and the structures and activities of these groups as well. To do so, we must gather systematic data that combines multiple methodologies, drawing on the strengths of each method to further illuminate the complexities of the phenomenon. We also need to emphasize comparisons--of gang and non-gang youth, across a variety of contexts, including neighborhood and city contexts, the specific contexts of individual gangs, as well as across

race, ethnicity, gender, age and class contexts. This means emphasizing not only potential differences but also exploring the similarities and variations existing within groups or contexts.

#### OUTLINE OF THE TEXT

My choice to study young women's gang involvement in a setting such as Columbus (in combination with additional cities), using multiple methodologies, and gang/nongang comparisons, thus allows me to underscore the diversity of gangs and gang affiliation, along with their overlapping similarities. The research is constructed in a way that stresses comparisons--of gang and non-gang girls, with an emphasis on individual, community and structural factors. This research design has allowed me to examine systematically three questions of concern: etiological questions, the meanings and contexts of gang involvement, gang structures and young women's roles within these groups.

Chapter two provides a detailed literature review, assessing our current knowledge of female gang involvement around the dimensions of interest: etiological questions, the meanings and contexts of gang affiliation, gang structures and girls' activities in these groups. It also includes a discussion of female involvement in delinquency and gang-related crime.

In chapter three, I will begin by discussing our current knowledge of gang proliferation, and situate Columbus in this context. To understand the nature and meanings of gangs in girls' lives in Columbus, it is also necessary to paint a picture of the city itself. Here I will provide an overview of Columbus' socioeconomic character, and population and economic growth in recent years. The chapter concludes with a general discussion of the gang situation in Columbus, as depicted by knowledgeable police officers and the local media. While their knowledge remains incomplete, it nonetheless provides a starting point from which to compare my findings.

Chapter four will provide an overview of methodology, including sampling procedures and sample characteristics, survey methods, census tract analysis, and in-depth interviewing. I will discuss some of the strengths of employing these particular methods, especially the use of multiple approaches. I will also address some of the difficulties I faced, how I feel the project was shaped by interview contexts, and the efforts I made to overcome these problems. This chapter will also provide an outline of the survey measurements used to compare gang and non-gang girls.

Chapter five examines these etiological questions by providing data on how gang and non-gang girls compare with one another in their responses to a number of questions in

the survey interview, related to socioeconomic and neighborhood conditions, perceptions of and performance in school, family relationships and problems, self esteem and victimization, peer relations and peer delinquency, involvement in crime, arrests, and exposure to violence. Potential patterns distinguishing gang and non-gang girls will be discussed. In chapter six, I examine in more depth some of the life experiences leading girls to choose to become gang-involved. Patterns emerged in the surveys and in-depth interviews suggesting that certain life contexts are related to girls' decisions to join gangs. Examining how these contexts motivate girls to become gang-involved illuminates some of the meanings of gangs in their lives, as they reveal the needs girls attempt to fulfill through gang membership. These patterns will be explored, and five case studies will be presented to illustrate. In addition, the experiences of three non-gang girls who associate with gangs will be discussed, highlighting their motivations to associate with gangs but also to remain non-members.

Chapter seven provides an overview of the structures and nature of those gangs in Columbus in which girls are involved. This will include descriptions of the size, gender composition, age range and territoriality of these groups, as well as a discussion of leadership and connections to other cities. I will also discuss how young women achieve status

in these groups, along with a more general presentation of member qualifications and ranking systems.

Chapter eight continues the description of Columbus gangs by highlighting their groups activities, including initiation rites, everyday activities, rules, inter-gang rivalries and criminal involvement. Both of these chapters will assess how Columbus gangs compare with those described in previous research on emergent gang cities.

Chapter nine explores the gendered meanings of gang involvement in Columbus, highlighting the contradictory nature of girls' experiences in the gang. Here I will discuss the disjuncture between the desired ideal of gender equality, and how it fails to manifest itself, in the organization of the gang, as well as in both males' and females' attitudes toward young women in general. I will examine specifically the ways in which young women in gangs participate in the perpetuation of gender inequalities, and the reasons behind their attitudes and actions.

Finally, chapter ten will conclude by summarizing the study findings in Columbus. Here I will note specifically how this project moves us forward in our understanding of gangs generally, and female gang involvement specifically, and will discuss what I consider important directions for future research. I will also discuss policy implications emerging from this study.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In fact, in Los Angeles county, 47 percent of all African American males between 21 and 24 years of age are listed in the police gang database, despite the fact that research consistently reveals that only a small proportion of youths in gang-involved communities are gang members (see Reiner, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> For example, a recent (1993) prominent gang homicide occurred in Columbus, Ohio (the study site) in a popular downtown shopping mall. The youth who was killed was a member of a Folks set that local officials had no prior knowledge of.

<sup>3</sup> This phrase is borrowed from Michael Tonry (1995), who uses the phrase to highlight the fact that the War on Drugs has *forseeably* worsened racial disparities in criminal justice, and that policy-makers knowingly adopt policies that are not designed to alleviate drug abuse and crime. Likewise, recent punitive approaches toward gangs do not effectively deal with the causes and meanings of gangs in youths' lives, but do serve political purposes (see Davis, 1990 chapter five).

## II. RELATED LITERATURE

Recent evidence suggests that young women approximate anywhere from ten to 38 percent of gang members (Campbell, 1984a; Chesney-Lind, 1993; Esbensen, 1996; Family and Youth Services Bureau, 1993; Fagan, 1990; Klein, 1971; Miller, 1975; Moore, 1991), and that female gang participation may be increasing (Fagan, 1990; Spergel and Curry, 1993; Taylor, 1993). In fact, Bjerregaard and Smith's (1992) sample of youths, stratified to overrepresent high-risk youths and youths living in high crime areas, actually found a slightly larger percentage of females (22 percent) than males (18 percent) claiming gang membership when using self-definition as a measure. These recent numbers are both the result of and are resulting in an increased interest in female gang participation among scholars studying gangs.

As I noted in the introduction, the history of gang research has been one which trivialized or ignored female participation, but this is less the case today. There have been numerous thorough critiques of the gender bias entrenched within the traditions of the gang literature (see Campbell, 1984a, 1990a, 1990b; Chesney-Lind and Shelden,

1992; Taylor, 1993), and these critiques are important. Rather than repeat them in detail here, my preference is to focus instead on what we *have* learned about female gang participation, and use this base of knowledge as a starting point for my work.

While there is a relative paucity of academic research on girls in gangs, there is nonetheless a considerable body of knowledge. In this chapter, I will discuss research findings concerning three areas of interest: first, the correlates of female gang participation, including a discussion of the relationship of gang affiliation with structural factors, individual problems, family relationships, peer relationships, and delinquency; second, the meanings and functions of gang affiliation for young women; and finally, the structures of gangs in which girls are involved and the roles of females within them.

#### CORRELATES OF FEMALE GANG INVOLVEMENT

Studies which examine the causes of gang participation tend toward two approaches. The first involves the assessment of the relationship of gang affiliation with a number of variables, including structural factors such as neighborhood characteristics, poverty, educational and occupational opportunities; individual factors such as self esteem, sexual experiences and victimization; family



relationships and experiences, including violence and other problems; and peer factors such as amount of contact with peers and peer delinquency. The second approach involves assessing the functions of gang membership, and how these functions relate to the meanings and benefits gang members attribute to their participation in the gang. In this section I will discuss the first of these approaches, and will discuss the second below.

### Structural Factors

Structural factors such as neighborhood characteristics, poverty, educational and occupational opportunities are and have historically been recognized by researchers as associated with rates of gang participation within communities (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955; Fagan, 1990; Hagedorn, 1988; Jackson, 1991; Moore, 1978, 1991; Padilla, 1992; Thrasher, 1927; Vigil, 1988). In the literature on female gang participation, however, this has tended to be an observational statement, rather than a problem to be tested empirically (see Campbell, 1984a; Chesney-Lind, 1993; Fishman, 1988; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Quicker, 1983). The most comprehensive contemporary treatment of risk factors associated with female gang participation is found in the work of Bjerregaard and Smith (1992), based on a sample of 987 youths, and stratified to overrepresent high-risk communities (comparing gang and non-

gang youths from the same communities). They found neither 'social disorganization' (as measured by percent female headed-households, percent on welfare, percent below poverty line, percent of population with less than a high school education, duration of unemployment, racial composition, and population mobility) nor poverty (derived from data on income of principle wage earner in household) as significantly associated with gang membership for females. However, they did find that low expectations for completing school were a significant predictor of gang membership for young women.

This finding on the relationship of female gang involvement and educational expectations has received support in other studies of girls in gangs. Bowker and Klein (1983), for example, report that female gang members were less likely than non-members to intend to finish high school or go to college. Fishman's data from the 1960s reveals that the majority of gang girls were high school dropouts or had extremely high rates of truancy. In addition, the gang girls Quicker spoke with expressed a strong dislike for school, indicating they found it boring and frustrating (1983: 34).

Many researchers point to structural factors to explain female, as well as male gang participation (Campbell, 1990a; Chesney-Lind, 1993; Fishman, 1988; Hagedorn, 1988; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Quicker, 1983; Taylor, 1993). While this assessment appears to be accurate (Fagan, 1989;

Jackson, 1991; see also chapter three), it nevertheless remains only a partial answer to the question of why girls join gangs and participate in gang activities. Even with samples stratified to overrepresent high-risk areas, fewer than one quarter of youths claim gang membership (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Winfree et al., 1991), and researchers have found no differences in perceived limited opportunities between gang and non-gang youths in these communities (Esbensen et al., 1993). Therefore it is necessary to examine what other factors might lead certain youth into gang affiliation, even while others within the same impoverished communities exercise other options.

#### Individual Factors

The examination of personal factors continues to be a useful means with which to attempt to differentiate those youths in high-risk areas who join gangs with those who do not. According to Klein (1995), youth who join gangs are more likely to have personal problems such as lower "impulse control," a tendency towards defiance and aggressiveness, and self esteem problems which lead to a greater than normal desire for the type of status, identity and companionship that gangs can provide. Klein surmises that the personal problems of youths likely to become gang members are in some ways exaggerations of those faced by young people more generally.

Once again, few recent studies have tested empirically the relationship of these factors to female gang participation, and results have been mixed. Bowker and Klein (1983) found a relationship between self-esteem and gang membership among females. In contrast, Bjerregaard and Smith report that self esteem was not related to gang membership for males or females in their sample, while early sexual activity was related to gang membership for both sexes:

Early engagement in sexual intercourse increases the probability of joining the gang by 17% for boys, and by 34% for girls . . . indicating that female gang members are significantly more likely to have engaged in early intercourse than male gang members. (1992: 18)

In nearly all cases, the girls reported becoming sexually active prior to gang affiliation. Moore's (1991) findings on Chicano/a gangs in Los Angeles offer some support for Bjerregaard and Smith's finding that early sexual activity is associated with contemporary gang membership. In addition, research suggests that a history of sexual victimization is related to gang membership for girls (Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Moore, 1991).

#### Family Variables

The family has long been considered crucial for understanding delinquency and gang behavior among girls (Canter, 1982; Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987; Moore, 1991; Smith and Paternoster, 1987). Weak supervision, lack of attachment to parents and family, the gang involvement of

other family members, family violence and the emotional climate in the home, and other problems within the home (such as a drug-addicted member, or a death in the family) are all factors which may be related to why some girls join gangs while others in their communities avoid doing so. According to Moore (1991: 82), the quality of family relationships and emotional climate within the family can serve to "insulate poverty-stricken youngsters from delinquency."

In general, girls are more closely supervised, and subject to stricter familial controls than are their male counterparts (Canter, 1982; Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987; Hill and Atkinson, 1988; Moore, 1991). This had led some researchers to examine whether lack of parental supervision permits some girls to join gangs. Bjerregaard and Smith measured both parental supervision and parental attachment in their study, and found no significant correlation with gang membership for either variable. In contrast, Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) observe that their interview respondents sometimes had parents who were working long hours or parents who were unemployed or underemployed, and speculate that this affected their supervision.

Moore's (1991) study of several Chicano/a gangs in Los Angeles provides a detailed discussion of the complexities of family experiences in the lives of female gang members. Her study compared male and female gang members, rather than gang

and nongang females, making her findings difficult to compare to my work (ie. she may have uncovered broader gendered patterns rather than gendered gang patterns); however, many of her findings are noteworthy. In Moore's study, the girls' mothers were more likely to work outside the home than boys', they were more likely to come from single parent homes, and a higher percentage of girls came from homes where the adults did not work.

On the question of whether gang affiliation is related to having other family members in gangs, Moore (1991: 48) reports that while boys are more likely to join gangs as a result of growing up in the neighborhood around gangs, girls are more likely to join because of a relative or close friend's association with the gang. In their interviews with gang members, Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) report that 90 percent of the girls (12 of 13) and 80 percent of the boys (28 of 35) reported having a family member who was in a gang; usually this was a sibling. Lauderback et al. (1992) argue that this pattern of gang identification through familial affiliations is more prevalent among Latinas, whereas African American girls are more likely to organize and join gangs independently.

Another factor considered significant in explaining gang affiliation is the existence of family violence in the home. In Joe and Chesney-Lind's study, 55 percent of the

boys and 75 percent of the girls who were asked reported physical abuse in their families. In addition, 62 percent of the girls reported sexual abuse. Campbell (1984a) also reports anecdotal evidence of family violence and sexual abuse among the women in her study of female gangs in New York.

Moore provides the most detailed account of family violence in her study of Chicano/a gangs. She reports that a number of her respondents witnessed their fathers beat their mothers, though "only a small minority experienced this as a routine feature of their home life" (Moore, 1991: 91). In addition, many of her respondents reported being afraid of their fathers and mothers (1991: 92-93). Finally, she reports that a number of female gang members had been victims of incest (1991: 96). She summarizes that female gang members recount more cases of childhood abuse and neglect than males, and more frequently come from homes where wife abuse and sexual assault are present (Moore, 1991). Because Moore's work compares male and female gang members, she is unable to speak to the question of whether female gang members are more likely than non-gang girls to come from homes where abuse is present.

In addition to violence, Moore also provides evidence in her study of other family problems faced by gang youth, including having alcoholics and/or drug addicts in the

family, witnessing the arrest of family member(s) growing up, having someone in the home who was physically handicapped or chronically ill, and having a family member die when they were growing up. Her conclusion is that gang members, particularly girls, come from families that are troubled. These studies reveal a myriad of factors within families that may contribute to the likelihood of gang involvement for some girls.

#### Peer Factors

Evidence suggests that peer influences are important for understanding gang participation among females (Brown, 1977; Bowker and Klein, 1983; Campbell, 1990a, 1990b; Figuiera-McDonough et al., 1981; Giordano, 1978; Morash, 1983). For both males and females, delinquency increases when youths are regular members of a group, and have frequent peer contacts (Bowker and Klein, 1983; Elliott et al., 1985; Giordano, 1978). The more time spent with a delinquent peer group, the more likely a girl is to be delinquent (Giordano, 1978: 130). In addition, the gender of their peer associates is important. Some research has indicated that girls form closer peer attachments than boys do (Giordano et al., 1986). According to Campbell (1990a), while it is often assumed that girls' involvement with delinquent groups results from the influence of delinquent *male* peers, her research on female gang members stresses the importance of the *female* peer



group.

Campbell's view is supported by several studies on female gang participation. Among girls in Bowker and Klein's study, "relationships with girlfriends are more important in determining gang membership and seriousness of delinquency than any . . . other variables" (1983: 745). Giordano's examination of participation in delinquency provides further evidence of this pattern. She found that girls received the most approval and support for engaging in delinquent acts from their girlfriends, and received less approval from male peers and boyfriends (Giordano, 1978: 131). She concludes:

Just as the same sex peer group has offered a source of status and approval in the case of male delinquents, it appears that approval from other girlfriends will also accompany a girl's decision to become involved in delinquent activity.  
(Giordano, 1978: 131-132)

However, she also found race differences in the relationship between delinquency and the gender composition of peer groups. White girls who spent time in mixed-gender groups were more likely to be delinquent than their peers who went out mostly with groups of girls. For African-American girls, the gender composition of the group did not affect the likelihood of delinquency, and "there was a somewhat greater likelihood that 'trouble' could involve a group of girls alone" (Giordano, 1978: 132). Giordano surmises:

This could represent a difference in the kinds of constraints which may have traditionally been placed on white as compared to black adolescent females. To the extent that the black female has

had a longer tradition of independence and freedom of action than has her white counterpart, the less likely it seems that the black female would need to learn techniques, values and motives from 'the guys.' (Giordano, 1978: 132)

Peer delinquency, then, is crucial for understanding youths' participation in crime. The most important single factor for explaining delinquency among both boys and girls is the delinquency of their peers (Elliott et al., 1985; Morash, 1983). Peer group norms that are favorable towards delinquency also affect rates of delinquency for individual youths (Figueira-McDonough et al., 1981). It is not surprising then that peer delinquency is related to the likelihood a youth will become involved with a gang. Bjerregaard and Smith (1992: 18) conclude that for the youths in their survey, peer involvement with delinquency "was significantly associated with the probability of gang membership for both sexes" (1992: 18).

All of the factors discussed thus far--structural, individual, family, and peer factors--may be part of the key to understanding the participation of girls in gangs. Some, such as sexual abuse and disruptive home environments, may be more salient for girls than boys, while others, such as poverty, lack of opportunities and peer relationships, may affect girls and boys similarly. Next I will turn to literature assessing the functions and meanings of gang membership for its participants, to illuminate further those

factors which may draw girls into gang involvement.

#### FUNCTIONS AND MEANINGS OF GANG PARTICIPATION

To understand youths' participation in gangs more fully, it is necessary to recognize the positive aspects of gang affiliation for those involved (Hagedorn, 1990; Quicker, 1983). Gangs comprise an important element of the social support systems of their members (Soriano, 1993: 454), and may meet specific needs for girls. Understanding the life contexts of girls in gangs--those factors shaping their decisions to join, such as lack of family, gang-involved family, neighborhood and peer contexts that provide incentive to join gangs--helps illuminate the meanings of gang affiliation for young women. According to Campbell:

If we are going to account for female gang membership in its own terms rather than as an interesting comparative footnote to the male gang, it is important to incorporate the community and class context in which these girls live and to identify what it means to be a woman growing up in and adapting to these conditions . . . . Gangs can be seen as representing a means by which some youths seek to resolve the problems presented by their structural position. (1990a: 172)

A number of themes emerge in research concerning the meanings of gang affiliation for the youths involved, including the role of the gang in providing youths a sense of belonging and support, status and identity, recreation and excitement, a means of adapting to the structural constraints imposed by their environments, and for girls, a way of

resisting the limitations placed on them by social definitions of appropriate femininity. I will discuss these themes in turn.

#### Belonging, Social Support and Family

For boys, it has long been recognized that "the gang can serve as a surrogate extended family for adolescents who do not see their own families as meeting their needs for belonging, nurturance, and acceptance" (Huff, 1993). The gang provides youths with a group of peers with whom friendship and familial relations are established. Recent evidence reveals that surrogate familial ties are also a product of female gang participation (Brown, 1978; Campbell, 1990a; Chesney-Lind, 1993; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995). As Brown reports, "the sense of belonging fostered by gang membership fulfills some very basic psychological needs for the female gang members in much the same fashion as for the male gang members" (1977: 223).

Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) report that the gang is a place where its members can find a support network that both acts as a family and provides an outlet to escape from troubled families. They explore several themes which emerged from their interviews with gang members. According to these authors, the gang provides a social outlet for these youths, offering support, solidarity, and a network of reliable friends, and it acts as an alternative or surrogate family

for those members whose parents are unable to provide stable family relations. Joe and Chesney-Lind report that friendships within the gang provide an outlet for members to deal with family problems and cope with abuse. While the boys they interviewed did not discuss the gang as an outlet for talking about their problems, the girls described the support network of the gang as offering friendship and a "system for coping and managing their everyday life problems."

#### Status, Identity and Excitement

Research has provided a laundry list of the benefits of gang affiliation for youths. According to Miller (1990), gang membership provides socialization for youths, recreation and entertainment, and a means of learning social skills. Concerning the members of the all-female gang they studied, Lauderback et al. (1992) explained that the gang provides individuals with status, stature in the community, confidence, a sense of belonging, family, a major support network, and provides protection, in addition to its financial benefits. And Brown (1978) comments that the gang provides group identity and individual identity within the group for its members. In addition, he notes that girls reported joining the gang for "popularity and the lure of excitement" (Brown, 1977: 223). Similarly, Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) argue that one function of the gang is to

alleviate the boredom experienced by inner city youths, who have few options for recreation and entertainment. Quicker summarizes: "To be in a gang is to be part of something. It means having a place to go, friends to talk with, and parties to attend. It means recognition and respected status" (1983: 80).

Regardless of the specifics, what these inventories tell us and what we know from much research is that youths who participate in gangs often express the importance of the gang in their lives (Moore, 1991: 77). Short and Strodbeck (1965) argue that self esteem needs are met by the group. The rewards provided by the group--status, companionship, excitement, protection, belonging--facilitate the building of esteem. Furthermore, participation in group activities is less a result of individual "pathology" as it is of group dynamics that encourage member involvement through the provision of self esteem and identity.

Klein and Crawford (1967: 68) point out that gangs can be differentiated from other groups not only because they are socially disapproved, but also because they have a disproportionate number of external sources of group cohesion. These include not only rival gangs, but also law enforcement and community agency practitioners and community members who disparage the gang. It may be that for female gang members, the additional external condemnation resulting

from gender norm violation could also serve to increase cohesiveness within the gang, and this could further explain the sense of solidarity among female gang members that researchers have noted (Campbell, 1990b).

#### Adaptation to Structural Constraints

Many researchers have pointed to the gang as a means for inner city youths to adapt to their oppressive living conditions--poverty, neighborhood crime, lack of opportunities, racism. According to Vigil and Long (1990: 59), the gang acts as "an arena for role enactment and self-empowerment." Girls living within the urban "underclass" face a number of problems, including limited educational and occupational opportunities, subordination to men, and childcare responsibilities, in addition to the powerlessness of underclass membership shared with males in their communities (Campbell, 1990a: 172-173). According to Campbell (1990a: 173), "the gang represents for its members an idealized collective solution" for coping with these problems. In particular, girls "find themselves in a highly gendered community where the men in their lives, while not traditional breadwinners, still act in ways that dramatically circumscribe the possibilities open to them" (Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995: 25). These authors note that stereotyping of both female and male gang members "has prevented an understanding of the many ways that the gang

assists young women and men in coping with their lives in chaotic, violent, and economically marginalized communities" (1995). As Campbell points out, many gang youths explain their gang's existence by pointing to the "jungle-like quality" of their neighborhood environments (1987: 459).

In her study of the Vice Queens, a Black female auxiliary gang in Chicago during the 1960s, Fishman (1988) discusses the impact on Black females of growing up in inner city impoverished neighborhoods. The Vice Queens were "socialized to be independent, assertive, and to take risks with the expectations that these are characteristics that they will need to function effectively within the black low income community" (1988: 26). Likewise, Brown (1977) points to the gang as an agent of socialization which teaches girls the survival strategies they need to live in their communities. Additionally, notes Fishman, girls in these communities experienced relatively greater freedom than girls in other social contexts, but along with this greater freedom came less protection. "The gang thus provided girls with opportunities to learn such traditional male skills as fighting skills and taking care of themselves on the streets" (1988: 15).

At the same time, however, girls in gangs still face sanctions for not behaving in gender-appropriate ways. Swart (1991) suggests that the meanings of gang affiliation for



girls are complicated by the contradictions they face as they balance deviant and gender norm expectations. On the one hand, he argues, "the female gang member's behavior must be 'deviant' to those outside of the gang in order to ensure her place within the gang itself" (1991: 45). But on the other hand, if it is too deviant, it risks the danger of offending other gang members who maintain certain attitudes about appropriate female conduct when it comes to issues of sexual activity, drug use, violence and motherhood. Swart elaborates:

As part of a delinquent subculture, there are expectations of female gang members that are in normative conflict with the larger society; while at the same time gender-typed behavior that is synonymous with that in society as a whole is required. The result is that female gang members must operate within competing and often contradictory normative contexts, in order to find a level of behavior which is 'acceptably deviant' to the other gang members. (1991: 46)

### Gender Resistance

Many studies point out the functions of gangs in providing youths with status, identity, excitement, a sense of belonging, and a means of adapting to structural constraints. In addition, some researchers have examined the ways in which female gang members may also be resisting the limitations placed on them by social definitions of appropriate femininity, which narrow their options even more in an environment in which they are already quite restricted.

For example, Campbell argues that "gang girls see themselves as different from their peers. Their association with the gang is a public proclamation of their rejection of the lifestyle which the community expects from them" (1987: 463-464). They reject qualities such as passivity, submissiveness and marianismo, which Campbell defines as the reciprocal qualities to machismo in men. Similarly, Harris' (1988) study of the Cholas, a Latina gang in the San Fernando Valley of Southern California, reveals that the girls adopted an image of themselves that was a rejection of the traditional images of Latinas as subservient.

Taylor's (1993) study of female gang participation in Detroit reveals the existence of a form of "street feminism" among the girls and women he interviewed who were highly critical of the sexism among men on the streets. These women and girls spoke eloquently of the entrenched nature of misogyny on the streets and the difficulties females often face when interacting with males in the urban drug and gang environments. Their critical consciousness is not something commonly documented in other studies of female gang members, and begs for further examination.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE GANG INVOLVEMENT

Research suggests that female involvement in gangs exists in a number of forms. Some young women are affiliated

with male gangs via their ties to individual male members, as girlfriends, sisters and/or relatives (Horowitz, 1983; Moore, 1991). In addition, in some places female gangs emerge as subgroups or affiliates of male gangs, sometimes taking a feminized version of the male gang's name (Campbell, 1984a; Fishman, 1988; Huff, 1993; Klein, 1971; Miller, 1975; Moore, 1991; Quicker, 1983). In other cases, young women are members of mixed gender gangs, without gendered subgroups emerging (see below; see also Decker and Van Winkle, 1996). Finally, the least examined are fully autonomous female gangs (Brown, 1978; Lauderback et al., 1992), which several authors suggest are on the rise (Huff, 1993; Taylor, 1993).

The most common presumed pattern of female gang involvement is the occurrence of all-female auxiliary subgroups of male gangs. Miller (1975) notes that in New York City, approximately half of all male gangs had affiliated female groups. Likewise, Klein (1971) notes that all of the gangs in his Los Angeles research had one or more female affiliates. Quicker (1983) found no autonomous female gangs, though he reports that the majority of the male gangs he observed had female auxiliaries. While it is important not to stereotype these groups "as simply the female auxiliaries of male gangs" (Chesney-Lind, 1993: 333), it remains necessary to examine their relationships to male

gangs in order to understand fully the role these groups play in girls' lives.

In fact, one question that arises, especially among emergent gangs, is whether the young women would classify themselves as members of auxiliary groups, or whether they define themselves simply as part of the larger whole. When they give themselves separate feminized versions of the gang name this is probably the case, but it is unclear how often this occurs among contemporary gangs. Unfortunately, this information is missing from some of the most important current studies of female gang involvement, as the authors do not clearly specify or examine the nature of the gangs from which their female subjects were drawn (see Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995). Too often, there is simply an assumption that girls are members of separate auxiliary or autonomous gangs.

Given increased popular concern about "new" violent female gangs, some researchers have addressed the question of whether and how female gang involvement has evolved from earlier periods. According to recent historical analyses, girls have long been involved in many of the same forms of gang behaviors as males (violence, crime, drug use), but their participation in these aspects of gang life was overshadowed by researchers' concern with their sexual behavior (Campbell, 1984a; Chesney-Lind, 1993: 334). For

example, Fishman's work on the Vice Queens in the 1960s is important because it challenges those who argue that female gangs have evolved into more violent, masculine subcultures. Her evidence is that these behaviors were manifest during the 1960s as well, but they were overlooked by researchers who emphasized the narrow roles of girls as sexual objects. In addition, as to the question of whether female gangs have become more autonomous over time, Moore (1991: 27) reports on one set of girl gangs in the late 1930s and early 1940s who were not bound to particular boys' cliques, even while other female groups fit the stereotyped image.

In this section, I will review what we know about female gang involvement, including the structures of those gangs in which females are involved, their requirements for entree, and their activities. Finally I will discuss the roles of dating, sexuality and motherhood among female gang members, as well as the place of fighting and delinquency.

### Structures

Research specifically on the structures of gangs in which females are members is hampered by the assumption that girls are typically members of subgroups of male gangs (and occasionally members of all-female groups). In addition, because the emphasis of many studies of female gang involvement tends to be on how gender shapes (or does not shape) activities and meanings within gangs, gangs structures

are often not a point of emphasis. There is some evidence, but it remains mostly sketchy.

In terms of gang size, several researchers have found that female groups tend to be smaller than their male counterparts (Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Moore, 1991). While Joe and Chesney-Lind report that female gangs tend to be smaller in size than male gangs, they don't clarify whether the females they interviewed were members of autonomous female gangs or female groups affiliated with male gangs. In addition, according to Campbell (1990a: 177-178), leadership in gangs established by girls is "usually more diffuse than in boys' groups." Moore reports that the female cliques in her study tended to be less age-graded (1991: 29), and Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) report that the girls in their study tended to be slightly younger than boys when they joined gangs (age 12 versus 14). Moore also reports that females typically left their gangs at earlier ages than males.

My data suggest that girls see themselves as members of mixed-gender gangs, rather than as female auxiliaries to male gangs (see chapter seven); thus it fruitful to discuss more generally what we know about the structures of gangs. Until the recent growth of gangs in many cities and towns across the United States (see chapter three), the structure of street gangs was described as vertical in nature, consisting

of age-graded cliques of core and fringe members, whose peak age of participation was approximately 16 to 18 (Klein, 1995). With the growth of gangs in the last decade, gang structures have become more diversified (Klein and Maxson, 1996; Spergel and Curry, 1993).

Fagan (1989) describes four gang types in the cities he studied, including social gangs involved in low levels of delinquency and drug use and sales, party gangs whose orientation is primarily around drug use, serious delinquent gangs with versatile crime patterns, and finally cohesive gang organizations, heavily involved in drug use and sales as well as other crimes. Klein and Maxson (1996) document five types of gang structures, ranging along dimensions of size, age range, subgroupings (or the lack thereof), duration, territoriality, and crime patterns. The most common forms (showing up in the largest number of cities, and the predominant form in a large number of cities) are Compressed and Neotraditional gangs. Each are gangs with a short duration (typically less than ten years). Compressed gangs do not have subgroups, are small in size and narrow in age range, and may or may not be territorial. Neotraditional are larger in size (fifty or more members) and are territorial. Both types have versatile crime patterns. These emerging gang forms may include spontaneous groups that show up and disappear rapidly, more age homogenous groups, and horizontal

gangs consisting of alliances between groups of similarly aged youth (Klein, 1995). These structures may be of particular relevance for understanding gangs in a city such as Columbus. Specifically, because they are new forms, gender composition and structure may be different from the past as well.

#### Requirements for Entree

Research suggests that girls' gang affiliations are often connected to a relative, close friend, or boyfriend's association (Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Moore, 1991). However, "being someone's 'girlfriend' is not enough to gain entry into the female gang" (Campbell, 1990b: 55). According to Lauderback et al. (1992), members emphasize trust, loyalty and toughness when deciding when to let a girl into the gang. Campbell (1992: 9) explains: "Initiation guarantees exclusiveness. The gang will not accept just anyone and this fact alone augments their self esteem which has taken hard knocks from teachers, social workers, police and families."

Quicker (1984: 14-15) notes the following membership criteria for female gang members in the Chicana gangs he studied: first, the girls should not be joining for selfish reasons, such as to seek protection for herself without being willing to give back to the group; second, she must show toughness, and not appear to be someone who will "fold under pressure"; and finally, she must be able to fight. In some



circumstances, this means girls must be "jumped in" the gang as a form of initiation. Campbell explains:

The 'prospect' must fight one or more established members. The function of this is to ensure a degree of courage and commitment from new members and to ensure that they are not joining only in order to meet boys or to use the girl gang as a strong arm for their personal grievances towards schoolmates. (1990b: 55)

According to Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995), however, most youth gangs in Hawaii do not require members to be initiated or jumped in upon joining the gang. Likewise, Lauderback et al. (1992) report that the all-female African American gang they studied did not require that girls fight their way into the gang. Thus requirements for entree may vary by city and/or ethnic context, and by gang type.

#### Gang Activities

Until recently, most research on girls' activities within gangs has emphasized their actions in relation to male gang members. As noted in chapter one, most traditional gang research has emphasized the auxiliary and peripheral nature of girls' gang involvement, and has often resulted in an almost exclusive emphasis on their sexual activities with male gang members, their use as weapons carriers, as decoys or spies for infiltrating rival gangs, and as instigators of conflict between male gangs (see Campbell, 1984a).

Miller's (1980) classic study of the Molls, a female gang in Boston closely affiliated with a local boys' gang,

along with Rice's (1963) report on the Persian Queens, a New York based female gang, revealed a male-dominated gang world in which there was little females could do to achieve status. They were cast in one of two roles, sex objects or tomboys, and found themselves in a double bind: when they were feminine, they were viewed by male gang members only as objects of sexual gratification; when they took on traditional male characteristics such as fighting, they were rejected for their deviation from normative gender expectations (see Swart, 1991). Even so, reinterpretation of these findings shows that the girls still engaged in a range of activities. For example, Campbell notes:

The Molls played hooky, stole, drank, vandalized, and fought. They attempted to gain favor with their male companion group (the Hoods) by emulating and abetting the boys' criminal activities, but not by freely dispensing sexual favors to them. (1990a: 171)

Fishman's (1988) reanalysis of data on the Vice Queens illuminates the diversity of girls' gang activities, even in the 1960s. In some ways, their actions do match the stereotypes. For example, the girls sometimes acted as "instigators in inter- and intra-gang fights among boys. They frequently manipulated the boys into fighting over real or alleged insults or 'passes' from male members of enemy gangs" (1988: 12). In addition, they carried weapons and acted as "lookouts" for boys. Fishman explains that for the male gang members, "the Vice Queens had little function

outside the mating-dating complex" (1988: 8). However, the girls also participated in their own activities, independent of the male group, as can be seen in their emphasis on fighting (see below). Fishman concludes that the Vice Queens "can be characterized as more autonomous than mere auxiliaries, but not fully independent of the Vice Kings" (1988: 24).

Some researchers note a strong sense of solidarity among female gang members (Campbell, 1990b; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Lauderback et al., 1992; Quicker, 1984), and Campbell (1990b: 55) reports that girls "have their own meetings and leaders, independent of the boys." Likewise, Brown notes that girls are integral to their gangs' identities, participate in numerous activities, and are "involved in various gang functions, rather than just ancillary activities such as sexual fulfillment" (1977: 226). In the sections that follow, I will elaborate more fully on the roles of dating and sexuality, and fighting among female gang members. What is important to recognize is that there is a breadth of activities in which girls engage, only some of which are associated with their relationships with males.

#### Dating and Sexuality

The topics of dating and sexuality are complicated ones in relation to girls in gangs. To begin with, there is a deeply entrenched history within the academic study of female

delinquency that paints these girls as sexually maladjusted and promiscuous (Cohen, 1955; Cowie, Cowie and Slater, 1968; Konopka, 1966; Rice, 1963; Short and Strodbeck, 1965; Thomas, 1967). This has been fed by the tendency of many researchers to take male gang members' points of view as the point of view, or as accurate. One of the most compelling aspects of Moore's (1991) *Going Down to the Barrio* is that she is able to present material from the points of view of both male and female gang members from the same groups. What her study reveals is a complex web from which to understand the situation of girls in gangs: we need to look not just at male/female relations and the sexual double standard that frequently surfaces within them, but also at girls' perceptions and relationships with one another. This includes examining the ways in which their relationships with male gang members bring them status among their female peers, but also the ways in which, as Campbell (1990a: 179) states, "gang girls exert strong normative control over one another's sexuality."

There is clearly a sexual double standard in operation in the relations between male and female gang members, as in American society as a whole (Campbell, 1990a; Fishman, 1988; Horowitz, 1983; Moore, 1991; Swart, 1991). In Moore's study, for example, many of the male gang members from early and more recent cliques admitted that female members were

"'treated like a piece of ass'" (1991: 52). Girls' options for dating were more narrow than boys as well. Moore reports that for girls, being a Chola and having the look of a Chola was stigmatizing, making them less attractive to boys outside the gang. On the other hand, male gang members frequently had girlfriends outside the gang who were "square," and these "respectable" girls were looked to by the boys as their future (1991: 74-76). Likewise, Fishman explains:

The primary role of girls' vis-a-vis the boys' gang was sexual. Vice Queens had sexual relations with members of the gang in the process of 'going with' the boys and they bore the boys' illegitimate children . . . . The boys, on the whole, only paid attention to the Vice Queens when they wanted to have sexual relations. (1988: 17-18)

Unfortunately, often rather than challenging this sexual double standard, it is also reinforced among girls in their relationships with one another, in the ways they police one another's sexuality. Several studies reveal that even as they were labeled "bad girls" by their male peers, who looked to straight or square girls for their futures (Fishman, 1988; Moore, 1991), gang girls created hierarchies among themselves, and sanctioned the behaviors of other girls, both for being too square and for being too promiscuous. Fishman reports a case in which some of the Vice Queens set a girl up to be gang-raped by the male gang members because they perceived her as too "uppity" and judgmental of their greater sexual experiences. Once she was gang-raped by the same

males they had slept with, she would be brought "down" to their level.

Typically though, the sexual double standard is reinforced by girls as sanctions against girls they perceive as too sexually active. Girls do not gain status among their peers for sexual promiscuity (Campbell, 1990a; Horowitz, 1983; McRobbie, 1978; Swart, 1991). The young women in Campbell's research of New York street gangs "had club rules which explicitly required serial monogamy" (1987: 452). Likewise, Quicker (1983: 19) notes that having sexual relations with someone else's boyfriend was cause for being thrown out of the gang he studied. Campbell (1987: 452) explains that girls "not only reject sexual activity outside the context of a steady relationship but even reject friendships with 'loose' girls whose reputations might contaminate them by association." On the whole, then, the sexual double standard, enforced by both males and females, tends to disadvantage girls in their relationships with boys, but also interferes with the strength of their own friendship groups. Campbell summarizes:

The necessity of being attached to a male in order to have sexual relations, combined with a reluctance to challenge the boy directly over his infidelity, had a very divisive effect upon the girls' relationships with one another. (1987: 462)

This is not to suggest that girls never challenge their male counterparts' sexist treatment. Lauderback et al.

(1992), for example, suggest that the young women they interviewed have very negative attitudes about men. "In their experience, men are generally abusive, verbally and physically, and controlling. They want the homegirls' money" (Lauderback et al., 1992). Likewise, Campbell (1987: 460) reports that "the girls opposed any view of themselves as being at the mercy of men. They took pride in their autonomy and rejected any suggestion that they could be duped or conned by males." Frequently, however, it seems that girls reject some of the more blatantly sexist behaviors of males, not by challenging those behaviors, but by labeling those girls who are the brunt of them as somehow "deserving" of that treatment, unlike themselves. For example, while the women in Moore's study recognized the ways in which male gang members used females sexually, a typical response was "'not me, they didn't treat me like that'" (1991: 55). Campbell notes that challenges to a girl's sexual reputation, or to the sexual reputation of the group as a whole, are fighting words: "many female fights are provoked by epithets such as 'tart' and 'whore'" (Campbell, 1990b: 54).

In addition, however, there are clearly rewards for girls in their relations with boys, particularly the status they receive among their female peers. Fishman notes that while the male gang members only interacted with the Vice Queens when they were looking for sex, the girls could gain

status among their female peers through their sexual relations with males when they could "keep four or five boys 'on the string' without any boy's knowing of the others, but at the same time, avoiding sexual relationships with too many boys at one time" (1988: 21). In addition, they gained status when they went steady with or had the baby of a high-status Vice King, even though the fathers seldom accepted responsibility. Motherhood provided adult status for these girls.

In general, researchers have noted that motherhood is often an important rite of passage among disadvantaged teenage girls (Anderson, 1990; Simons et al., 1991; Stack, 1974). Pregnancy and motherhood also appear to change the dynamics of a girl's gang participation. According to Swart (1991: 49-50), while getting pregnant and becoming a mother "does not necessarily mean that female gang members have to break away from the gang, it does mean that they have to constrain their deviant behavior to the extent that it allows them to be seen as 'good mothers.'" Both Campbell (1987) and Horowitz (1983) note that girls are judged harshly among their peers for failing to take care of their children, for being perceived as "bad mothers." And Moore notes that girls typically leave the gang earlier, usually following a pregnancy. Motherhood is often the link to a "conversion to conventionality" among girls in gangs (Moore, 1991: 114).



## Fighting

When researchers have examined the place of fighting within female gangs and among female gang members, they have emerged with contradictory points of view. Some see its existence as a result of necessity (Campbell, 1992; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995), while others recognize the positive features of fighting for these girls, including its function as a status-enhancer (Brown, 1978; Fishman, 1988; Quicker, 1984). In addition, several researchers note the contradictions girls experience when they fight, resulting from sanctions for gender norm violation. In particular, males may look down on a girl who is too good at fighting (Horowitz, 1983; Swart, 1991). This is in keeping with Giordano's (1978) finding that girls receive more peer approval for delinquent acts from their female rather than male peers. Swart explains:

While displaying a certain amount of aggressive behavior is necessary for female gang members' acceptance into and participation with the gang, excessive violence is deemed a breach of appropriate female roles and is sanctioned. (1991: 49)

Some researchers tend to downplay girls' involvement in fighting, and/or their motives for engaging in fights. For example, Joe and Chesney-Lind argue:

For girls, fighting and violence is a part of their life in the gang--but not something they necessarily seek out. Instead, protection, from neighborhood and family violence, is a major theme in girls' interviews . . . . violence (gang or otherwise) is not celebrated or normative; it is instead more directly a consequence of and a

response to the abuse, both physical and sexual,  
that characterizes their lives at home. (1995: 25)

Joe and Chesney-Lind depict gang girls' fights merely as last resort responses to abuse. While Campbell recognizes that violence and fighting are a normative part of gang girls' activities, recently she has also argued that their motives are not based on choice. Like Joe and Chesney-Lind, Campbell frames their violence as linked to victimization. Using middle class girls as her model of what gang girls would be like if they could, she explains that girls in gangs adopt an instrumental view of aggression rather than using aggression expressively, because to do otherwise would leave them open for exploitation and abuse. She explains: "Openness and trust become weakness and to be weak is to be exploited" (Campbell, 1992: 10).

While this assessment appears somewhat accurate, it does not present the whole story. Gang girls' fighting is not *only* a response to victimization. Other research contradicts this image, or at least paints a more complicated picture of the meanings of fighting in gang girls' lives. According to Brown (1978), fighting provides girls with a means of establishing a reputation "in a milieu where aggression has become a symbolic means for establishing an identity" (Brown, 1978: 227). He describes that fights occur in a number of situations. In addition to fighting other gangs, fights occur within the group, sometimes when two

girls fight over the same male, but also when a girl seeks to elevate her status by fighting someone who has an established reputation for toughness.

In her earlier work, Campbell herself notes that girls gain standing in their gangs from being good fighters. She explains that "fighting a male (and especially winning) carries a particular status among the girls" (Campbell, 1984b: 154). This does not appear to be a result of contemporary changes, as Fishman's (1988) discussion of the Vice Queens in the 1960s reflects many of the same themes. She explains that "status was gained from the girls' abilities in conflict situations, e.g., the perfection of fighting techniques, the number of times the girls willingly fought and with whom they fought" (1988: 23). Some girls were not hesitant to fight males when provoked, and in addition, the Vice Queens often fought members of other female groups. Fishman surmises:

Fighting other female auxiliary gangs appears closely linked with maintaining loyalty in the group and a sense of solidarity between members. Seldom did girls fight over personal grievances, rather to preserve the Vice Queens' reputation for toughness. (1988: 14)

Fighting, then, appears to have contradictory meanings in gang girls' lives. I will now turn to a more comprehensive discussion of girls' delinquent involvement.

## Delinquent Involvement

It has long been recognized that gang members tend to be more criminally active than non-gang members (Esbensen et al., 1993; Klein, 1971; Thornberry et al., 1993), and this holds for female gang members as well (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992). According to Klein and Crawford, offense patterns are affected by gang affiliation "because the antecedent deviant values, the requisite skills, and the opportunities for misbehavior are learned and reinforced through association with other members" (1967: 69). In their recent analysis of the relationship between gang membership and delinquent involvement, Bjerregaard and Smith (1992: 14) report: "It is consistently the case that gang members are significantly more likely to have committed delinquent acts and to have used illegal substances than non-gang members." The enhancement effect of gang membership was most noticeable for serious delinquency and marijuana use (see also Thornberry et al., 1993). It was slightly higher for girls for general delinquency, and slightly higher for boys for drug use, but overall there was consistency across the sexes. They summarize:

The traditional gang literature has generally suggested that gang membership enhances delinquent activity, and particularly serious delinquent activity for males, but not for females. In contrast, our study suggests that for females also, gangs are consistently associated with a greater prevalence and with higher rates of delinquency and substance use. Furthermore, the results suggest that for both sexes, gangs

membership has an approximately equal impact on a variety of measures of delinquent behavior. (Bjerrregaard and Smith, 1992: 16)

Other researchers emphasize the differences between male and female offending. For example, Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) suggest that while girls in gangs commit crimes and engage in fights, they are less involved in this activity than males. They argue that females are "far less involved in drug selling, robbery, and other types of criminal behavior," that girls in gangs are more involved in "pro-social" activities than males are, and that "their problems with the law originate with more traditional forms of delinquency such as running away from home."

An interesting counterpart is provided by Bowker et al. (1980: 516). They suggest that far from instigating male gang delinquency, there is evidence of "the structural exclusion of young women from male delinquent activities." Their respondents suggested that not only were girls excluded from the planning of delinquent acts, but when girls inadvertently showed up at the location of a planned incident, it was frequently postponed or terminated (1980: 516).

Likewise Fagan (1990: 196-197) reports greater gender differences in delinquency between gang members than between nongang youth. Male gang members were significantly more involved in most serious delinquency, while for alcohol use,

drug sales, extortion and property damage the gender differences were not significant (1990: 196-197). However, he reports that "prevalence rates for female gang members exceeded the rates for nongang males" for all the categories of delinquency he measured. He summarizes his findings in relation to girls as follows:

More than 40% of the female gang members were classified in the least serious category, a substantial difference from their male counterparts [15.5%]. Among female gang members, there was a bimodal distribution, with nearly as many multiple index offenders as petty delinquents. Evidently, female gang members avoid more serious delinquent involvement than their male counterparts. Yet their extensive involvement in serious delinquent behaviors well exceeds that of nongang males or females. (Fagan, 1990: 201)

While researchers report various rates of participation in delinquent acts for girls, few would dispute that when it comes to serious delinquency, male gang members are involved more frequently than female gang members. As Chesney-Lind points out, none of the recent studies of female gangs supports emerging cultural stereotypes of hyper-violent female offenders. The gender differences in serious delinquency that do emerge may be linked to the structures of girls' gangs, their roles in these groups, as well as the functions that gangs provide in their lives.

## ISSUES IN FEMINIST CRIMINOLOGY

Thus far in this chapter I have outlined in detail empirical research findings concerning female gang involvement. Before moving on, I want to speak for a moment about feminist criminology and the potential for this project to advance our theoretical understanding of young women in gangs. Daly (1992) has raised the critique that feminist criminology has a tendency to romanticize female offenders and frame their criminal involvement simply as a result of victimization or as a form of resistance to victimization and oppression. The desire to see women only in a positive light, while understandable, is unrealistic and leads to scholarship that fails to capture the causes and meanings of the criminal involvement of women and girls, as well as their gender identities. For white scholars studying primarily women of color and/or poor women, there is the struggle to be sensitive to racial and class oppression. This, coupled with the fear of being labeled racist and classist, has led to a tendency to resist placing any responsibility on women for their actions, including their behaviors and attitudes toward other women. These problems are multiplied by the fear of generating research that may be "absorbed and insulated" (Omi and Winant, 1986: 81) by conservatives.<sup>1</sup> The result, however, is the construction of research that provides women with little or no real agency.

In the field of gang research I would suggest that this tendency has manifested itself in three ways. First is a focus on girls in gangs as victims of male gang members' sexism. The emphasis here is on how the male gang members perpetuate systems of gender inequality in which females are exploited. Young women attempt to negotiate through a series of double binds, but are unable to take real action on their own behalf because they are unwilling or unable to challenge male gang members' authority, and are even duped into maintaining it (cf. Campbell, 1984a; Swart, 1991).

The second approach is the focus on gang membership as a form of resistance to oppression, but again with victimization at the forefront. For example, Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) describe the "dismal future" that awaits female gang members in "their bleak communities," and they describe these young women as having "found themselves hanging together after having been abandoned by the fathers of their children, and abused and controlled by other men." They are portrayed as having no agency other than that which results from the consequences of their victimization. Further, they describe the gang to "a haven for coping with the many problems they encounter in their everyday life in marginalized communities" (Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995: 25).

The third approach is similar to the second, but takes the theme of young women's coming together in the face of



abuse one step further. Taylor (1993) and Lauderback et al. (1992) both discuss the rise of all-female gangs, which they describe as groups of young women who have banded together in solidarity after having been treated unfairly and excluded from full participation in male groups (Lauderback et al., 1992). Highly critical of young men's sexism, these young women are depicted as groups of street feminists, out for equal opportunities in the urban environment.

Part of the emphasis of each of these approaches is to challenge the ways in which female delinquents, and female gang members in particular, have been pathologized in mainstream studies as personally maladjusted (cf. Ackley and Fliegel, 1960; Cohen, 1955; Konopka, 1966; Rice, 1963; Short and Strodbeck, 1965).<sup>2</sup> Each provides some insight into young women's experiences within gangs, and within the larger contexts of their lives, and succeeds in challenging stereotypes of female gang members.

What is missing from these approaches is a sense of young women's agency beyond a romantic vision of sisterhood and solidarity. Young women are victims of male sexism and are duped into participating in it by exerting normative control over other girls' activities, or they are defined as having agency specifically when they are challenging sexism and resisting oppression. My sense is that victimization and agency are a more layered phenomenon, and that young women

are not simply victims of male sexism or resisters of it. Rather they actively participate in gender oppression through their attitudes and actions towards one another, simultaneous with these other phenomena. I would suggest that we need to pay attention to what *girls* get out of upholding the gender inequality documented in gangs. Thus, one of my goals in this project is to explore how and why young women in gangs participate in a system of gender inequality that ultimately disadvantages them. This approach will provide additional insights into the meanings and functions of gang involvement for young women, and help move beyond a more simplistic victimization/agency dichotomy that takes a relatively uncritical approach to the attitudes and behaviors of young women in gangs.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Critical criminology has faced a similar set of problems. MacLean summarizes:

On the one side we have state actors criminalizing the poor and less powerful resisters of social injustice, and on the other side we have the poor victims of social injustice victimizing their counterparts in a predatory way and being seen by 'progressives' as proto-revolutionaries (1991: 10).

<sup>2</sup> For example, Cohen (1955) suggested that female gang members were characterized by an inability to form appropriate relationships with males and a tendency to act out sexually. Short and Strodbeck (1965) noted that girls who were physically unattractive and unable to form adequate peer relations were most likely to join gangs. And Rice (1963) described female gang members as "dim" and "exceptionally unattractive." Much of this personal maladjustment was tied to sexual promiscuity (Cohen, 1955; Cowie, Cowie and Slater, 1968; Konopka, 1966; Thomas, 1967).

### III. NATIONAL GANG CONTEXTS AND THE COLUMBUS SETTING

Within the last decade, we have seen extensive evidence of the proliferation of gangs across the United States, into "a growing number of large and small cities, suburban areas, and even some small towns and rural areas" (Spergel and Curry, 1993: 359; see also Hagedorn, 1988; Klein and Maxson, 1989; Winfree et al., 1992). According to Klein (1995), close to an estimated 1,000 towns and cities across the U.S. now report having gangs. For most of these cities, the number of gangs and gang members remains relatively small, making gangs "an increasingly widespread problem that is, nonetheless, not a large problem in most locations" (Klein, 1995: 32). Findings from the Maxson-Klein national gang migration survey reveal that gang emergence in many cities was first recognized prior to the mid-1960s, while the largest growth of new gang cities has occurred from 1985 on (Klein, 1995: 32).

Much evidence has shown that this growth in gangs has occurred independently within a number of cities as a result of the rapid deterioration in living conditions for many Americans caused by structural changes in the U.S. economy, deindustrialization, and the growth of the urban 'underclass'

(Anderson, 1990; Hagedorn, 1988, 1990; Huff, 1993; Jackson, 1991; Moore, 1988; Moore and Vigil, 1993; Padilla, 1992; Short, 1990; Sullivan, 1989; Wilson, 1987; Zevitz and Takata, 1992). These changes have brought about conditions of entrenched poverty in many inner city communities, characterized by intense racial and economic segregation and isolation. Researchers have documented an outmigration of middle class families from these areas, and a decline in social services for families and individuals left behind, who are disproportionately African American, Hispanic and poor (Wilson, 1987; Hagedorn, 1991).<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps most troubling has been the loss of jobs and resulting explosion of unemployment and underemployment within these communities. Youth unemployment has grown as well. According to Duster:

The loss of jobs in recent years in manufacturing is of particular significance since blue-collar work has provided for many decades the major entry portal into the world of work for teenagers who are without skills, credentialing, or qualifications required for white-collar work. (1987: 309)

The growing service economy has done little to alleviate these problems, both because many jobs tend to require advanced education, and because those that do not are often located in suburban areas, far removed from the inner city. In the last 25 years, unemployment rates among young African Americans have quadrupled in the U.S., while rates of

unemployment for white youths have basically gone unchanged (Duster, 1987: 303). This lack of alternatives has contributed to the growth of gangs in many cities, and recently has meant that youthful gang members, given less opportunity for maturing out of gangs, are more likely to continue their criminal involvement into adulthood (Hagedorn, 1988, 1991, 1994; Klein, 1995; Moore, 1988, 1991). As Jackson summarizes, "higher crime rates and more youth gangs are among the unintended consequences of the nation's pattern of postindustrial development" (1991: 379).

However, as Klein (1995) points out, these explanations hold up better for some cities and groups than others. In smaller cities or cities with less severe economic problems, they may have less explanatory power even though they remain relevant.<sup>2</sup> A second contributing factor that gang researchers are beginning to pay attention to, particularly in seeking explanations for the emergence of gangs in new cities, is the diffusion of gang culture and style through popular media attention to gangs and the commercialization of gang style (see Klein, 1995: 205-212). Movies, albums, music videos, documentaries, news media's attention to gangs, and the popularity of "various aspects of gang culture--argot, clothing, tattoos, use of hand signals, and so on" (Klein et al., 1995: 110) all contribute to youthful identification with gang culture, and may help explain the simultaneous

growth of gangs in so many cities, suburbs and towns across the United States (cf. Decker and Van Winkle, 1996: 85-89). These socioeconomic and cultural contexts are all factors that must be considered when examining gangs in particular city contexts. In the sections that follow, I will provide background information on my study setting (Columbus, Ohio) and on gangs within this city.

#### COLUMBUS SITE SELECTION AND CHARACTERISTICS

My goal in selecting the setting for this study was to choose a city in contrast to those with longstanding gang problems. Much has been made in recent gang studies of the contrast between chronic and emerging cities (Spergel and Curry, 1993), between old and "new," (Hagedorn, 1988), but the contrast has tended to go unexplored in any depth. Spergel and Curry (1993) note that chronic gang cities have long histories of serious gang problems, in which gangs tend to be better organized, and involved in more serious crime and drug trafficking than in emerging cities. While cursory evidence is available, there are few studies which provide detailed information on gangs in emergent cities. Recent research in Denver (Esbensen et al., 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993) and Rochester (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Thornberry et al., 1993), though studying gang involvement in emerging cities, has focused on gang member characteristics

and crime, rather than structural and other behavioral characteristics of gangs in these cities. Hagedorn (1988) and Decker and Van Winkle (1996) provide two of the few depth portraits of gangs in emerging or "new" cities, and both describe cities heavily affected by deindustrialization and population loss.<sup>3</sup>

With an overall research focus in the field on the proliferation of gangs as associated with deindustrialization and related socioeconomic problems, I wanted to choose, in contrast, a city which is experiencing overall economic growth, one without longterm and widespread 'underclass' conditions. In addition, I hoped to choose a city in which gangs were recognized as a relatively new phenomenon. Choosing these focal points allows me to explore the changing nature of gangs in the midwest, particularly their diversification and expansion into a broader range of cities.<sup>4</sup> Given the rapid growth of gang cities, it is important to examine the nature of gangs in new cities, and in cities with varied socioeconomic contexts, in order to better assess and address those factors contributing to the emergence and expansion of gangs.

City selection was accomplished with the combined use of the Maxson-Klein national gang migration survey (see Maxson et al., 1995) and census data. Maxson and Klein's data provided an initial pool of seven cities within the



target region with a sizeable number of gangs: Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus and Toledo, Ohio, and Fort Wayne, Gary and Indianapolis, Indiana.<sup>5</sup> I then used social and economic indicators from the 1990 U.S. Census to compare these cities. Through the analysis of census data, and reports of the year in which street gangs emerged in each city, Columbus emerged as the least traditional gang city, with economic stability and growth, combined with a street gang problem that emerged as recently as 1985. In this section, I will discuss Columbus in greater detail, and in the next section will discuss in more depth the emergence and patterns of gang involvement believed to exist currently in Columbus.

Columbus is a city described by urban analyst David Rusk as highly elastic.<sup>6</sup> Across the U.S., the majority of persons living in metropolitan areas now reside in suburbs (over 60 percent in 1990), and the majority of jobs are now located in suburbs. Thus, successful (elastic) cities feature the following characteristics:

In an elastic area suburban subdivisions expand around the central city, but the central city is able to expand as well as capture much of that suburban growth within its municipal boundaries. Although no community is free of racial inequities, minorities are more evenly spread throughout the area. Segregation by race and income class is reduced. City incomes are typically equal to or higher than suburban incomes. Tapping a broader tax base, an elastic city government is better financed and more inclined to rely on local resources to address local problems. (1995: 47)

Table 3-1 provides population, racial distribution and median household income for Columbus and its home (Franklin) county. Compared to many other large cities, African Americans are a relatively small percentage of the urban

**Table 3-1 Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics**

	Franklin County	Columbus
Population Size	961,437	632,958
Percent Race/Ethnicity		
White	81.5%	73.2%
African American	15.9%	22.6%
Asian American	2.0%	2.4%
Other	0.4%	1.8%*
Median Household Income	\$30,375	\$26,651

Source: U.S. Census, 1990

\* In Columbus, 1.1% of the population is Hispanic, 0.2% Native American, 0.5% other. I do not have this information for the county.

population (22.6%). As Table 3-1 illustrates, African Americans are 15.9 percent of the county population, but are 22.6 percent of the population in Columbus, which has a median household income nearly \$4000 less than Franklin County as a whole. According to Rusk (1995: 12), African Americans are approximately twelve percent of the population in the greater Columbus metropolitan area, which expands just beyond the boundaries of the county. Using per capita income as a measure, comparing Columbus with the greater metropolitan area, Rusk (1995: 33) calculated a city/suburb

income ratio of 81 percent for Columbus. This urban/suburban income gap is less severe than is found in more inelastic cities, as is the racial disproportion between Columbus and its surrounding suburbs (Rusk, 1995). Nevertheless, inequalities do exist, and combined with other socioeconomic disparities, remain a reality for many African Americans (and poor whites) living in Columbus. I will discuss these racial and class inequalities further below, but first I will outline some of the positive features of Columbus, in particular its ability to sustain growth.

From 1950 to 1990, the population in the Columbus metropolitan area grew by 89 percent, from a population of 728,802 in 1950 to a population of 1,377,419 in 1990. During this period, the city population grew as well, by 68 percent. In fact, from 1980 to 1990, Franklin County was the only one of Ohio's eight largest counties to experience significant growth (Columbus Metropolitan Human Services Commission, 1995). According to Rusk, "central to the urban problem is how different metro areas have grown" (1995: 14). The city of Columbus has managed to capture both population and economic growth within its boundaries, while more troubled cities have not. Of the population growth within the Columbus metropolitan area from 1950 to 1990, the city of Columbus captured 40 percent of that growth within its boundaries (Rusk, 1995: 21). One reason Columbus has been

able to grow is that it has aggressively expanded its city limits. In 1950, the city of Columbus was 39 square miles; by 1990, it was 191 square miles--a change of 385 percent (Rusk, 1995: 17).<sup>7</sup>

As the previous discussion illustrated, the last two decades have witnessed a move from an industrial to a postindustrial age in the United States. Many researchers have focused on the devastating affects of deindustrialization on many urban areas, especially those in the east and midwest. However, some cities such as Columbus have managed to sustain growth even as they lost industrial jobs. In 1973, approximately 21 percent of jobs in the Columbus metropolitan area were in manufacturing, and by 1988 this had declined to 13 percent, with a -14 percent change in manufacturing jobs during this period (Rusk, 1995: 39). Simultaneous job growth during this period was 40 percent (Rusk, 1995: 42).

It is specifically as a result of these changes in Columbus' economy that the city has continued to thrive over the last decades. Table 3-2 shows the industry of employed persons in the city of Columbus. In 1993, over fifty percent of all jobs in the Columbus metropolitan area were in the services and trade sectors of the economy. The services sector grew by 72 percent from 1980 to 1993, followed by FIRE (finance, insurance and real estate) at 50 percent growth and

trade at 45 percent growth. By 1993, only 17 percent of local jobs were in manufacturing or construction (Columbus Metropolitan Human Services Commission, 1995: 10). The unemployment rate in Franklin County is lower than the state and national rates (4.8 percent in 1993), and has been

**Table 3-2 Industry of Employed Persons, Columbus**

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Services	36.17%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	23.35%
Manufacturing	11.61%
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	10.24%
Transportation, Communications and Public Utilities	6.90%
Public Administration	6.33%
Construction	4.34%

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Source: U.S. Census, 1990

declining in recent years. According to the Columbus Metropolitan Human Services Commission, this is because the service-producing jobs which have increased are also more stable during economic slowdown (1995: 9).

However, median income in these sectors (services and trade) are among the lowest in Franklin County (Metropolitan Human Services Commission, 1995: 12). While Columbus is thriving in comparison with other cities in the U.S.,

particularly those in regions hit hardest by deindustrialization, it still has problems of racial and economic inequality. Deindustrialization has not had the kinds of devastating affects in Columbus that it has had in other cities, where large areas of highly concentrated urban poverty have grown, yet it remains a city with significant racial disparities.

The isolation of the poor, and particular poor African Americans, is of critical importance. A great deal of the economic expansion that has occurred in the greater Columbus area has occurred in the suburbs, with new expansive shopping and business complexes opening on a regular basis, expanding further and further away from the central city. It is true that Columbus does not have large 'underclass' areas, and that much of the suburban growth has occurred within Columbus' city limits. However, there are substantial pockets of impoverished neighborhoods within the city, and given a relatively small population of urban African Americans, these economically isolated neighborhoods also tend to have high concentrations of poor African Americans.<sup>8</sup>

Table 3-3 provides comparative data on important socioeconomic indicators for African Americans and whites in Columbus.<sup>9</sup> What these data reveal is a great deal of racial inequality. Whites' median household income is one and a half times that of African Americans; even the median income

**Table 3-3 Socioeconomic Characteristics of Columbus**

Measure	African American	White
Median Household Income	\$19,750	\$28,583
Median Income, Female Headed Households with Children under Age 18	\$8,791	\$14,948
Percent Unemployment	11.3%	4.6%
Percent of Families Below the Poverty Line	26.8%	8.6%
Percent Poverty, Female Headed Households with Children under Age 18	52.6%	37.8%
Percent Female-Headed Families	46.9%	16.8%
Percent Public Assistance	21.3%	6.3%
Percent Non-High School Graduates (Age 18-24)	30.0%	14.3%
Percent Non-High School Graduates (Age 25 +)	30.4%	19.0%

Source: U.S. Census, 1990

for female-headed households is more than \$6,000 higher for whites than African Americans. Unemployment is more than two times higher for African Americans than whites, and rates of poverty and public assistance are three times higher for African Americans than whites. African Americans are also nearly three times more likely to live in female-headed

families than whites. In fact, while in absolute terms African Americans are better off in Columbus than in more economically troubled cities (for example, with higher median incomes and with lower rates of poverty), in relative terms (comparing the gap between African Americans and whites) the racial disparities in Columbus are equal to or even greater than in many of these other cities.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, these disparities have been increasing. While median household income has increased in Franklin County for both whites and African Americans since 1979, they have increased more for whites, widening the income gap between the two groups. In addition, while the poverty rate for whites remained stable in Franklin County from 1980 to 1990 (9.6 percent), it has increased for African Americans (from 26.4 percent in 1980 to 29.3 percent in 1990) (Columbus Metropolitan Human Services Commission, 1995: 12-13). Infant mortality rates for African Americans are double those for whites, and this is also a gap that has been increasing in recent years (Columbus Metropolitan Human Services Commission, 1995: 17).

One arena in which racial disparities are most visible in Columbus is in education. As Table 3-3 shows, the percentage of non-high school graduates is twice as high for African Americans than whites at ages 18 to 24, and one and a half times as high for those 25 and over. In addition, in



1990, approximately 29 percent of whites in Franklin County had received bachelor's degrees, while only 12 percent of African Americans had (Columbus Metropolitan Human Services Commission, 1995: 6).

The state of public education is also a significant factor. According to Rusk:

Public education in inelastic areas is characterized by a single, but shrinking, central-city school system surrounded by multiple suburban systems . . . . By contrast, in elastic areas a unified, central-city school system is typically as dominant as the expanding central city. (1995: 34)

Though overall Columbus fits the pattern of an elastic city, on these measures, it closely parallels inelastic cities. Only 25 percent of metropolitan area students are enrolled in Columbus Public Schools while there are 52 suburban school districts in the area, and the school segregation index (measured by the proportion of African American students who would have to change schools to produce a proportional distribution) is 71 (with complete segregation 100 and complete integration zero). In fact, the Columbus metropolitan area is among the top ten most school-segregated among metropolitan areas with one million or more residents (Rusk, 1995: 36).

There is further evidence that Columbus Public Schools are troubled in comparison to suburban schools in the area. Dropout rates for grades seven through twelve in all Franklin

County schools were 5.2 percent in 1994, but 9.7 percent in Columbus Public Schools--the highest dropout rate in the county. In the 1992-93 school year, Columbus Public Schools had the lowest number of students (21 percent) pass the ninth grade proficiency exam of any school district in the county. Graduation rates in Columbus Public Schools in 1993 were 46 percent, but for Franklin County as a whole they were 63.7 percent (Columbus Metropolitan Human Services Commission, 1995: 6-7).

In addition, there are clear racial disparities in disciplinary actions against students in Columbus Public Schools. Three times more African American than white students were expelled in the 1992-1993 school year. Compared to figures from a decade earlier, the number of African American students expelled nearly tripled, from 66 students in 1983 to 189 students in 1993. For white students, these numbers are 43 and 64 respectively. While more African American students than whites have been expelled every year during this time period, from 1990 on, between two and a half and five times more African American than white students have been expelled each year.<sup>11</sup> In addition, of 23,000 school suspensions in Columbus Public Schools during the 1992-93 academic year, 65.7 percent involved African American students (Columbus Metropolitan Human Services Commission, 1995: 7). Given my focus on the experiences of

adolescent females in Columbus, these disparities are of particular significance. All of the young women in my study who are enrolled in school attend Columbus Public Schools, and the majority are either African American (60.8 percent) or of mixed race (10.9 percent).

It is crucial for any study of gangs in cities with emerging gang problems to situate the growth of gangs within these social and economic contexts. Many researchers have pointed to gangs as a means for inner city youths to adapt to their oppressive living conditions--poverty, neighborhood crime, lack of opportunities, racism. In addition, as Baca Zinn (1989) points out, these contexts are inextricably gendered. Gang subcultures emerge as a mode of adaptation to deteriorating living conditions (Vigil and Long, 1990), and likely fulfill unique needs for their female participants. As Campbell (1990a) points out, girls surviving in poor urban communities face a number of problems, including limited educational and occupational opportunities, subordination to men, and childcare responsibilities, in addition to the "powerlessness of underclass membership" shared with males within the community. She argues that "the gang represents for its members an idealized collective solution" for coping with these problems (Campbell, 1990a: 173).

I would suggest that Columbus fits this model in many ways, even without a large 'underclass' area, because the

relative gaps between the haves and have-nots in Columbus is so large and visible, and is compounded for African Americans by their small percentage of the population. There may be less physical isolation in Columbus (though it clearly exists), but these other factors contribute additionally to psychological isolation, both for those African Americans trapped in Columbus' inner city areas, and those who find themselves one of a handful of African Americans when in thriving communities in the Columbus metropolitan area.

#### GANGS IN THE COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN AREA

The increase in the number of gangs and their locations across the United States has resulted in their increasingly diverse forms (Huff, 1993; Winfree et.al., 1992), as well as probable changes in the prevalence and shape of female participation, such as the growth in autonomous female gangs (see Lauderback et al., 1992; Taylor, 1993). According to Vigil and Long (1990: 55), some of these differences "stem from regional and urban differences, particularly adaptation to environmental circumstances and social forces." Given Columbus' social and economic contexts, what then of the gang situation in Columbus?

According to the Maxson-Klein national migration survey, gangs were first recognized in Columbus in 1985 (Maxson et al., 1995). Columbus is often cited by gang

researchers as providing a telling anecdote regarding the shift from official denial of gangs to admitting that a city has a gang problem. As C. Ronald Huff (1989) initially reported, it was shortly following the separate assaults against the governor's daughter and the mayor's son in the mid-1980s that Columbus officially recognized it had a gang problem. Detective Thad Alexander with the Columbus Police Department, who has been working with gangs in Columbus for the last decade, suggests that the initial introduction of gangs and "the gang mentality" into Columbus occurred around 1984, from a group called the G.I. Boys from Gary, Indiana.

At the time of the Maxson-Klein migration survey (1992), police reported an estimated ten to 25 gangs in Columbus, with 200 plus members. More recent police estimates are approximately thirty active gangs, with 400 to 1,000 members (LaLonde, 1995), with the biggest stronghold of gangs in Columbus' public housing units.<sup>12</sup> The majority of these groups are small in size (twenty or fewer members). Columbus area suburbs also have reported recent evidence of gang activity, such as graffiti, gang colors and dress (Crumbley, 1995; Mayhood, 1995b).

According to police estimates in the Maxson-Klein migration survey, about 90 percent of gang members in Columbus are African American, eight percent Hispanic, and two percent white.<sup>13</sup> Others report (and my research

suggests) that many of the gang sets in Columbus are racially mixed groups (Mayhood and LaLonde, 1995a), though with a majority of African American members. Gangs in Columbus have adopted "big city" gang names such as Crips, Bloods and Folks, along with the dress styles, signs, and graffiti of these groups. Many local gang workers suggest part of this is media-influenced (Mayhood and LaLonde, 1995b), in addition to the transmission of specific elements of particular gangs' style by members coming from other cities. There are no reports of organized gang migration into Columbus, but as is often the case in cities around the country (see Klein, 1995), there is evidence of individual young people with gang knowledge or involvement moving to Columbus, typically with their families (Huff, 1989). These youths are often looked up to and emulated by youths who are Columbus natives (Mayhood, 1995a), though gangs are and have been primarily a "homegrown" problem (Huff, 1989).

Columbus gangs and/or their members are involved in a variety of known criminal activities, most frequently vandalism, property damage, and minor drug trafficking.<sup>14</sup> The general impression of gangs conveyed by officers I spoke with in the Columbus Police Department is that Columbus gangs are not as visibly active on the streets as gangs in many other cities, and they are more easily approached and confronted by police than gang members in tougher cities.

They are described as "loose groups and 'wannabes' seeking a reputation . . . not as violent or organized as those in larger cities" (Mayhood and LaLonde, 1995a: 2A).

The officers I spoke with speculated that these dynamics are partly "because Columbus has no hardcore blighted inner-city areas" like other large cities (see also Mayhood and LaLonde, 1995a). According to Detective Alexander, kids in Columbus "talk the talk, but can't walk the walk . . . a lot of these kids don't have the heart to be gangsters."<sup>15</sup> And in fact, while the number of gang members has increased in the last decade, and the number of juveniles arrested for carrying concealed weapons in Columbus has nearly tripled in the last few years (Mayhood and LaLonde, 1995a), arrests for violent offenses among juveniles have so far remained stable (LaLonde, 1995).

As is typical, local discussions of gangs in Columbus tend to focus exclusively on their male participants (see Hoover and Mayhood, 1995; LaLonde, 1995; Mayhood, 1995a; Mayhood and LaLonde, 1995a, 1995b). In a comprehensive three part series on gangs which ran in *The Columbus Dispatch* in 1995, females were only mentioned as something enjoyed by gang members (Mayhood and LaLonde, 1995a: 2A), and in the context of being girlfriends of members or being "sexed in" to their gangs (Mayhood, 1995a).<sup>16</sup> Officers I spoke with in the Columbus Police Department also tended to view more

serious gang problems as mostly a male phenomenon, but recognized that most gangs in Columbus have female members or affiliates. They also had information on five small all-female gangs in Columbus. These female groups in Columbus are not neighborhood-based, but are believed to have developed in middle and high schools, reportedly cause trouble in and around their schools, on the bus, and at bus drop off points, and are involved in theft, some drug trafficking, and assaults.<sup>17</sup>

Overall then, the picture of Columbus gangs is not particularly surprising. Given their relatively recent emergence in the city, they tend to be small groups, criminally oriented but not especially sophisticated. This may in part be tied to Columbus' lack of large entrenched 'underclass' neighborhoods, to its overall economic success, and greater opportunities for young adults to mature out than are found in cities experiencing economic decline. Given their size and newness, the structures of gangs in Columbus match those described in other cities with emergent gang problems. They can best be characterized as "relatively autonomous, smaller, independent groups, poorly organized and less territorial" than in older gang cities (Klein, 1995: 36). Chapters seven and eight below will provide more detailed information about Columbus gangs, as described by some of their female participants.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Research suggests that the "underclass" explanation may be better suited to describe the experiences of inner-city African Americans than Latinos. While poor African Americans are experiencing outmigration from their communities, Latino communities experience a continuing influx of new immigrants. Deindustrialization has been accompanied by a reindustrialization of the type of low-wage work that tends to employ immigrants. In addition, because of their unique cultural experiences, Latinos are better able to create ethnic enclaves, informal economies, and strong interhousehold networks that shelter them from the types of isolation experienced by many inner city African Americans (Moore and Pinderhughes, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> These factors do remain important, even in smaller cities and suburbs. Johnstone's (1981) research on suburban gangs, for example, shows a high correlation between the number of poverty-level families in a suburban community and the amount of gang activity there.

<sup>3</sup> Neither deal with gender issues or female involvement in any systematic way, though Decker and Van Winkle at least include interviews with female gang members and provide a cursory discussion.

<sup>4</sup> These issues can more accurately be addressed only through the comparison of Columbus with one or more additional cities which vary on the two points of interest (date of gang emergence and socioeconomic character). Comparative data will allow me to address the extent to which female gang involvement in Columbus is unique to its particular socioeconomic niche, and the extent to which elements of female gang involvement transcend particular contexts. Of cities in the U.S. with populations between 200,000 and 800,000, there are four that are comparable to Columbus, with an onset of gangs after 1985. These include Jacksonville, Florida, Nashville, Tennessee, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Portland, Oregon. In addition, Denver, Colorado and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma are in the same size range, but have a date of gang emergence in the early 1980s. There may be some generalizability of gang patterns from Columbus to these other cities.

<sup>5</sup> Pittsburgh was initially included as a city falling within the region of interest. However because of contradictory evidence concerning the existence of gangs in the city, it was excluded from consideration (see Klein, 1995: 89-90).

<sup>6</sup> Rusk's work (1995) gives further credence to my site selection. Columbus was one of only two midwestern cities he characterized as highly elastic. The other was Indianapolis, which did not meet my second criteria of being a new gang city. The emergence of gangs in Indianapolis was in the 1960s (see Klein, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> According to Rusk, Columbus accomplished this growth by "annex[ing] aggressively, driven by two strategic goals: to become the most populous city in Ohio and never to allow itself to become completely surrounded by incorporated suburbs" (1995: 23).

<sup>8</sup> In chapter five, I will present specific evidence of this in the form of census tract analyses of interview subjects' neighborhoods.

<sup>9</sup> Because Hispanics, Asian Americans and other groups are only 4.2 percent of the city's population, and because I have no Hispanic and only one Asian American girl in my sample, my focus here will be exclusively on African American/white differences.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Cleveland provides a striking contrast with Columbus on social and economic indicators, including a more diverse racial composition, an unemployment rate more than double of Columbus', a median income \$9000 lower, twice as many households relying on public assistance income, and poverty rates that are double those found in Columbus (U.S. Census, 1990). However, the disparity between African Americans and whites in Cleveland is less severe on the majority of measures listed in Table 3-3 above. For example, the poverty rate for African Americans in Cleveland is just over twice that for whites (35.6 percent versus 15.7 percent), while it is more than three times higher in Columbus.

<sup>11</sup> In the 1994-1995 academic year, the number of African American students expelled reached its highest number ever--242. During the same period, 69 white students had been expelled.

<sup>12</sup> Much information in this section comes from two meetings and several phone conversations with officers in the Columbus Police Department in early 1996. I met once with Lieutenant Fred Bowditch with the Strategic Response Bureau, and again with Lieutenant Bowditch and Detective Thad Alexander with the department's threat group unit. I had several followup conversations with each.

<sup>13</sup> My evidence, while not systematic, indicates that these percentages overestimate the involvement of African American youths, and underestimate the involvement of white youths. Of the gang members in my study, 23.8 percent (five of 21) were white.

<sup>14</sup> Information from Lieutenant Bowditch, followup phone conversation, May 1996.

<sup>15</sup> During our initial meeting, Detective Alexander reported that Columbus experienced relatively few gang-related homicides, in keeping with his depiction of Columbus gangs as comparably "soft." However, during a followup phone conversation in early April, he expressed concern that there has been a recent increase in gang-related homicides this spring. With the warmer weather in late March, he found himself working on three homicides he suspected were gang-related in as many weeks. However, he clarified that while he believes there's been an increase this year from last, he can't say for certain because accurate statistics have not been gathered. He reports that there has not been a significant effort to investigate whether homicides involving young people were gang related in the past few years.

<sup>16</sup> None of the girls I spoke with reported being "sexed in" as their initiation into the gang. The majority reported being beaten or jumped in, and most were strongly resistant to the stereotype of them as sexual objects within their gangs (see below).

<sup>17</sup> Despite numerous efforts, I was only able to interview one young woman from an all-female gang. I can only speculate on why this was the case, and I think the reasons are multiple. There are not very many all-female gangs in Columbus, and they were not taken seriously by individuals I spoke with. Police officers downplayed their involvement in crimes other than fighting other girls, while numerous female members of mixed-gender gangs described them as pointless (more on this in chapter seven). The young woman I did interview from an all-female gang suggests that her gang makes a concerted effort not to bring attention to themselves (for example, they don't wear colors, throw signs or have rivalries), to avoid detection of their criminal involvement. This desire to stay "low-key" may be another reason these young women were so difficult to locate.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY AND STUDY OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to provide a picture of female gang membership, and in particular to focus on a city context in which gangs are a relatively new phenomenon, and have not arisen in the context of entrenched urban 'underclass' conditions. I have drawn on multiple sources of data, including surveys with gang and non-gang girls, census tract information for each interviewee, and in-depth qualitative interviews with gang members and gang affiliates. In the field of research on female gang involvement, there have been several studies which provide qualitative data, typically coming from a small group of girls in one or several gangs (cf. Campbell, 1984a; Fishman, 1988; Lauderback et al., 1992). Recently, we have available survey data which allow for the comparison of females who are in gangs with those who are not (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Fagan, 1990). But to date there have been no attempts to combine these methods, drawing on the unique benefits of each type of study in order to produce a more thorough investigation of girls in gangs. This is a primary objective of my project.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the goals of the

study, then I will provide an overview of how it was accomplished, including a discussion of sampling procedures, the construction and implementation of the survey and in-depth interviews, and how census tract information was gathered. I will then discuss methodological strengths and limitations, and issues of validity and reliability as they arise and are addressed in the project.

#### GOALS OF THE STUDY

This research is the first part of a larger study of female gang involvement in several midwestern cities with contrasting socioeconomic conditions and gang histories. It involves a survey interview with 46 girls, 21 of whom are gang members and 25 who are not in gangs, followed by subsequent in-depth interviews with the gang members and three non-gang girls who are gang-affiliated (ie. their primary social group is predominantly a gang or gang members). The interviews were supplemented with census tract analysis for the respondents. Gang membership was determined in the survey interview by self-definition: if the young woman claimed to be a gang member, she was classified as one (see below for a discussion of self-definition and other means of determining gang membership in research).

The goals of the research are multiple, reflecting the diversity of methods. First, I examined factors related to

female gang membership, specifically, what structural, environmental, familial and personal factors lead some girls toward gang affiliation while others in their communities exercise different options. Interviewing gang and non-gang girls provides a basis of comparison on a number of variables (see below). Second, I further examined the contexts in which girls join gangs by exploring through in-depth interviews what they see as the motivating circumstances of their gang involvement. Examining the contexts that shaped their decisions to join, and the reasons they continue to participate, provides insights into the meanings of gangs in the lives of young women. The third thrust of the project involves examining the structures, nature, and activities of gangs in Columbus, and the place of girls and meanings of gender within these groups. This information was initially gathered in the survey interview, then expanded upon in the in-depth interviews. Discussions of the survey instrument and interview guide will provide further clarification of this process (see below).

#### SAMPLING PROCEDURES

Interviews were conducted with 46 girls (21 gang and 25 non-gang), all of whom lived in areas in the city in which they had at least minimal exposure to gangs.<sup>1</sup> The decision to interview around 50 girls was to provide a sufficient

number for stable comparison, while maintaining a reasonable size for the qualitative interviewing.<sup>2</sup> Several problems must be dealt with when attempting to build a sample of gang members. Gangs are relatively transitory groups, characterized by fluid and changing membership (Klein, 1971); and as such cannot be sampled randomly (Short and Strodbeck, 1965). Researchers must deal with two related issues: where and how to locate gang members, and how to know when we have found one. One approach which deals with both of these issues is to sample members based on police rosters. However, this approach over-samples those gang members most seriously involved in crime and experienced with formal intervention. Research shows variation in the amount of crime committed by gang members (Fagan, 1989, 1990), thus this approach is problematic.

Two additional approaches often employed include referrals through community agencies that deal with gang members, and snowball sampling (asking gang members to make referrals to other members). Cooperation from agency personnel generally proves successful for accessing gang members (see Bowker, Gross and Klein, 1980; Fagan, 1989; Short and Strodbeck, 1965; Vigil, 1988). However, agency referrals still pose the problem of targeting only officially labeled gang youth. Snowball sampling is believed to be perhaps the most effective way of getting close to a

representative sample of gang youths, since it avoids drawing entirely from officially labeled "gang members" (Fagan, 1989; Hagedorn, 1988).

In this study, I attempted both of these latter approaches. My primary sources of interview subjects were local agencies that work with youth. I did not specifically target agencies working with gang members, nor did I generate a pool of interview subjects from agency rosters of "known" gang members. To further avoid over-sampling girls who were labeled as gang members, I asked agency personnel to refer me not just to girls believed to be gang members, but also any other girls living in areas in Columbus where they might have contact with gangs. Though I attempted snowball sampling throughout the study, most of my efforts were fruitless because so many of the girls I interviewed were in residential facilities. I was successful at snowballing *within* agencies, however. Several girls I interviewed were gang-involved but without staff knowledge. They were referred to me by other girls I interviewed within facilities. Because the project was a gang/non-gang comparison, I was able to arrange interviews with girls without informing staff that they were gang-involved. Thus in a limited capacity I was able to interview gang members who had not been detected by officials.

Before proceeding to a more detailed discussion of the



sampling in Columbus, I need to further address the issue raised above about how to determine who is a gang member. To avoid the problems caused by sampling officially labeled youth, researchers recently have turned to self-definition as a measure of gang membership, either alone or in conjunction with more restrictive guidelines (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Esbensen et al., 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993; Maxson and Klein, 1993; Thornberry et al., 1993; Winfree et al., 1992). Allowing respondents to self-identify as gang members avoids the problem of confusing definitions and behaviors (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Fagan, 1990; Winfree et al., 1992). Given the changing nature of gangs as they grow and emerge in new cities, and their diversification (Curry and Spergel, 1992; Huff, 1993; Spergel and Curry, 1993), it may be the case that fewer definitional criteria can capture better those gangs and gang members now active (Horowitz, 1990; Winfree et al., 1992).

Concerns with using self-reported gang membership include whether actual gang members will deny their gang involvement, whether non-gang youths will claim gang-involvement, and whether youths will be included who are members of groups that do not fit with researchers' definitions of a "gang." To deal with these issues, some researchers have used self-definition in conjunction with more restrictive guidelines. A typical guideline to restrict

who counts as a gang member is the character of the gang to which they belong. Specifically, a number of researchers agree that it should be a group that is involved in illegal activities in order for the youth to be classified as a gang member (Fagan, 1989; Esbensen et al., 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993<sup>3</sup>), given that gangs are by definition "organized to some extent around delinquent conduct" (Thornberry et al., 1993; see also Klein, 1971; Klein and Maxson, 1989; Spergel, 1990; but see Horowitz, 1990; Short, 1990). Additional criteria considered by some researchers include that the youth be able to provide a gang name and report more than six members (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Thornberry et al., 1993), or report involvement in initiation rites, as well as symbolic systems such as colors and signs (Winfree et al., 1992).

Except for the exclusion of non-delinquent "gangs," research suggests that using restrictive measures does not change the substantive conclusions concerning gang members' behaviors when comparing self-defined gang members to those members who meet more restrictive definitions (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Fagan, 1990; Thornberry et al., 1993; Winfree et al., 1992). In fact, Winfree et al. (1992: 34) report that the "self-reported definition of gang membership proved to be a better predictor of gang-related crime than the more restrictive definition," which they speculate may be

a result of fringe or wannabe members' efforts to "demonstrate their gang-worthiness" (Winfree et al., 1992: 35).

Additional evidence in support of the robustness of self-definition as a measure of gang membership comes from those studies which have found large and stable differences between self-identified gang members and non-gang youths (including non-gang serious offenders) in their rates of involvement in delinquency, and specifically serious crime (see Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Esbensen et al., 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993; Fagan, 1990; Thornberry et al., 1993). These studies have not found consistent differences in social indicators between gang and non-gang youth.

Given the support previous research offers for using self-definition as a measure of gang membership, I adopted this approach in my project. All of the young women defined their gangs as delinquent. Though I did not adopt any of the other restrictive measures noted above, all of the gang members I interviewed described belonging to groups which met each of these criteria. All of the young women provided gang names, were members of groups with more than six members,<sup>4</sup> and described initiation rites and symbols adopted by the gang. This supplementary evidence provides greater confidence in the validity of self-definition in the study.

Contacts with interview subjects were arranged through

several agencies in the Columbus area, including the county juvenile detention center, a shelter care facility for young women (Rosemont Center), a day school within the same institution, and a local community agency (Directions for Youth).<sup>5</sup> Referrals for participants were made by agency staff, and were also made by young women who had participated in the study and had friends they believed I should talk to. One additional gang member was referred to me by a previous interviewee. Contact personnel at the agencies were aware that the study was a comparison of gang and non-gang girls, and were asked to refer me to young women who were either believed to be gang involved, or who lived in areas in Columbus known to have gangs. Likewise, when I asked young women if they had friends who might want to participate, these included gang and non-gang friends. My goal was for the non-gang comparison sample to be composed of girls who at the very least had the opportunity to join a gang because there was some amount of gang activity in their neighborhoods.<sup>6</sup>

Criteria for selecting non-gang youths was simply that they did not report gang membership, and they did not describe their community as one in which gangs were not present. All of the non-gang youths who were interested in participating were included in the study unless they did not fit the above criteria. Thus they included a range of young

women, all of whom had experienced the same forms of intervention as the gang members, and most frequently were in the same agencies. While they are not a random sample of all non-gang youths in the community, they provide a match for gang members by their "at-risk"<sup>7</sup> status.

**Table 4-1 Selected Sample Characteristics (n=46)**

	Total (n=46)	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
<u>Race</u>			
African American	28 (60.9%)	15 (71.4%)	13 (52.0%)
Mixed	5 (10.9%)	1 (4.8%)	4 (16.0%)
White	12 (26.1%)	5 (23.8%)	7 (28.0%)
Asian American	1 (2.2%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.0%)
<u>Age</u>			
12	2 (4.3%)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.0%)
13	8 (17.4%)	3 (14.3%)	5 (20.0%)
14	11 (23.9%)	4 (19.0%)	7 (28.0%)
15	11 (23.9%)	5 (23.8%)	6 (24.0%)
16	6 (13.0%)	5 (23.8%)	1 (4.0%)
17	6 (13.0%)	3 (14.3%)	3 (12.0%)
18	2 (4.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (8.0%)

This sampling has not provided me with a representative sample of gang and non-gang girls in Columbus. The sample is made up almost entirely of young women who have experienced some level of community agency or juvenile justice intervention. However, it accomplishes several goals. First, a primary concern of the study is to understand the experiences of young women who are at-risk, in the hope that findings from the project can inform more effective public policy aimed at young women. A sample overrepresenting girls who have experienced some intervention is not troubling to me, because these are precisely the young women whose needs I would hope to see more effectively addressed. In addition, the sample meets an important second goal, and that is to have a meaningful comparative population of gang and non-gang girls.

Table 4-1 provides selected demographic information on the sample, specifically the race and age of the girls I interviewed. Approximately three quarters of the sample are African American or mixed-race girls (all of whom were African American mixed with other ethnic groups). About one quarter of the sample are white girls, and one Asian American girl falls in the non-gang category. The distribution by race is fairly even. Non-gang girls are slightly more likely to be younger than gang girls, though this difference is not significant. One quarter of the non-gang girls (versus one

**Table 4-2 Interview Source (n=46)**

Interview Source	Total (n=46)	Gang (n=21)	Non-Gang (n=25)
Detention Center	18 (39.1%)	12 (57.1%)	6 (24.0%)
Rosemont Shelter Care	22 (47.8%)	8 (38.1%)	14 (56.0%)
Rosemont Day School	3 (6.5%)	1 (4.8%)*	2 (8.0%)
Directions for Youth	3 (6.5%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (12.0%)
Snowballing	1 (2.2%)	1 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)

\* This respondent fit in dual categories--she lived in Rosemont's shelter care facility and also attended its day school. Other girls in the shelter care facility either attended their regular school or went to a separate on-site school program.

fifth of the gang girls) are between the ages of twelve and thirteen; 52% of the non-gang versus 42.8 percent of the gang girls are age fourteen to fifteen; and 24 percent of the non-gang versus 38.1 percent of the gang girls are age sixteen to eighteen. The mean age of non-gang girls is 14.73, and the mean age for gang members is 14.91.

Table 4-2 provides a list of interview sources for the sample, by gang or non-gang status. At Rosemont Center and Directions for Youth, interviews were conducted in private offices; at the detention center two were conducted in private interview rooms and the rest in the visiting area,

and the snowballed interview was started at a public library and concluded at the respondent's home. In addition, one of the girls interviewed at the detention center was released prior to the completion of the in-depth interview, which we later conducted at her home.

One potential problem with the sample is the fact that approximately 57 percent (12 of 21) of the gang members came from the Franklin County Detention Center, while only 24 percent (six of 25) of their non-gang counterparts came from this facility. This could lead to a bias characterizing gang members as more seriously delinquent than their non-gang counterparts. However, there is evidence to suggest that the over-representation of gang members from the detention center is not a cause for serious concern in this project. A snapshot view of the detention center taken in June 1995 by the Ohio Department of Youth Services indicates that the detention center does not engage in careful risk assessment to screen for serious offenders, and instead is routinely used to house non-serious offenders. The report revealed that 33 percent of youths locked in the facility were there on "motions" or probation violations, and nearly half of these had been placed on probation for unruly or misdemeanor offenses in the first place (Sanniti, 1995).

I also have reason to believe that there is a good deal of overlap between the girls interviewed in the detention



center and those interviewed through other agencies because the populations served by these agencies are adolescents who are deemed at-risk. Directions for Youth is a private agency providing outreach, individual and family services to youths in Columbus who are at-risk because of unruliness, delinquency or dependency. Referrals come from the juvenile court, schools, children's services, and the community at large. The Rosemont Center Day School is a private school which provides educational services for youths labeled as severely behaviorally or emotionally handicapped, and referred by parents, schools or social service agencies. Typical problems include poor school attendance and multiple suspensions for behavioral problems.

Given that the majority of girls in the sample came from either the detention center or Rosemont's shelter care program (86.9 percent), it is particularly important to assess how these two facilities compare. Rosemont's shelter care program is an emergency care facility which houses young women placed by Franklin County Children's Services, with referrals coming from the juvenile court and/or parents, including cases of abuse, neglect, and unruly behavior. While it is designed to provide temporary placement for young women without other options (for example because family members or foster parents refuse to allow them back in the home, and/or as they await placement in foster or group homes

or in residential programs), many of the young women I spoke with had been at the facility for several months or more.<sup>8</sup> Rosemont's shelter care program does include young women in its population whose cases are dependency-only (ie., girls who have been removed from their families as a result of abuse or neglect), but only one girl in my sample fell exclusively into that classification.

The overlap between girls from the detention center and Rosemont's shelter care facility also was illustrated in my research process. While my interviewing was sporadic at both locations,<sup>9</sup> I nevertheless encountered girls at one setting that I had interviewed at the other. One young woman I interviewed at the detention center in June 1995 I ran into five months later in Rosemont's shelter care facility; and a young woman I interviewed at Rosemont's shelter care facility in December 1995 I later reinterviewed at the detention center in March 1996.

In addition to this anecdotal evidence, data on arrest and detention provide support for the comparability of girls at the two locations. Of the 22 girls interviewed at Rosemont, 15 (68.2 percent) had been arrested (six of the eight gang members, and nine of the fourteen non-gang members). Furthermore, half of the girls in each category (four gang, seven non-gang) reported having spent time at the detention center, and two others had cases pending.

## PROCEDURES TO PROTECT HUMAN SUBJECTS

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the University of Southern California's Institutional Review Board in April 1995 following approximately seven months of negotiations. Numerous issues arise when conducting research on adolescent gang members that are noteworthy for discussion. These include parental consent, legal risks of disclosing criminal involvement, disclosure of child abuse, and problems posed by student researchers engaging in sensitive research. Here I will briefly outline these issues and discuss how they were resolved.

A primary issue when interviewing adolescent gang members is parental consent, which is routinely required when interviewing individuals under age eighteen. However, this poses a danger for gang youths because the act of seeking parental consent risks informing parents of their child's gang membership. Research has documented gang youths' reluctance to reveal gang membership to parents and their success at concealing it (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996). To deal with this problem, I sought and was granted a waiver of parental consent, contingent on the appointment of a youth advocate to serve as a surrogate guardian for interview subjects. Jodi Rice, a social worker with Catholic Social Services in Columbus, agreed to this role. Potential interview subjects were given Ms. Rice's name and telephone

number, and were provided with the opportunity to contact her prior to making the decision to participate.<sup>10</sup> In addition, I met with Ms. Rice throughout the interview phase of the project to discuss how each interview went and to discuss any problems that arose.

Because parental consent was waived, great diligence on my part was required to assess youths' voluntary participation and informed consent. Girls under age twelve were excluded from participation, and I took particular care with those under age fourteen to assess their competence to provide informed consent.<sup>11</sup> Each participant was initially screened through someone else, either an agency worker or another youth, who approached them about participating in the study. When they expressed interest in participating, they were introduced to me. Potential subjects were given a "Description for Participants" (Appendix A), which outlined in general terms the goals of the study (without mentioning gangs specifically), explained confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation, including the right to refuse participation, to refuse to answer any questions, and to terminate the interview at any time. I read this description to potential subjects, solicited questions, then asked if they would like to participate. Participants were paid ten dollars for each interview.

Subjects who are interviewed about their criminal

involvement must be protected from legal consequences resulting from information disclosed during the interview. Prior to each interview, subjects were warned that they should not tell me any information about planning to hurt someone in the future, and I asked no questions during the interviews to solicit this type of information. Concerning past criminal involvement, confidentiality was protected by federal law once the project was officially funded by the National Institute of Justice, but additional procedures were used to further protect interview subjects. I maintained the anonymity of interview subjects by not eliciting or recording names (except first names when needed to schedule interviews), and by keeping any identifying information safeguarded in a locked file box and destroying it promptly. I did not share any individual information with family, agency personnel or public officials regarding criminal involvement, or any other topic covered in the interviews.

It is critical to assess exposure to violence as a risk factor in gang membership, particularly for females. Questions included in the survey about exposure to violence risked eliciting reports of child abuse. Ohio law does not require mandatory reporting of abuse cases for academic researchers, though I chose to make decisions concerning whether to report abuse on a case-by-case basis. If there was prior and on-going intervention, reporting was

unnecessary. This was actually the case in all situations in which abuse arose in the study, probably because I dealt specifically with a population of youths identified through agencies. If the need had arise, I planned to report abuse when intervention had not occurred and the subject was willing to cooperate, as well as when the subject was hesitant to cooperate, but evidence was of serious and continuing abuse and pointed toward the likelihood that reporting the abuse would result in successful intervention. Neither of these situations arose.

Given the outlined risks associated with conducting research on criminally-involved minors who are likely to have histories of victimization, Institutional Review Boards such as that at USC are reluctant to grant permission to students to engage in research of this type. This concern was greater in the case of my project because the research was being conducted in a city and state distant from my immediate faculty advisors. To provide greater supervision and control of my project as a new researcher, the Institutional Review Board required that I have an on-site supervisor in Columbus who was experienced in the type of research I conducted. C. Ronald Huff, Director of the School of Public Policy and Management at the Ohio State University and an experienced gang researcher, served in this capacity. He helped coordinate entree into the field, and was available to deal

with problems that arose during the research process.

#### SURVEY INSTRUMENT AND CENSUS TRACT ANALYSIS

The survey interview I developed (Appendix B) is a variation of several instruments currently being used in conjunction with longitudinal and cross-sectional research under way in a number of cities in the U.S., including Rochester (The Rochester Youth Development Study), Denver (The Denver Youth Survey), San Diego and Long Beach (The Gang Membership Resistance Surveys). The strength of using an instrument that adopts many of the questions and scales currently in use in research in other cities lies in the ability to make comparisons between the girls in my study and girls interviewed in these other cities, in addition to the confidence that results from using instruments that have shown themselves previously to be valid and reliable.

The survey instrument is broadly based, covering a number of factors that the literature suggests may be related to gang membership among youths in general, and girls in particular. Factors related to gang membership include structural factors such as social class, neighborhood characteristics, lack of opportunities, levels of aspirations, social isolation and lack of adult role models, as well as measures of commitment to school and education. In addition, the survey measures the importance of peers,

peer delinquency and individual delinquent involvement, all of which are empirically linked to gang involvement. Also included are measures of family factors such as attachment to adult caregivers, supervision, abuse, and other family problems, as well as questions addressing personal and psychological issues, including sections on sexual history and self esteem.

While maintaining the majority of scales and measures found in these studies, I also tailored the instrument to address issues of particular relevance for understanding female gang involvement. This includes the addition of a separate section on victimization, perceptions of gender as resulting in blocked opportunities, the gender composition of friendship groups and/or gangs, and whether this involves gender segregation of activities (see below for a detailed discussion of the measures used).

Gang membership was determined in the interview by self-definition. After asking a series of questions about family, school, and activities, I asked girls to describe their group of friends, then asked if they considered this group to be a gang. I followed with the question of whether they consider themselves gang members (see questions 64 through 69 in Appendix B). When they responded affirmatively, we moved to a series of questions about the nature of their gang, including its size, leadership,



activities, symbols, and so on (see questions 76 through 100 in Appendix B). Time for completion of the survey ranged from a half hour to two hours. The length of an interview typically depended on whether the participant was a gang member (if so, there were a series of additional questions), how much delinquency she was involved in (there were a series of followup questions for each affirmative response in the self-reported delinquency scale), and how many arrests they had (again, due to followup questions).

Census tract information was gathered in the context of the survey interview. At the beginning of each interview, I asked the interviewee to tell me the names of two streets that cross each other that were very near to her home. I then located each intersection on a map of the city, noted its census tract, and recorded socioeconomic measures for comparison.<sup>12</sup> Although this may not provide precise data on census tracts (since there is a chance some girls may live close to census tract borders, and the cross streets they indicate are in the next tract over), it does provide generally accurate data on the neighborhood contexts of the girls I interviewed.

#### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The in-depth interview guide (Appendix C) was developed with the goal of gaining a greater understanding of the

nature and meanings of gang life from the point of view of the girls who are members.<sup>13</sup> While the survey interview provided contextual information such as family background, educational experiences, and the like, the goal of the in-depth interview was to explore aspects of the social worlds of girls who are in gangs. I implemented a numerical system in which the in-depth interviews could be linked back to the survey responses

The interviews were semi-structured and open ended, and all but one were audiotaped. Of the 21 gang members from the survey, 19 participated in the in-depth interview.<sup>14</sup> In addition, three gang-affiliated girls were interviewed, one who was affiliated with an all-male Crips set, one whose friends were primarily Folks but who also had friends in other gangs, and a third who hung out exclusively with gang members but from different gangs.

The in-depth interviews were structured around several groupings of questions. We began by discussing their entree into the gang--how they became involved, when they decided to join, what the initiation was like, how they were feeling, and what other things were going on in their lives at the time. Then we discussed the structure of the gang--its history, size, leadership, organization, and their own place in the group. The next series of questions was about gender within the gang, for example, how females get involved, what

activities they engage in and whether these are the same as the males' activities, what kind of males and females have the most influence in the gang and why, what girls wouldn't make good members, and whether males or females contribute anything that would be missing if the gang were not mixed gender groups.<sup>15</sup> The next series of questions were about gang involvement more generally--what being in the gang means, what kinds of things they do together, whether members date one another, whether they fight, whether they sell drugs. Then I asked how safe or dangerous they feel gang membership is, and how they deal with it. I concluded by asking again what it's like to be a female in the gang, then asked them to speculate on why people their age join gangs, what things they like, dislike about and have learned by being in the gang, what they like best about themselves and what they think they'll be like in the future. This basic guideline was followed for each interview subject, although when additional topics arose in the context of the interview, we often deviated from the interview guide to pursue them.

A separate interview guide was constructed for the non-gang affiliates (see Appendix D). It primarily followed the same outline as the gang member interview guide, but included a series of additional questions about the meanings of and motivations for not being a member. We discussed why they hang out with gang members but choose not to join, how their

gang friends respond, whether their friends are all members of the same gang or members of rival gangs, and how this affects their friendships, what the benefits of not joining are, and whether they think they'll join in the future. I chose to conduct these few non-gang interviews in order to highlight that there is not a clear, rigid distinction between gang and non-gang youths. While there are only four interviews with young women who are affiliates but not members, I believe they are important for providing a way of further exploring the meanings of gangs and exploring the boundaries of gang membership among young women in Columbus.<sup>16</sup>

#### METHODOLOGICAL STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

Combining qualitative interviewing with survey research provides valuable complementary information about the social worlds of gang-involved girls. My hope with this project was to bring these methods of gaining knowledge together in meaningful ways. Given my sample size and nonrepresentativeness, my goal was not generalizability, but rich analysis of the nature of and meanings girls attribute to gang involvement, and the personal, familial, social and community contexts in which it occurs. In this section, I will address what I see as some of the strengths of my combined methodology in meeting these goals, as well as some

of the problems that inevitably arose.

In any research project, issues arise and care must be taken to assess the accuracy and potential problems with the data. Self-report surveys such as the instrument I used for the first phase of my study (Appendix B) are gaining a history in the field, and evidence suggests that they tend to produce valid and reliable data (Hindelang et al., 1981). However, given that most self-report studies over-sample male participants, one potential cause for concern is that assessments of self-report instruments have not carefully examined whether they are equally valid and reliable for both females and males.<sup>17</sup> As noted above, the majority of scales and questions included in my survey instrument are currently being used in several major longitudinal studies (including male and female participants), where they have shown themselves to be generally valid and reliable.

One difficulty with the survey interview was its inability to capture the complexities of lived experience. Survey interviews are designed to reduce complex phenomenon into contained, measurable categories. Often in the lives of at-risk adolescent females, this leads to somewhat erroneous information. Smith suggests that as researchers:

Our training teaches us to ignore the uneasiness at the junctures where transitional work is done-- for example, the ordinary problems respondents have of fitting their experiences of the world to the questions in the interview schedule. (1987:93)

The most notable example of this incongruity between girls' lives and the survey instrument was in questions concerning living arrangements and family relations. It was difficult to capture the living arrangements of many girls, who routinely moved around from one relative to another, were in and out of placements, foster homes, and/or spent time on the streets as runaways. Likewise, it often made little sense to ask about parental attachment or authority given these contexts.

Because many of the questions in the survey asked young women to recall past events, memory is also a consideration. For example, though in general self-reported delinquency scales are considered accurate, reliability and validity are most suspect when dealing with less serious forms of delinquency (Denver Youth Survey, 1990), which are less likely to be remembered accurately especially when engaged in with relative frequency. In my study, I would suggest that questions on the incidence of delinquency (as measured by "how many times in the last six months?" when an item has been responded to affirmatively) were not accurate. Many girls answered these questions without a great deal of reflection. Nonetheless I do believe they are credible indicators of what types of delinquency they are more and less likely to engage in, even if the frequencies themselves can't be trusted.

Assessing the in-depth interviews involves a somewhat different set of concerns. A characteristic of qualitative interviewing is that it provides us with a means of understanding the social world from the points of view of the research subjects, highlighting the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences (Adler and Adler, 1987; Glassner and Loughlin, 1987; Harding, 1987; Smith, 1987; Strauss, 1987). Specifically in this study, it means attempting to gain a deeper understanding of the roles of gangs in the lives of young women who are gang-involved. While my concern with the survey data is whether interviewees have given accurate responses to my questions, my concern with the in-depth interviews is the extent to which I have successfully captured the meanings these young women attribute to their gang involvement.

Establishing rapport was crucial, especially for the in-depth interview. The survey interview simply asked respondents to choose from a series of responses. The in-depth interviews were conversational in style, and we discussed aspects of their lives at length. This interaction created a relationship between myself and the interviewees that was more intimate. Important elements of rapport-building include establishing trust and familiarity, showing genuine interest, and not being judgmental about those topics discussed (Glassner and Loughlin, 1987: 35), and these were

goals within the interviews (see below for further discussion).

My research design proved useful for establishing rapport. The survey interview began with relatively innocuous questions (living arrangements, school), and slowly made the transition from these to questions about gang involvement, delinquency, and victimization. In addition, administering the survey interview prior to the in-depth interview allowed a relationship between myself and the interviewee to be established, so that when we initiated the in-depth interview we already had a level of familiarity with one another. Detailed questions in the survey interview about histories of delinquent involvement provided an opportunity to exhibit a neutral, nonjudgmental demeanor, even on the rare occasions when individuals reported brutal acts of violence. Thus, this layer of understanding was already in place when the in-depth interviews occurred.

An additional strength of the combined methodology was that the survey interviews provided collaborative evidence (or triangulation) for the in-depth interviews (see Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Schmitt, 1993). The use of multiple sources of data allows for more systematic and rigorous analysis and increased confidence in the validity and reliability of research findings. An additional form of triangulation came in the form of conversations with staff,



who sometimes revealed information about girls I had interviewed or was preparing to interview.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, I was sometimes able to compare the interviews and conversations I had with girls who were either in the same gang or were in gangs that associated with one another. At Rosemont in particular, there was typically a small group of girls who hung out together at any given time, and I was able to check their interviews for consistencies and inconsistencies.<sup>19</sup>

Schmitt (1993) suggests that it is only through the development of insider knowledge that research subjects' views of "what's going on" can be known. Since I could not gain insider knowledge through actual group membership, I relied instead on extensive contact with interview subjects and self-reflexivity. Dawson and Prus suggest that "the most appropriate methodological response to our interpretive plight continues to be . . . increased familiarity (e.g., achieved intersubjectivity) with the people we meet through our research" (1995: 121; see also Kirk and Miller, 1986). One element of reflexivity was to incorporate 'native' terms into the in-depth interview (for example, I substituted the term "set" for "gang" since this was the term girls used to describe the groups they were members of), and asked them what terms they would use when talking with one another (see Spradley, 1979 for a discussion of these techniques). I incorporated their language into the discussions, not in a

way that was coopting (as if it were my own), but explicitly as someone interested in learning their language and meaning systems.

Of course this process was not entirely successful. I am not a part of their social worlds, and thus was unable to fully adapt their language as my own. In fact, I believe that for me to do so would undermine my credibility. The young women I interviewed know as well as I that we operate in social worlds far removed from one another; my trying to talk like them would be inauthentic, and they would be acutely aware of this. I consciously attempted to adopt parts of the language of interview subjects, and sometimes unconsciously in the course of conversations I adopted terms and phrases in response to theirs. Likewise, this process was reversed: the young women I interviewed sometimes adopted my language when we spoke about various issues, as well as accepting the ways I framed a number of the issues we discussed.

At issue when this occurs is the extent to which my language and perceptions shape the meanings of girls' responses. When they appear to respond based on my framing of issues, are they telling me 'authentic' aspects of their experiences, or have I led them to discuss things in a particular way? Obviously the answer is yes, they do speak about issues in particular ways in response to me. However,

I believe that we still shared similar meanings in these cases--that the translation between my language system and their own did not significantly alter what they had to say. I make this case because there are numerous examples throughout the interview transcripts in which girls challenge and resist what I say when they feel my language or framing have gotten things wrong. On the other hand, closer examination of their discussion of topics that involve the adoption of my language reveal shared meanings.<sup>20</sup>

I paid close attention to interview subjects' reactions to some of the themes I raised, particularly instances during the interview when they "talked back" (Blumer, 1969: 22) by labeling a topic irrelevant, pointing out what they saw as misinterpretations on my part, and/or offering corrections (see also Glassner and Loughlin, 1987: 36). As the interviews progressed, I also took emerging themes back to respondents (by bringing them up towards the end of later interviews) to see if they felt I had gotten it right. This process proved to be useful for further refining some of my themes.

There are a number of additional methodology issues that need to be addressed. Inaccurate responses or incomplete disclosure in the context of the survey or in-depth interviews may be accounted for by a number of factors. Some respondents may have engaged knowingly in deception for

self-protective purposes, from discomfort resulting from the social distances between themselves and the interviewer (me) or because of concern with impression management and presentation of self. Because I was interviewing adolescents, I also need to consider how age, cognitive development, and/or social development may have shaped interviewees' interpretations of questions, and ability and willingness to respond. The context in which the interviews occurred is also significant. In particular, because many of the young women were in placement, and some were involved in individual or family counseling, their responses may be different than they would have been if interviewed when on the streets. Finally, I will address the veracity of girls' accounts by discussing the ways in which they construct "stories" of the gang based on their interpretations of what it is supposed to be like, rather than what it necessarily is. I will consider these issues further below.

#### Disclosure, Trust, and Confidentiality

For a variety of reasons, interview subjects may choose not to be forthcoming in their interview responses. Most obviously, the desire to protect oneself from incrimination (particularly when questioned about criminal or "deviant" activities) may lead interview subjects to conceal aspects of their lives from the interviewer. The secretive nature of gangs themselves only exacerbates this problem. Overcoming

this obstacle can only be achieved by building rapport and trust in the interview, and by establishing and reassuring confidentiality.

Dunlap et al. (1990: 130) have suggested that taking a teacher role can provide interview subjects with a sense of meaning and importance. Particularly for members of "deviant" groups such as gangs, it is rare to be taken seriously and to be placed in a position to teach members of the adult world. By taking the role of "acceptable incompetent" (Lofland and Lofland, 1984:38-39), and exhibiting a non-judgmental demeanor, I presented myself as nonthreatening and was able to establish rapport with the young women I interviewed. I also attempted to build rapport through my appearance, by consistently wearing jeans, for example, along with t-shirts or sweaters. I tried to look neat but not overly stylish or professional, nor under-dressed to the point of appearing totally unprofessional.

In addition, I ensured trust in my subjects through my efforts to protect their confidentiality, which went beyond simply stating my intentions and methods of protecting them. My actions in the course of the interviews also conveyed this concern. For example, when young women accidentally disclosed their own or a friend's name on tape, I immediately stopped and erased the slip, and played the tape back before continuing with the interview. Likewise, when interviewing

in open areas (such as the visiting room at a juvenile detention center), I stayed aware of our surroundings to ensure against eavesdropping. On separate occasions when this seemed a concern, we paused the interview while persons were in hearing range, lowered our voices to virtual whispers, moved to a different table, or requested a private interview room to complete the interview. Importantly, I did not wait until girls appeared or stated that they were uncomfortable. Instead I was proactive in reacting to the immediate environment. This type of concern appeared to engender greater trust among the interviewees.

These actions on my part also meant that word of mouth about my project tended to be positive in the settings where multiple interviews took place. This encouraged girls to participate, and to open up during the interviews. In fact, on one occasion when I interviewed a gang member at Rosemont who had been referred by another member, she hesitated during the survey when I started asking questions about her gang's criminal activities. I paused and asked if she was uncomfortable with the line of questions, and she said yes and asked me to wait while she took a break. I am relatively certain she went to the gang member who had referred her for reassurance, because when she came back, she was comfortable and ready to answer the questions, and expressed no further ambivalence in either the survey or the in-depth interview.

In fact she herself later arranged for me to interview several of her friends.

### Social Distances

In addition to problems of self-protection (or as a different form of self-protection), I also need to speak to how our social differences may have shaped girls' responses to me. Any telling of 'a story' may be affected by race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, sexual orientation, religious background, personal history, character--an infinite list of possible factors that form the scaffolding of relationships between people (Taylor et al., 1995: 3; see also Charmaz, 1995; Riessman, 1993).

Compared to the interviewees, I was anywhere from eleven to seventeen years older than them (though typically perceived as younger), of the same gender, but often of a different race (I am white, and the majority of interviewees are African American), and class background (upper middle versus middle, lower-middle, working class and poor). As Taylor et al., point out:

Adolescents may choose a form of political resistance--that is, choose not to speak about what they know and feel--to people they see as representing or aligned with unresponsive institutions and authorities. (1995: 36)

Social distances that include differences in relative power can result in suspicion and lack of trust, both of which I actively sought to overcome (see above).

However, when trust is established, the existence of social differences between the interviewer and interviewees can actually provide insights that may not emerge in the context of interviews where the two share similar backgrounds. One advantage of social distance is that "this position may elicit explanations [from interviewees] that are assumed to be known by someone with insider status" (Taylor et al., 1995: 36). In fact, as noted above, social distance means that the interviewee can recognize herself as an expert on a topic of interest to someone typically in a more powerful position vis-a-vis the social structure (in this case, particularly in terms of age, race and education). To find oneself placed in this position can be both empowering and illuminating because one can reflect on and speak about one's life in ways not often available. This is particularly the case for the young women in my study, whose "social location of class, gender, age, and for many, race or ethnicity, places them in a socially marginalized position that does not grant a public hearing of their experience, strength, or knowledge" (Taylor et al., 1995: 18).

For example, social distances between myself and the girls I interviewed led some girls to respond to me in ways that purposely resisted and challenged common stereotypes about adolescents, inner-city youths, and gangs. Many of the girls I spoke with were cognizant of the "controlling images"



(Collins, 1990) used to describe aspects of their lives. For example, throughout the interviews, a number of the gang-involved girls noted that gangs are more than the negative groups depicted in popular images. They instead emphasized the ways in which gang life is "just normal life," that gang members "do fun things together too, they're not always doin' bad stuff."

I believe overall I was successful in establishing rapport and gaining the trust of the young women I spoke with. There are a few interviews that come to mind where this wasn't the case, but for the most part I am confident that real communication occurred between us.<sup>21</sup> I do believe, however, that particular questions elicited less candid disclosure than others. For example, when asked, "which of the following best describes the grades you are getting: mostly A's, mostly B's, mostly C's, mostly D's or mostly F's," 40 percent of the non-gang respondents and 33 percent of the gang respondents reported getting mostly B's or above, and fully 89.1 percent (90.5 percent of gang girls and 88 percent of non-gang girls) claimed to get C's or better. Given that the sample overrepresents at-risk youths, and that in later questions the same girls report high rates of other problems in school such as suspensions and class failure, I would argue that both gang and non-gang girls inflated their overall school grades during the survey.

In looking for an explanation of this inflation, my speculation is that it is directly tied to their responses to me as the researcher, and concern with presentation of self. All of the girls I interviewed knew that I was a college student, as this was part of the description for participants we reviewed at the start of the survey. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of girls perceived me to be about ten years younger than I am (or around twenty years old).<sup>22</sup> This perceived closeness of our ages, my known educational achievements, and the fact that the question about grades came early in the survey (question 13), probably account for the overinflation of school performance.

#### Adolescence

It is important not to treat the interview subjects' age as the sole determinant or predictor of her experiences. Adolescents are in a transitional period of life, becoming increasingly oriented to adults' worlds, though with "rough edges" (Fine and Sandstrom, 1988: 60). As a consequence of their move toward adulthood, "age begins to decrease in importance as a means of differentiating oneself, and other dimensions of cultural differentiation, such as gender and class [and race], become more crucial" (Fine and Sandstrom, 1988: 66).

Nonetheless, studying adolescents presents unique

concerns which must be addressed. Age continues to be an important context shaping our ability to reach understanding with one another. The meaning systems of adolescents are different from those of adults, and adult researchers must exercise caution in presuming that they have an understanding of adolescent cultures simply because they've "been there" (Fine and Sandstrom, 1988). Staying cognizant of this fact kept me from making quick assumptions about the stories I was told.

There also are developmental issues to consider, particularly when interviewing early adolescents. Research suggests that youths ages twelve to fourteen "exhibit heightened self-consciousness, greater instability of the self-image, slightly lower self-esteem, and a less favorable view of the opinions held of them by significant others" when compared to both older and younger youths (Simmons et al., 1973; see also Elkind and Bowen, 1979; Pesce and Harding, 1986). In addition, this research suggests that girls are more self-conscious and sensitive to others' perceptions of them than boys (Elkind and Bowen, 1979; Pesce and Harding, 1986). These changes are believed to be the result of the new environments youths find themselves in upon entering junior high school (Simmons et al., 1973), which are often characterized by conflict, gossip and rumors (Taylor et al., 1995: 118).

These contexts are important to consider when assessing which young women opened up the most during the in-depth interview. I definitely found that, except for a few younger girls who were very talkative (though not always focused), the young women who opened up the most during the in-depth interviews tended to be those who were older (fifteen through seventeen). In addition, since formal operational thought (or an ability to think theoretically) is believed to develop around ages sixteen to eighteen, the older girls tended to have more insight into their behaviors than the younger girls (Blasi and Hoeffel, 1974). These are important considerations to bear in mind when examining the meanings girls attribute to their gang involvement.

#### Interview Contexts

The choice to interview within institutional settings is not without costs. Agar (1977) has suggested that out-of-context reports from research subjects are often not completely accurate, and may present a more glamorous, exaggerated or smooth picture than is warranted. In my project, I believe that interviewing girls who were primarily located in the detention center or in Rosemont Center's shelter care program affected the pictures some girls presented of their lives in particular ways.

First, a number of the girls in these two placement facilities were involved in either individual or family

counseling, and family reunification was a typical goal. In a few cases, I believe this resulted in girls romanticizing family life, projecting more than anything the family of their desires. Significantly, the discrepancy was noticeable because their responses to empirical questions (such as whether adult family members fight, drink, do drugs, have been in jail, have been abusive, etc.) contradicted their responses to questions about their feelings about the family (see, for example, questions 126 through 137 in Appendix B). In the most extreme case, a young woman reported that she spent most of her childhood in various foster homes because of her mother's crack addiction, spent over a year on the streets as a runaway, was molested by both her father and brother, and yet reported feelings of closeness within the family. This contradiction is partially explained by her ongoing participation in counseling with her recovering mother at the time of the interview.

Being locked up also gives girls time for more introspection than is the case on the streets. A number of young women I interviewed expressed more ambivalence about their gang involvement and/or delinquency than I believe they would have if interviewed in non-institutional contexts. Being in enclosed environments where they are unable to hang out with friends and have fun, and instead are experiencing negative consequences of their behaviors, leads girls toward

reflection on their past behavior, and toward the construction of positive goals upon their release. Few girls out-and-out rejected their previous peers and activities, but a number of girls vacillated between attachment to their gang and a desire to "do good" on the outside.

Again, an extreme case highlights a more subtle pattern. One girl I interviewed was utterly enthralled with "gang life" in one breath--throwing signs for me and talking about her gang in very animated ways--and in the next breath exclaimed that upon release from the detention center she would be getting out of the gang in order to "straighten up" her life. This back and forth discussion continued for the duration of the interview.

A final contextual problem that arose in the project was that interviewing a number of girls in the same setting sometimes led to more "buzz" about my project than I was comfortable with. In particular, because I was interviewing both gang and non-gang girls, I tried very hard to keep the project from being labeled a "gang" study. Unfortunately, staff members were often the worst culprits in this capacity. At Rosemont Center, though I mentioned to the director of the shelter care program that I wanted the gang element of the study downplayed, she and other staff members openly referred to the project as a study of gangs in front of potential interview subjects. In the most disturbing

incident, I was just beginning the survey interview with a girl at Rosemont when a staff member burst into the room and announced loudly, "hey, do you wanna interview me? I know a lot about gangs!" Fortunately that particular girl ended up being an out-of-town placement who didn't meet my sample criteria.

On several occasions, I also got a sense that word had spread that the project was about gangs among girls at Rosemont and the detention center, and in both cases decided to pull out of the site for a short time to allow the talk to die down and to allow for some population turnover. At Rosemont, I was sitting inside by a window during a break from interviews when I heard a group of girls talking excitedly about the study of gangs. At the detention center, I interviewed a girl who was being accused of gang involvement by her mother and staff at the detention center but who denied that she was a member. Word had gotten back to her that my project was about gangs, and she was very leery when completing the survey.<sup>23</sup> Both of these incidents occurred relatively early in the project, and I subsequently attempted to counter this problem by doing a block of survey interviews prior to scheduling the follow-up interviews with gang members. While this risked losing some of the follow-ups, it did allow me to temper the amount of gang-talk that otherwise followed my project.

### The Construction of 'Gang' Stories

Thus far, my discussion has focused on ways to strengthen the accuracy of information gathered in the interviews. These elements of methodology are vital, but should not lead researchers to believe that they are able to truly capture "realities" in the social world. An additional layer that must be considered when examining interview data is the ways interview subjects use the opportunity to refine the stories of their lives, blurring or ignoring the ways their actual experiences fail to fit neatly into the "story" of their experiences. Richardson (1990: 23) notes, "People organize their personal biographies and understand them through the stories they create to explain and justify their life experiences" (see also Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1993). These stories are typically shaped by "'already established cultural standards'" (Schmitt, 1993: 126), including those of the larger culture, and for gang members, of the gang itself.

Young women's responses in both the survey and in-depth interviews may be affected by their use of cultural stories. For example, in coming to understand and justify why they are gang-involved, young women in gangs may cull from cultural stories and media depictions which emphasize that youths join gangs because of such things as "family problems." As a result, their survey responses may be shaped by their own attempts to explain their involvement in the



gang. Likewise, non-gang youths in neighborhoods with gangs may explain their lack of gang involvement by perceiving their life experiences in opposition to those seen as leading youths to join gangs. The reverse may occur as well, when youths resist framing their experiences in ways which fit with larger cultural stories, and thus downplay elements of their lives that are in keeping with these depictions.

In addition, gangs as social groups have particular "stories" that get refined through their telling and retelling, and become part of the normative structures of gangs even when they are not consistently enacted in behaviors. For example, Klein (1971: 85) has noted that violence is a "predominant 'myth system'" within gangs, even though evidence shows that there is much more talk about violence than violent behavior. In this study, young women report not just about their experiences, but frame them in ways that fit with their stories of the gang, and particularly their story of their gendered place in the gang.

Much of the information available from the interviews is thus not accurate in the sense of capturing youths' actual behaviors and activities, but is accurate in the sense that they are describing the constructed norms and values within their group. Often in fact, their descriptions of behaviors and activities provide evidence that challenges the stories they tell. The most obvious example is young women's

insistence on the presence of gender equality within their gangs, even as they provide evidence to the contrary (see chapters seven through nine). Another example is the use of "sexing in" as an initiation into gangs. None of the young women I spoke with said they were sexed in, though it is likely that some were. However, they know that in order to have respect, the appropriate story of initiation for girls is to be beaten in or take blows to the head and/or chest.

Many of the statements young women make about their experiences are, in fact, two findings: the adoption and use of cultural frames with which to make sense of their experiences, and evidence of the nature of their social worlds (cf. Miller and Glassner, forthcoming). Though not "true" in the sense of capturing what really happens, this information is nonetheless true in the information it provides about the meanings of gang members' social worlds. As Glassner and Loughlin (1987: 37) note: "The patterns and consistencies in their accounts argue that there is, in fact, a world of shared meanings which they express in the course of talking about their lives."

In this section, I have highlighted many of the strengths of my research, as well as the limitations of data resulting from methodological problems. I have also provided detailed discussions of my sensitivity to these problems and the careful manner in which I dealt with them when possible.

Before moving to the presentation of study findings, the next section will provide a detailed discussion of the measurements used in the survey interview to explore correlates of female gang involvement among girls in Columbus.

### SURVEY MEASUREMENTS

Guided by the literature on the relationship of gang involvement to various facets of girls' lives, measures used in the survey instrument and gathered for census tract analysis clustered around several themes: structural factors such as neighborhood characteristics; educational issues; family relationships and experiences; personal factors such as self-esteem, sexual experience, and victimization; and peer relations. In this section, I will briefly review research findings concerning the etiology of female gang membership (as presented in chapter two) and discuss how I examined these issues in the survey portion of the project. In addition, I will discuss how I explored potential differences between gang and nongang girls that may be in part a function of gang involvement, such as delinquency, drug and alcohol use, and arrests.

#### Structural Factors

Many researchers have noted the relationship between structural factors such as neighborhood characteristics,

poverty, educational and occupational opportunities and rates of gang participation (Fagan, 1990; Hagedorn, 1988, 1993; Jackson, 1991). This relationship is presumed to exist for females as well as males (see Campbell, 1984a; Chesney-Lind, 1993; Fishman, 1988; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Quicker, 1983). However, research also shows that only a minority of youths in impoverished areas are actually gang-involved (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Fagan, 1990).

My goal was to build a sample of gang and nongang girls from the same community contexts, in order to explore what factors might contribute to some young women's choice to join gangs, while others in the same environment do not choose to be gang-involved. Given this research interest, my hope was that gang and nongang girls would closely match on socioeconomic measures gathered from census tracts on their neighborhoods, and that both groups of girls would identify gangs as groups they have some familiarity with in their neighborhoods or lives. Data gathered from census tracts includes the racial composition of the neighborhood, median household income, unemployment rates, the percentage of families falling below the poverty line, the percentage of families that are female-headed, and rates of public assistance. These variables allowed me to check the extent to which the gang and nongang girls are comparable to one another in terms of their neighborhood contexts, and provided

a means of comparing the neighborhood contexts of these at-risk girls with the overall socioeconomic character of Columbus. In order to match girls in terms of opportunities to join gangs, I asked a series of questions about how much they felt their neighborhoods were affected by gangs (see questions 70 through 75 in Appendix B). If they reported not being in a gang, I also asked whether they had ever been approached to join a gang and whether they had ever considered joining.

I was also concerned with whether they have witnessed and/or experienced violence in their social environments. To examine this, I asked the following questions: Have you seen someone else get sexually assaulted, molested or raped? Have you seen someone else get attacked or stabbed with a knife? Have you seen someone else get shot with a gun? Have you seen a drive-by shooting? In addition, I asked each girl whether she had seen someone get killed. To examine their firsthand experiences with serious violence, I asked the following questions: Have you been beaten up? Has anyone threatened you with a knife or gun? Has anyone attacked or stabbed you with a knife? Have you been shot with a gun? These questions allow me to explore the extent to which violence is a part of the social worlds of gang and/or nongang girls in Columbus.<sup>24</sup> I included several individual level variables in the survey, to explore possible

differences in the experience of girls that may contribute to gang involvement. These included questions about whether the adults in their households worked, the educational attainment of adults in their households, and a measure of residential stability (How long have you lived in the neighborhood where you live now? Of this time, how long have you lived in your present home?). I examined perceived barriers to success using the Barriers to Success Scale adapted from the Denver Youth Survey (questions 170 through 176). (Sample statements: I'll never have as much opportunity to succeed as kids from other neighborhoods; If a kid like me works hard, she can get ahead.) I also added several additional questions to examine whether gender is perceived as a barrier to success. (Sample statements: I'll never have as much opportunity to succeed as a male will; If a woman works hard, she can get ahead.)

While structural factors are of significance for understanding female gang involvement, they nevertheless remain only a partial answer to the question of why some girls join gangs. Even with samples stratified to overrepresent high-risk areas, fewer than one quarter of youths claim gang membership (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Winfree et al., 1991), and other researchers have found no differences in perceived limited opportunities between gang and non-gang youths in these communities (Esbensen et al.,

1993). Therefore it is necessary to examine what other factors might lead certain young women into gang affiliation, even while others within the same impoverished communities exercise other options.

#### Educational Factors

A number of studies have reported a relationship between educational expectations and gang membership for females (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Bowker and Klein, 1983; Fishman, 1988; Quicker, 1983). Given this consistent relationship between education and gang affiliation described in the literature, I adopted a number of measures in order to explore the roles that school experiences and educational expectations might play in gang affiliation for girls in Columbus. First are measures of school performance, including whether they are currently enrolled, the grades they are getting, and whether any of the following have occurred in the last year: they have gotten an honor or award at school, failed a class, gotten suspended or expelled, and/or changed schools.

Next, I was interested in exploring girls' educational expectations, what they think about school, and how they see themselves at school. To measure the former, I asked the girls how far they thought they would go in school. In order to measure what the girls think about school, I adopted an eleven item Attitudes Toward School Scale from the Denver

Youth Survey (questions 14 through 24 in Appendix B).

(Sample statements: Homework is a waste of time; I try hard in school; Getting good grades is very important to me; I don't really belong at school.) To examine how they see themselves at school, I used the school portion of the Hare Self-Esteem Scale used in a number of youth surveys in the field (questions 138 through 147 in Appendix B). (Sample statements: I often feel worthless at school; I am an important person in my classes.)

Finally, in order to gauge the girls' perceived relationships with their teachers, I first asked "of all the teachers you have known, how many have you liked?" Then I administered a twelve item Teacher Labeling Scale (questions 29 through 40 in Appendix B), adopted from the Denver Youth Survey. (Sample questions: How much would your teachers agree that you get along well with other people? That you break rules? That you are likely to succeed?) The diverse focus of these questions concerning school allow me to explore which of numerous school experiences might be more or less correlated with gang involvement among girls in Columbus.

#### Family Factors

The family has long been considered crucial for understanding delinquency and gang behavior among girls (Canter, 1982; Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987; Moore, 1991;



Smith and Paternoster, 1987). Weak supervision, lack of attachment to parents and family, the gang involvement of other family members, family violence and the emotional climate in the home, and other problems within the home (such as a drug-addicted member, or a death in the family) are all factors which may be related to why some girls join gangs while others in their communities avoid doing so (see Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Campbell, 1984a; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Lauderback, 1992; Moore, 1991).

These studies reveal a myriad of factors within families that may contribute to the likelihood of gang involvement for some girls. In my survey, I explored these factors in a number of ways. First, to examine family structure and stability I asked which and how many adults they were currently living with and for how long. In addition, I explored girls' perceptions of the quality of their relationships with family members. This was accomplished using the parent/family portion of the Hare Self-Esteem Scale (questions 126 through 137 in Appendix B). (Sample statements: No one pays much attention to me at home; I am an important person to my family.) I later asked several additional questions, including how much fun they feel their family has together, how much time they spend doing things together, and how close they feel their families are. I also asked if there is a female and a male adult in

the family they feel close to, and who that is.

In addition, I explored their perceptions of parental supervision and discipline. I adopted seven items from a Parental Supervision Scale from the Denver Youth Survey (questions 279-285). (Sample questions: How often do your parent(s)/guardian(s) talk with you about what you did during the day? How often do your parent(s)/guardian(s) know who you are with when you are away from home? How often do you know how to get in touch with your parent(s)/guardian(s) if they are not at home?) To measure parental discipline I asked, "If your parent(s)/guardian(s) had planned some punishment for you, how often can you talk them out of it?"

Finally, to explore other family factors that research suggests may be related to gang involvement among girls, I asked a series of additional questions: whether anyone in the family has been in a gang (and if so whom), whether they have been abused by adults in their family, whether anyone they have regularly lived with has used alcohol or illegal drugs a lot, if anyone in the family has spent time in prison or jail, and whether they have seen adults in their homes hit each other.

#### Personal Factors

The examination of personal factors continues to be a useful means of exploring differences between those youths in high-risk areas who join gangs with those who do not (Klein,

1995). Some researchers have found a relationship between self esteem and female gang involvement (Bowker and Klein, 1983) while others have not (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992). In addition, early sexual activity has been linked to gang participation for girls as well (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Moore, 1991).

I examined a number of personal factors that may be related to gang involvement among girls. The first of these was their self-concept, as measured by the Eastwood Scale, adapted from the Klein-Maxson Gang Membership Resistance Survey. This scale measures self-concept around three constellations: perception of self as "good" (sample statements: I'm the kind of person who is a good citizen; I'm the kind of person who gets along well with other people); perception of self as "bad" (sample statements: I'm the kind of person who gets into trouble; I'm the kind of person who will spend time in jail); and perception of self as "sick" (sample statements: I'm the kind of person who is an unhappy person; I'm the kind of person who has a lot of personal problems).

Next I asked several questions about sexual experiences and sexual abuse. First, I asked if they have had sexual intercourse, and if so at what age their first intercourse occurred.<sup>25</sup> In addition I asked the number of sexual partners they have had, how old they were when they had their

first period, and whether they have ever been pregnant. I also asked whether they have ever been sexually assaulted, molested or raped. Finally, as rough measures of conformity to traditionally feminine values, in a scale about things they value in life, I asked the following questions: How important is it to be in love? How important is it to get married? How important is it to be a mother?

### Peer Factors

Evidence suggests that peer influences are important for understanding gang participation and delinquency among females, particularly peer delinquency, the gender and age composition of friendship groups, and time spent with peers (Brown, 1977; Bowker and Klein, 1983; Campbell, 1990a, 1990b; Figuiera-McDonough et al., 1981; Giordano, 1978; Morash, 1983). I explored the relationship between gang involvement and peer associations in a number of ways. First I assessed their perceptions of their relationships with peers by using the peer portion of the Hare Self-Esteem Scale (questions 118 through 127 in Appendix B). (Sample statements: I have at least as many friends as other people my age; I wish I were a different kind of person because I would have more friends.) In addition, I asked how important their friends were to them.

Next, I was interested in comparing the compositions of girls' groups of friends, to compare gang and nongang

differences. To do so, I asked a series of questions including the gender composition of their friendship groups, whether they had a boyfriend and if so if he was a member of their group of friends, how many friends were in their group, their age ranges, and whether or not there were adults in this group of friends. Next I asked what kinds of activities they and their friends did together (see question 103 in Appendix B). To measure peer delinquency, I asked whether or not their group of friends do things that are illegal as a group, how much time they spend talking about their illegal activities, and what sorts of illegal activities they engage in (see question 106 in Appendix B).

All of the factors discussed thus far--structural, educational, family, individual, and peer factors--may be part of the key to understanding the participation of girls in gangs. It is likely that some of these factors (such as structure and nature of peer groups), if correlated, are functions of gang affiliation, while others, such as sexual abuse and disruptive home environments, are likely contributing factors. Before concluding this chapter and moving to a discussion of survey results (chapter six), I will review the relationship of gang membership to delinquency, substance use, and contact with the juvenile justice system, and will discuss how I examine these issues in the survey.

### Delinquency, Drug Use and Arrests

It has long been recognized that gang members tend to be more criminally active than non-gang members (Esbensen et al., 1993; Klein, 1971; Thornberry et al., 1993), and this holds for female gang members as well (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992). I incorporated a series of questions to explore the potential differences between gang and nongang girls in their delinquency, substance use, arrests, and exposure to serious violence. First, to measure participation in delinquency, I used a classification scheme for self-reported delinquency from the Rochester Youth Development Study, which includes minor, moderate and serious delinquency, along with alcohol and marijuana use. The following activities were classified as minor delinquency: running away; skipping classes without an excuse; lying about your age to get into someplace or to buy something; being loud or rowdy in a public place where someone complained and got you in trouble; avoiding paying for things like a movie, taking bus rides, or anything else; and trying to steal or actually stealing money or things worth five dollars or less.

Moderate delinquency includes the following: being drunk in a public place; damaging, destroying or marking up someone else's property on purpose; trying to steal or actually stealing money or things worth between five and fifty dollars; taking a car or motorcycle for a ride without

permission; throwing objects such as bottles or rocks at people; and hitting someone with the idea of hurting them. The following activities were classified as serious delinquency: trying to steal or actually stealing money or things worth between fifty and a hundred dollars; trying to steal or actually stealing money or things worth over a hundred dollars; stealing or trying to steal a car or other motor vehicle; attacking someone with a weapon or with the idea of seriously hurting or killing them; being involved in a gang fight; and using a weapon or force to make someone give you money or things.

Girls were also asked whether they had drunk beer or wine without permission, whether they had drunk hard liquor without permission, and whether they had used marijuana.<sup>26</sup> With all of these questions regarding participation in delinquency and substance use, followup questions were asked about how old they were the first time they engaged in the behavior, whether it occurred alone or with other people, and how many times in the last six months they had engaged in the behavior. In addition to the questions about delinquency, I also asked questions about their recent arrest histories. I recorded the number of arrests they had in the last year, and whether they had been arrested for one or more status offenses, property offenses, and/or violent offenses.

In this section, I have briefly reviewed much of the

literature on the correlates of gang involvement for girls, and have explained how my survey explores many of these issues among young women in Columbus. Chapter five will outline the survey results, comparing the experiences of gang and nongang girls.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Two additional non-gang girls were interviewed, but neither were included in the final sample. Both were from primarily white suburban areas outside of the city of Columbus (Pickerington and Gahanna), and both reported that there were not gangs in their communities.

<sup>2</sup> My goal was to interview a total of fifty girls, 25 gang and 25 non-gang. After months passed while repeated attempts failed, I settled for 21 gang members. Other survey interviews with gang members (and those comparing gang and non-gang youth) have been based on larger numbers, but typically do not include follow-up in-depth interviews. I chose a sample size that could provide meaningful information in both venues while remaining logistically reasonable.

<sup>3</sup> In the Denver Youth Survey (Esbensen et al., 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993), youths self-identified as gang members who describe their groups as non-delinquent (as measured by responding negatively questions about whether their gang fights with other gangs and/or participates in illegal activities) were excluded. This resulted in the loss of nine self-reported gang members in Wave 3 of their study (from 41 to 32) and eight self-reported gang members in Wave 4 of their study (from 76 to 68). Self-reported gang members were only excluded if they reported that the group was non-delinquent; their individual delinquency (or lack thereof) was not a criteria for exclusion.

<sup>4</sup> One gang member (see discussion of Lisa in chapter six) described her set as only having seven members, but she clarified that it was a new set which had recently split from a well-established one. Her set was in the process of growth. In all other ways, the group she described fits the criteria of a gang established both in chapter one and here (with a recognized name, symbolic systems, rivalries, and delinquent involvement), and she was among the most knowledgeable of those I interviewed concerning the origin of her gang (Folks).

<sup>5</sup> I contacted numerous additional agency personnel in an effort to draw the sample from a larger population base, but many efforts remained unsuccessful despite repeated attempts and promises of assistance. These included persons at the probation department, a shelter and outreach agency for runaways, police personnel, a private residential facility for juveniles, and three additional community agencies. I made repeated attempts with workers at some agencies, but the

closest I came to success was a scheduled interview with a young woman who changed her mind prior to the interview date. None of the agencies I contacted openly denied me permission to interview young women, they simply chose not to follow up. Part of the reason for this may be suspicion of researchers and a desire to protect clients; I suspect another part was an unwillingness to take on the additional work necessary to identify clients and assist in scheduling interviews. I do not believe that much bias resulted from the non-participation of these agencies. Each has a client base of "at-risk" youths, and the young women I interviewed report overlap with some of these same agencies. For example, a number had been or were on probation, and several report staying at the shelter for runaways.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to relying on agency personnel to refer me to girls from neighborhoods with some gang activity, I also explored how much contact girls had with gangs by asking a series of questions in the survey about the presence and nature of gangs in their neighborhoods (see questions 70 through 75 in Appendix B), about whether they had friends or family in gangs, and about whether (for non-gang girls) they had ever been approached to join a gang or ever considered joining a gang.

<sup>7</sup> The terms "at-risk" has been criticized by some authors for implications underlying the label. For example, Taylor et al. (1995: 21) note:

A primary danger of the "at-risk" label is its tendency to shift attention away from the social conditions that place adolescents at risk and locate the risk within the adolescents themselves.

This shift places the burden of change on the adolescent and thus relieves the larger society of responsibility for addressing the inequities of race, class, and gender that create conditions of risk. It also emphasizes, often mistakenly, intellectual, social, or emotional deficit.

I will use the term "at-risk" throughout this section, in part because it is a label widely used by both researchers and many of the social workers through which I arranged interviews, and because I believe the term can connote concern for understanding the social conditions affecting the lives of young women. Nonetheless, I would caution the reader to keep this criticism in mind.

<sup>8</sup> In 1995, 278 adolescent girls were placed in Rosemont's Shelter Care program for a total of 7,115 days; the average stay was 25.59 days (Rosemont Center Annual Report, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> This was partially a result of funding problems slowing the progress of the research. In addition, at the detention center, the woman who worked most closely with girls and had been arranging interviews for me left the center and was not replaced for some time. At Rosemont, access was lost after a gang-related incident occurred at the facility. In both facilities I sometimes pulled back from the research to allow for population turnover.

<sup>10</sup> None of the girls chose to exercise this option.

<sup>11</sup> One twelve year old was excluded, when she appeared uncomfortable while agreeing to participate. I reiterated the voluntary nature of the project and assured her again that she didn't have to participate if she didn't want to, and finally she changed her mind and declined.

<sup>12</sup> Three girls named parallel streets in their neighborhoods for which I was unable to provide census tract data.

<sup>13</sup> Many of the questions in the in-depth interview guide were framed using Glassner and Loughlin's (1987) ethnographic study *Drugs in Adolescent Worlds* as a guide.

<sup>14</sup> Two girls from Rosemont Center's shelter care program were unable to participate in the follow-up interview, though both had agreed to do so. Access at the center was severed after a gang related incident occurred on Rosemont's campus. In addition, one girl completed part of the in-depth interview but became uncomfortable talking about her gang, and the interview was terminated early.

One of the young women I interviewed was originally classified as non-gang, but subsequently reclassified as a gang member. Her survey was counted as one of the 21 gang member surveys, though technically she was not yet a member when we completed this interview. I did so because the timing of her membership appeared to be a result of her institutional placement (ie. she was desirous but unavailable to join until her release). When I interviewed her the first time at Rosemont, she had not yet joined but was highly gang-affiliated. Her brother and boyfriend were members of the same Crips set, she dressed down, threw signs, spent time almost exclusively with members of this set, was involved in many of their activities. I ran into her several months later at the detention center, and she informed me that she had joined the gang upon her release from Rosemont. We did a second in-depth interview to follow up, and I reclassified her as a gang member at that time.

<sup>15</sup> Of the 21 girls I interviewed, 20 were members of mixed-gender gangs and only one was a member of an all-female group. The members of mixed-gender gangs characterized them as integrated, mixed-gender gangs, not male gangs with female auxiliaries. For the interview with the member of an all-female gang, I either rephrased questions in this section, or skipped questions that did not apply. We also talked about the benefits, problems, and meanings of being in an all-female gang.

<sup>16</sup> These issues will be discussed further in chapters seven and eight.

<sup>17</sup> This assessment of the lack of knowledge about how self-reports specifically apply to females was corroborated through my inquiries with several experts on self-report studies, including Dave Huizinga and Terence Thornberry.

<sup>18</sup> The interviews were confidential; I did not disclose any information about my conversations with interview subjects with staff members, regardless of what they confided to me.

<sup>19</sup> I only came across two obvious discrepancies. The first was a young woman who told me her gang-affiliation was with Bloods, though several other gang members at Rosemont told me she was a Folk, and I saw for myself that the young women she hung with at Rosemont were members of Crips and Folks sets, not Bloods. She appeared very gang-involved in the survey interview, and I believe she attempted to mislead me to protect herself and her gang. We were unable to schedule an in-depth interview (see note 13 above for an explanation), but I was planning on asking her about the discrepancy at that time.

The second discrepancy involved a gang member at Rosemont who referred me to a friend of hers, who she claimed was a member of her set. The friend ended up being affiliated with the set but not a member. In this case, I believe the motivation was monetary. At that time, I had agreed to pay girls an additional ten dollars when they referred me to friends who were gang members.

<sup>20</sup> Several examples help illustrate this process. First, throughout the interviews I tried in a variety of ways to get young women to talk openly and explicitly about gender relations in the gang. Because gender equality was a strong (but contradictory) value system among girls, they resisted my efforts to frame discussions in these ways. Stories about gender came out in the interviews, but often not when I asked them to talk about it, because they had their own gendered story of equality to reinforce (see chapter nine). In

addition, when I used words they didn't understand, several young women said so, asking me to define my question in terms they could understand.

A second example is the opposite--an obvious case in which young women have adopted my language, and evidence in the texts that our meanings were shared. The process of getting into the gang was one I referred to as an "initiation," while young women referred to it in a number of ways depending on what occurred: getting beaten in, sexed in, "done it" in, boxed in, jumped in, blessed in, taking blows, taking "six," taking "six licks," and so on. The language they used was descriptive, referring specifically to the activities involved in the "initiation." I used the term "initiation," and probably in response to me, they used the term back to me in describing the process of joining a gang. At issue is whether the meaning of this process is the same to them as the term "initiation" is to me: do they consider the process of joining a serious and formal induction into the group? Evidence from the interviews suggests that the answer is yes. Specifically, in addition to talking about the "initiation" itself, girls make a number of comments indicating that this is the case. For example, they make the distinction between themselves and "false flaggers," who are looked down upon and reportedly beaten up for claiming to be gang members when they haven't actually gone through the process of being put into the gang (initiated). In fact, one young woman reported that her boyfriend, to his dismay, discovered that he had been beaten into his gang by false flaggers, and thus had to undergo a second beating. A second example illustrating the seriousness of the process of joining is when girls discuss getting out of the gang, which they say either can't occur (ie. once you're in it, you're in it for life), or only at a great expense such as being beaten by the gang members more extensively than when they joined. Each of these themes illustrates the extent to which our notions of the process of joining are shared, even though the language is different.

<sup>21</sup> Three interviews come to mind (all non-gang) where the girls seemed terribly bored and inattentive throughout the survey. I assume their motivation for participating was monetary.

<sup>22</sup> After interviews with numerous girls, I was asked my age, and always met with surprise and the disclosure that they assumed I was much younger. In fact, once at Rosemont's Day School I was stopped and asked for a pass by a staff member when I attempted to leave the school, because she assumed I was one of the students.

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<sup>22</sup> After interviews with numerous girls, I was asked my age, and always met with surprise and the disclosure that they assumed I was much younger. In fact, once at Rosemont's Day School I was stopped and asked for a pass by a staff member when I attempted to leave the school, because she assumed I was one of the students.

<sup>23</sup> I believe this young woman was surprised after completing the survey, because she kept anticipating a long series of questions about gangs that never materialized. I ask only a few questions about gangs to those girls who label themselves non-gang, compared to around three hundred questions unrelated to gangs in the survey.

<sup>24</sup> Exposure to violence may be indicative of the structure of girls' neighborhoods, with 'underclass' neighborhoods having more crime and thus more violence. It may also result from girls' gang and street involvement--if they are actively involved in delinquent activities in the neighborhood, they are more likely to experience violence in some form within their social environments.

<sup>25</sup> While I asked separately about whether they had sexual intercourse with a person of the opposite sex and with a person of the same sex, only one girl admitted to having had sex with another female, and described this experience as coerced. Since only one of 46 girls responded affirmatively to this question, it was dropped from further analysis.

<sup>26</sup> The survey included questions about a number of additional drugs (see questions 221 through 228 in Appendix B), but few girls reported drug use outside of marijuana use.

## V. CORRELATES OF FEMALE GANG AFFILIATION IN COLUMBUS

In the last chapter, I highlighted what the literature suggests concerning the etiology of female gang involvement, and outlined how I examined various facets of girls' lives in my survey. Here I will present findings from the survey along the same dimensions of structural, educational, family, personal, and peer factors, along with differences between gang and non-gang girls in rates of delinquency, marijuana use, and arrest.

### STRUCTURAL FACTORS

As expected, both gang and non-gang girls disproportionately come from neighborhoods which fall below Columbus' averages on socioeconomic measures. Table 5-1 provides census measures of median income, rates of poverty, unemployment, public assistance, and female-headed families, along with the percent of African Americans in Columbus. Census tract information gathered during the survey interview allowed me to compare the neighborhoods of the girls in my study with the overall socioeconomic climate of Columbus. Table 5-2 shows where gang and non-gang girls' neighborhoods fall in relation to these city averages. Most of the girls



**Table 5-1 Socioeconomic Characteristics of Columbus**

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Median Household Income	\$26,651
Percent of Families Below the Poverty Line	12.6%
Percent Unemployment	5.9%
Percent Public Assistance	9.4%
Percent Female-Headed Families	23.6%
Percent African American	22.6%

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Source: U.S. Census, 1990

in both sub-samples live in neighborhoods where families are worse off economically than in the city as a whole. In fact, a clear majority of gang girls live in neighborhoods with twice the rates of poverty, unemployment, and public assistance as the citywide average; and the percentage of African Americans in these disadvantaged communities are also double their citywide population. Gang members are significantly more likely than non-gang girls to live in areas with double the rates of poverty of the city-wide average. About one quarter of gang members are also in neighborhoods with median incomes less than half the city average, and triple the rates of unemployment. On the other hand, slightly more gang than non-gang girls come from neighborhoods that are comparably well off, and they represent about one quarter of the gang girls in the sample.

**Table 5-2 Neighborhood Characteristics**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang <sup>1</sup> (n=22)
<u>Median Income</u>		
Below City Average	16 (76.2%)	18 (81.8%)
75% of City Average	13 (61.9%)	11 (50.0%)
50% of City Average	6 (28.6%)	1 (4.5%)
<u>Percent Poverty</u>		
Above City Average	13 (61.9%)	17 (77.3%)
Double City Average	12 (57.1%)	6 (27.3%)*
Triple City Average	5 (23.8%)	4 (18.2%)
<u>Percent Unemployment</u>		
Above City Average	17 (81.0%)	20 (90.9%)
Double City Average	11 (52.4%)	10 (45.5%)
Triple City Average	5 (23.8%)	0 (0.0%)
<u>Percent Public Assistance</u>		
Above City Average	15 (71.4%)	17 (77.3%)
Double City Average	11 (52.4%)	9 (40.9%)
Triple City Average	9 (42.9%)	6 (27.3%)
<u>Percent Female-Headed Families<sup>2</sup></u>		
Above City Average	14 (73.7%)	18 (90.0%)
Double City Average	7 (36.8%)	7 (35.0%)
Triple City Average	1 (5.3%)	1 (5.0%)
<u>Percent African American</u>		
Above City Average	16 (76.2%)	15 (68.2%)
Double City Average	13 (61.9%)	13 (59.1%)
Triple City Average	11 (52.4%)	8 (36.4%)

<sup>1</sup> three missing cases

Source: U.S. Census, 1990

<sup>2</sup> two missing cases

\*p &lt; .05

Another element of neighborhood characteristics that was important to explore was whether or not young women in

**Table 5-3 Exposure to Gangs**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
Is there a lot of talk about gangs around your neighborhood?	19 (90.5%)	19 (76.0%)
Is there a lot of gang activity around your neighborhood?	17 (81.0%)	13 (52.0%)*
Are any of the people living on your street members of a gang?	20 (95.2%)	14 (56.0%)**
Are there gang rivalries close by?	13 (61.9%)	11 (44.0%)
Is there pressure on kids to join gangs around your neighborhood?	7 (33.3%)	12 (48.0%)
Among the kids in the neighborhood how important is it to be a member of a gang:		
Very Important	6 (28.6%)	13 (52.0%)
Somewhat Important	12 (57.1%)	7 (28.0%)
Not Important At All	3 (14.3%)	5 (20.0%)
Have you ever been approached to join a gang?	N/A	12 (48.0%)
Have you ever thought about joining a gang?	N/A	10 (40.0%)

\*p < .05

\*\*p < .01

the sample have been exposed to gangs in their neighborhoods. In order to have a matched sample, the non-gang girls in my sample need to have some exposure to gangs, and thus

opportunity to consider joining. I asked girls a series of questions about the extent of gang activity in their neighborhoods, and followed up with the non-gang girls by asking whether they have ever been approached to join a gang or considered joining. Table 5-3 shows responses to these questions. While gang members are more likely to recognize and report gang activity in their neighborhoods, there is not a single non-gang member in my sample who did not respond affirmatively to at least one of the questions.<sup>1</sup> Gang members are significantly more likely to report that there is "a lot" of gang activity in their neighborhoods, and that people living on their streets are members of gangs. It may be that there is more visible gang activity in gang members' neighborhoods, and that this regular exposure to gangs helps account for the likelihood a girl will become gang-involved. However, part of the differences among gang and non-gang girls may be at the level of awareness--gang members may know of more gang activity because they are part of it. Interestingly, non-gang girls are more likely to believe there is pressure on neighborhood kids to join gangs, and they are more likely to say that being in a gang is "very important" to kids in the neighborhood (though neither of these differences are significant).

Another indication of the nature of girls' neighborhood contexts is the extent to which they have been exposed to

violence around their neighborhoods. As Table 5-4 indicates, gang members are significantly more likely to have exposure to violence than non-gang girls. Fifteen (71.4 percent) of the gang girls report being victims of serious assaults, including being beaten up, threatened with a knife or gun, stabbed, or shot. More than half (eleven) of the gang girls report being victims of more than one of these types of assault, versus only two of the non-gang girls. Gang members are also significantly more likely to have witnessed serious violence, including seeing someone get sexually assaulted, stabbed, and/or shot, and witnessing drive-by shootings.

These findings may be indicative of more violent neighborhood contexts for gang members, but they also may be a result of girls' gang involvement. Being in the gang means they are more likely to have delinquent peers and engage in delinquency themselves (see below), so they may have greater exposure to violent crimes around the neighborhood. In many cases, it is their friends who are the assailants and/or victims of these attacks. Over half of the gang members and a third of the non-gang girls have all witnessed someone getting killed. While Columbus does not have the serious gang violence of many other cities, living in this city has not protected the young women I spoke with from exposure to violence and brutality in their lives.

**Table 5-4 Exposure to Violence**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
Physically Assaulted	15 (71.4%)	8 (32.0%) <sup>***</sup>
Witnessed Violence	19 (90.5%)	15 (60.0%) <sup>**</sup>
Seen Someone Get Killed	11 (52.4%)	8 (32.0%)

<sup>\*\*</sup> p < .025

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> p < .01

In addition to neighborhood characteristics and exposure to gangs and violence in the neighborhood, I also examined girls' individual circumstances, including their residential stability, whether the adults in their households work, and the educational attainment of adults in their households, along with perceived barriers to success. As Table 5-5 shows, the majority of girls in the study have moved within the last few years. This is especially the case

**Table 5-5 Residential Stability**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
12 Months or Less	11 (52.4%)	6 (24.0%)*
24 Months or Less	14 (66.7%)	11 (44.0%)
36 Months or Less	16 (76.2%)	13 (52.0%)

\* p < .05

for gang members, half of whom have moved in the last year, and three quarters of whom have moved in the last three years. Recent residential instability is correlated with gang involvement for the girls in my study.

**Table 5-6 Work and Education among Adults in Household**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
Live with Mother	14 (66.7%)	17 (68.0%)
Mother Working	7 (50.0%)	16 (94.0%)
Live with Father	6 (28.6%)	5 (20.0%)
Father Working	2 (33.3%)	5 (100.0%)
Adult(s) in Household Working	17 (81.0%)	22 (88.0%)
Highest Educational Attainment of Adult in Household:		
Non-High School Graduate	2 (9.5%)	6 (24.0%) <sup>1</sup>
High School Graduate	10 (47.6%)	6 (24.0%)
More than High School	9 (42.9%)	12 (48.0%)

<sup>1</sup> one missing case

To examine whether the adults in their households work, I looked at the question in three ways: First, if they live with their mothers, do their mothers work? Second, if they live with their fathers, do their fathers work? Finally, regardless of who they live with, is there an adult in the household who works? For educational attainment of adults in

the family, I examined the same three sets of adults. Table 5-6 shows the results for both sets of questions.<sup>2</sup> Two thirds of girls in each category live with their mothers (14 gang girls and 17 non-gang girls), though most live with some other adult as well. Of these, half (seven) of the gang members' mothers work, while nearly all of the non-gang girls mothers work (16 of 17). The majority of girls in my study do not live with their fathers (15 gang girls and 20 non-gang girls). Of those who do, all (five) of the non-gang girls' fathers work, and two of the six gang members' fathers work. While gang members are less likely than non-gang members to have a parent who works, the majority of girls in both groups live with at least one adult who works. None of the differences are statistically significant.

The majority of both groups of girls live with at least one adult in the household who has finished high school, and nearly half live with an adult who has some higher education. More gang members live with an adult high school graduate (versus non-high school graduate) than non-gang girls. Finally, neither gang nor non-gang girls tended to recognize the barriers imposed by their socioeconomic disadvantage. Mean score for gang members on the Barriers to Success Scale was 2.383, and for non-gang girls it was 2.393.<sup>3</sup> On these variables, there were no significant differences.



## EDUCATIONAL FACTORS

While there are strong indications in the literature that female gang involvement is associated with poor school performance and low expectations for completing school (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Bowker and Klein, 1983), there are no significant school-related variables in my study. For the most part, young women in gangs are comparable to young women who are not in gangs when it comes to a variety of measures of school performance, expectations, attitudes, and relationships with teachers.

Tables 5-7 and 5-8 show a number of measures of school performance for gang and non-gang girls. Slightly fewer gang

**Table 5-7 School Performance**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
Currently Attending School	16 (76.2%)	20 (80.0%)
Received an Honor or Award At School in the Last Year	7 (33.3%)	13 (52.0%)
Failed a Class at School In the Last Year	15 (71.4%)	14 (56.0%)
Suspended or Expelled In the Last Year	15 (71.4%)	16 (64.0%)
Changed Schools In the Last Year	13 (61.9%)	12 (48.0%)

girls are currently attending school, and only a third have received an honor or award at school (versus over half of the non-gang girls). Gang members are more likely to report failing a class at school, getting suspended or expelled from school, and changing schools in the last year. The direction of these relationships are as expected; however, none are significant. Likewise, in terms of grades, the majority of both gang and non-gang girls report getting mostly A's or B's, while only a few report getting D's or F's.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 5-8 Grades**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
Mostly A's or B's	11 (52.4%)	16 (64.0%)
Mostly C's	8 (38.1%)	6 (24.0%)
Mostly D's or F's	2 (9.5%)	3 (12.0%)

Educational expectations are also not significantly different for gang versus non-gang girls (see Table 5-9). Nearly all of the girls in the study (89.1 percent) believe they will complete their high school education. More gang than non-gang girls report that they will not go beyond high school (38.1 percent versus 20 percent), but the majority of girls in both groups report that they plan to attend college

or technical school, or beyond (52.4 percent of gang members, 68 percent of non-gang).

In terms of girls' feelings about school and perceptions of their place and performance at school, there are again no significant differences between gang and non-gang responses. The mean score on the Attitudes Toward School Scale (questions 14 through 24 in Appendix B) is 2.137 for gang members, and 2.050 for non-gang girls.<sup>5</sup> For the most part, both sets of girls report liking school and feeling that it is important. The school portion of the Hare Self-Esteem Scale (questions 138 through 147 in Appendix B) measured girls' perceptions of how they fit into school (for example, their abilities relative to peers). Again, gang and non-gang responses are similar, with a mean score of 2.264 for gang members and 2.168 for non-gang girls.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 5-9 Educational Expectations**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
High School Dropout	2 (9.5%)	3 (12.0%)
High School Graduate/GED	8 (38.1%)	5 (20.0%)
College/Technical School or Beyond	11 (52.4%)	17 (68.0%)

The final school-related topic I examined concerned girls' relationships with their teachers, specifically how many of their teachers they have liked, and whether they believe their teachers would describe them in negative or positive ways. Table 5-10 shows girls' responses to the question, "Of all the teachers you have known, how many have you liked?" Approximately one third of the respondents in both groups report liking few or none of their teachers. However, twice as many non-gang girls (40 percent, versus 19 percent of gang girls) report liking most or all of their teachers. The largest percentage of gang members report liking half of them. These differences are not significant. Likewise, with the Teacher Labeling Scale, non-gang girls have a slightly lower mean score (2.448) than gang girls (2.939), indicating they are somewhat more likely to believe teachers would describe them in positive rather than negative ways, though these differences are not significant.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 5-10 Attachment to Teachers**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
None or a Few	7 (33.3%)	9 (36.0%)
Half	10 (47.6%)	6 (24.0%)
Most or All	4 (19.0%)	10 (40.0%)

## FAMILY FACTORS

Previous research suggests that the quality of family life is correlated with gang involvement for girls (Campbell, 1984a; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Moore, 1991), although there is contradictory evidence (see Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992). I examined a number of facets of family life, including family structure and stability, perceived quality of family relationships, parental supervision, and problems in the family such as violence, substance abuse, and the presence of additional gang members. The most successful family factors in differentiating gang from non-gang girls are the latter: violence, substance abuse, and the presence of gang members in the immediate family.

**Table 5-11 Family Household Composition**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
Mother/Father	2 (9.5%)	3 (12.0%)
Mother Only	5 (23.8%)	8 (32.0%)
Father Only	2 (9.5%)	2 (8.0%)
Mother/Stepfather	2 (9.5%)	3 (12.0%)
Father/Stepmother	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.0%)
Mother/Boyfriend	4 (19.0%)	4 (16.0%)
Other Relative	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.0%)
Other Adults	2 (9.5%)	3 (12.0%)

Table 5-11 shows the living arrangements of gang and non-gang girls. There is no clear pattern of living arrangements for either group of girls, although the largest percentage of both groups live with their mother or their mother and her boyfriend (42.9 percent of gang girls, 48 percent of non-gang girls). In all, eight gang members (38.1 percent) and seven non-gang members (28 percent) report not living with their mothers. There are no discernable differences in living arrangements for gang and non-gang girls. Family stability was measured by asking girls how long they have lived with the adults in their household. The longest period noted was used as the measure. Five gang girls and three non-gang girls report that they have lived with these adults for a year or less. Two gang and four non-gang girls report having lived with these adults from two to five years, while the majority report living with the same adults for seven or more years--fourteen gang girls (66.7 percent) and eighteen non-gang girls (72 percent).

The next set of measures examined the quality of family relationships among gang and non-gang girls. The family portion of the Hare Self-Esteem Scale (questions 126 through 137 in Appendix B) did not yield different results for the two groups. Mean score for gang members is 2.376, and mean score for non-gang members is 2.290.<sup>8</sup> Respondents were also asked if there are adults in the family they feel close to

(one male, one female). Fourteen of the gang girls (66.7 percent) and sixteen of the non-gang girls (64 percent) could name two adults in the family they feel close to. Only one gang member, compared to four non-gang members, report not feeling close to any adults in the family.

**Table 5-12 Quality of Family Relationships**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
<u>Family Closeness</u>		
Very Close	9 (42.9%)	5 (20.0%)
Somewhat Close	6 (28.6%)	8 (32.0%)
A Little Close	2 (9.5%)	5 (20.0%)
Not Close at All	4 (19.0%)	7 (28.0%)
<u>Time Family Spends Together</u>		
A Great Deal	3 (14.3%)	4 (16.0%)
Pretty Much	8 (38.1%)	7 (28.0%)
A Little	4 (19.0%)	10 (40.0%)
None at All	6 (28.6%)	4 (16.0%)
<u>Family Fun</u>		
A Great Deal	6 (28.6%)	4 (16.0%)
Pretty Much	7 (33.3%)	10 (40.0%)
A Little	1 (4.8%)	8 (32.0%)
None at All	7 (33.3%)	3 (12.0%)

Table 5-12 shows the results of several additional questions about family relationships asked in the survey, including perceived family closeness, time spent together, and family fun. Interestingly, gang members are more likely

to report that their families are very close (42.9 percent versus 20 percent), and this response is nearly statistically significant ( $p < .10$ ). The other two measures (family fun and time spent together) do not have discernable patterns, although again non-gang girls seem to report less satisfaction with family life than gang girls. There are also no significant differences on measures of parental supervision (mean score for gang members is 1.845 and for non-gang 1.724) or parental discipline (mean score for gang members is 1.700 and for non-gang 1.920).<sup>9</sup>

While the majority of family measures examined thus far do not indicate a relationship between family relationships and gang involvement, my research does suggest that female gang members are more likely to come from homes where other forms of conflict are present, such as violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and the presence of additional gang members. Tables 5-13 and 5-14 show these relationships. A much larger percentage of gang than non-gang members report witnessing violence in the family and experiencing abuse at the hands of one or more family members. They report greater alcohol and drug use in the home as well. Of these variables, drug use and abuse are statistically significant. In addition, gang members are significantly more likely to report experiencing multiple family conflicts, with 61.9 percent (13 girls) noting that four or five of these family problems exists in



the home (versus only three non-gang members).

Nearly the same number of gang and non-gang girls report having family members in gangs. As Table 5-14 shows, however, gang members are significantly more likely to have a brother, sister or parent who is gang involved.<sup>10</sup> Among gang members, the most common gang-involved family member is a brother (38.1 percent), while for non-gang girls, the most common gang-involved family member is a cousin (36 percent). Eight gang members (38.1 percent) report having multiple family members in gangs, while seven non-gang girls (28 percent) report having multiple family members in gangs.

**Table 5-13 Family Conflict**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
Adults in Home Hit Each Other	9 (42.9%)	7 (28.0%)
Abused by Family Member	12 (57.1%)	7 (28.0%)*
Regular Alcohol Use in Home	15 (71.4%)	12 (48.0%)
Regular Drug Use in Home	15 (71.4%)	7 (28.0%)***
Family Member in Prison/Jail	17 (80.9%)	17 (68.0%)
Report Three or More of Above	15 (71.4%)	7 (28.0%)***
Report Four or Five of Above	13 (61.9%)	3 (12.0%)****

\* p < .05

\*\*\* p < .01

\*\*\*\* p < .001

**Table 5-14 Gang Affiliation Among Family Members**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
Family Member in Gang	12 (57.1%)	13 (52.0%)
Parent or Sibling in Gang	10 (47.6%)	4 (16.0%)**

\*\* p < .025

These include cousins, uncles, step and foster siblings, in addition to parents, brothers and sisters.

Further evidence of the significance of the relationship between the gang membership of immediate family members and girls' likelihood of gang involvement comes from examining the four non-gang girls who report having siblings in gangs. Three of the four have brothers in gangs and all three are gang-associates.<sup>11</sup> The fourth non-gang girl has very adverse feelings towards gangs, in part because her older sister, who is a gang member, ran away from home the previous year and has not been heard from since.

Given the nearly equal number of gang members who report very close families (42.9 percent) and the number with immediate family members in gangs (47.6 percent), I explored whether there is a connection between these variables by examining the nine cases of girls who report having very

close families. The relationship that appears to exist is in the opposite direction: of the nine gang members who reported the family being very close, only two of these had family members in gangs. The other seven report no gang members in the immediate or extended family.

#### PERSONAL FACTORS

Some research has suggested that a number of personal factors may be related to gang involvement for girls, most notably self-esteem (Bowker and Klein, 1983), and early sexual activity (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Moore, 1991). The Hare Self-Esteem Scale did not yield differences between gang and non-gang girls (see above for discussion of school and family dimensions, below for discussion of peer dimensions). However, I also examined self-concept using the Eastwood Scale, which measures the extent to which youths see themselves as "good," "bad," and psychologically troubled. As Table 5-15 shows, there are gang/non-gang differences in response to questions in this scale, with non-gang girls more likely to define themselves as "good" than gang girls, and gang girls more likely than non-gang girls to define themselves along the dimensions "bad," and "sick."<sup>12</sup> Notably, comparing scores along the three dimensions within each category, gang members' mean scores along the dimension of "good" are still lower than their mean scores for the

**Table 5-15 Eastwood Scale**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
<u>"Good"</u>		
Mean Score	2.147	1.844
Standard Deviation	.671	.557
<u>"Bad"</u>		
Mean Score	2.488	3.033
Standard Deviation	.740	.794
<u>"Sick"</u>		
Mean Score	2.665	3.028
Standard Deviation	.552	.725

**Table 5-16 Sexual Abuse and Activity**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
<u>Sexual Abuse</u>	13 (61.9%)	7 (28.0%)**
<u>Age at First Intercourse</u>		
N/A	2 (9.5%)	6 (24.0%)
Prior to Age 13	7 (33.3%)	9 (36.0%)
Age 13 to 15	12 (57.1%)	10 (40.0%)
<u>Number of Sexual Partners</u>		
None	2 (9.5%)	7 (24.0%)
One	6 (28.6%)	11 (44.0%)
Two or More	13 (61.9%)	7 (28.0%)**

\*\* p < .025 when responses are dichotomized so that none and one are compared with two or more

the other two dimensions, indicating that this remains a dominant element of self-concept. Differences between mean scores for gang versus non-gang girls are not significant.

Other personal factors are also noteworthy, specifically concerning sexual abuse, sexual activity, and attitudes toward marriage and motherhood. Table 5-16 provides data on the number of girls who have been sexually abused, age at first intercourse, and number of sexual partners.<sup>13</sup> A majority of gang members report having been sexually abused, versus just over a quarter of non-gang girls. Four of the gang girls (19 percent) report multiple sexual assaults by different people. Among the gang members who report sexual abuse, only three describe being raped by a peer or peers as an adolescent, and the rest report childhood sexual abuse and/or incest. Clearly then, this correlation is not a matter of gang membership putting girls at greater risk of sexual assault; instead a history of sexual assault is a risk-factor for gang involvement (cf Moore, 1991).

There are not significant differences among gang and non-gang girls when age at first sexual intercourse is examined. Among sexually active girls, the mean age at first sexual intercourse for gang members is 12.89, and is 12.52 for non-gang girls. Mean age is actually slightly lower for gang than non-gang girls, though gang members are over-represented at both the high and low ends. Of the twelve

gang members who report first sexual intercourse as occurring between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, half report that they first had sex at age fifteen (versus none of the non-gang girls). But, of the girls reporting first sexual intercourse at age twelve or younger, five of the seven gang members report having sex before age twelve, versus only two of the non-gang girls.

Gang members are significantly more likely than non-gang girls to report having sexual intercourse with multiple partners (when compared with the number of girls reporting no or one sexual partner). Thirteen of the gang members (61.9 percent) report having sex with two or more partners in the last year, while only seven (28.0%) non-gang girls report this. Among girls who are sexually active, mean number of partners for gang members is 2.39, versus 1.67 for non-gang girls. Eight gang members (38.1 percent) have had sex with three or more partners in the last year, versus four (16 percent) of the non-gang girls. This is probably in part a function of gang members' peer affiliations, since they are more likely to have adult friends, and friends who are delinquent (see below). Other researchers have found a correlation among youths between delinquency and involvement in "adult" behaviors such as sex (Hirschi, 1969). Ironically, young women in gangs are very critical of girls they see as sexually promiscuous (see chapter eight).

**Table 5-17 Attitudes Toward Love, Marriage and Motherhood**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
<u>How important is it to be in love?</u>		
Very Important	7 (33.3%)	7 (28.0%)
Pretty Important	1 (4.8%)	5 (20.0%)
Somewhat Important	3 (14.3%)	6 (24.0%)
Not Too Important	5 (23.8%)	6 (24.0%)
Not Important At All	5 (23.8%)	1 (4.0%)
<u>How important is it to get married?</u>		
Very Important	6 (28.6%)	7 (28.0%) <sup>***</sup>
Pretty Important	1 (4.8%)	7 (28.0%)
Somewhat Important	2 (9.5%)	6 (24.0%)
Not Too Important	3 (14.3%)	3 (12.0%)
Not Important At All	9 (42.9%)	2 (8.0%)
<u>How important is it to be a mother?</u>		
Very Important	7 (33.3%)	13 (52.0%) <sup>***</sup>
Pretty Important	1 (4.8%)	5 (20.0%)
Somewhat Important	1 (4.8%)	2 (8.0%)
Not Too Important	0 (0.0%)	2 (8.0%)
Not Important At All	12 (57.1%)	3 (12.0%)

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < .01$  when responses are dichotomized to compare very, pretty and somewhat important with not too and not important at all.

I was also interested in examining whether girls in gangs differ in their attitudes toward love, marriage and motherhood, when compared to their non-gang counterparts. Shover et al. (1979) suggest that girls who adhere to traditional feminine values are less likely to be delinquent. I asked girls how important it is to be in love, to get married, and to be a mother. Table 5-17 shows the results.

About one third of gang girls appear to adhere to traditional values, stating that love, marriage and motherhood are very important. However a consistent majority do not see these things as important. Non-gang girls are more evenly distributed in their responses, and are more likely to see love, marriage and motherhood as important. Motherhood is where the most dramatic difference is visible, with 52 percent of non-gang girls calling it as very important, while 57.1 percent of gang girls say it is not important at all. These responses may help shed light on the meanings of gang affiliation for girls (see chapter eight).

#### PEER FACTORS

To examine girls' relationships with their peers, I was first interested in how important their peers are, and whether they perceive themselves as accepted and well-liked by peers, and their reasons for having particular groups of friends. I was also interested in the structure of their peer groups, such as how many friends are in their group, the gender composition of their group of friends, the age range, and whether there are adults in their peer group. Finally, I examined peer group activities, and delinquency as an element of the peer group. Because for gang girls, their peer reference groups are typically the members of their gangs, many of the responses in this section are likely be a



function of gang affiliation, rather than a cause of gang affiliation among girls.

The majority of both gang and non-gang girls state that their friends are very or pretty important to them (12 of the gang members and 15 of the non-gang members). Only one gang member and two non-gang girls report that their friends are not very important to them or not important at all.

Similarly, there are no differences in gang and non-gang responses to the peer section of the Hare Self-Esteem Scale. Mean score for gang members is 1.833, and mean score for non-gang girls is 1.918. On the whole, girls tend to view themselves favorably in relation to their peers. Fifteen of the gang members (71.4 percent) and twelve of the non-gang girls (48 percent) report currently having a boyfriend.

To get a sense of the meanings of peer affiliations for girls, I asked what they consider the really important reasons they are members of a particular group of friends or gang. Table 5-18 shows the results. A majority of both groups of girls report that they are members of their group for support and loyalty, excitement, to learn new skills, and because the group is one they can feel proud of. Gang members are almost twice as likely as non-gang girls to report that protection and feeling like they belong to something are reasons they are members, though these results are not quite significant ( $p < .10$ ). Gang members are also

**Table 5-18 Reasons for Gang/Group Membership**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=24) <sup>1</sup>
To make friends	4 (19.0%)	9 (37.5%)
To get a reputation	6 (28.6%)	3 (12.5%)
To fill up empty time	10 (47.6%)	16 (66.7%)
For support and loyalty	11 (52.4%)	17 (70.8%)
To feel important	8 (38.1%)	9 (37.5%)
To feel like you belong to something	13 (61.9%)	8 (33.3%)
To prepare for the future	1 (4.8%)	7 (29.2%)
To avoid home	13 (61.9%)	11 (45.8%)
To keep out of trouble	3 (14.3%)	16 (66.7%)****
Members forced you to join	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)
For excitement	15 (71.4%)	18 (75.0%)
To share secrets	4 (19.0%)	16 (66.7%)***
To get away with illegal activities	7 (33.3%)	3 (12.5%)
To participate in group activities	7 (33.3%)	16 (66.7%)*
To learn new skills	13 (61.9%)	16 (66.7%)
To have a territory of your own	11 (52.4%)	7 (29.2%)
To get your parents' respect	2 (9.5%)	3 (12.5%)
Because someone in your family was a member	9 (42.9%)	5 (20.8%)

To meet guys easily	3 (14.3%)	6 (25.0%)
Because the group is one you can feel proud of	16 (76.2%)	15 (62.5%)
To get money or other things	11 (52.4%)	4 (16.7%)**
To get money or other things from selling drugs	6 (28.6%)	2 (8.3%)
Because a friend was a member	10 (47.6%)	7 (29.2%)
To get what you don't get from your family	10 (47.6%)	8 (33.3%)
Some groups just develop into gangs	7 (33.3%)	N/A

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<sup>1</sup> one missing case

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .025

\*\*\* p < .01

\*\*\*\* p < .001

more likely to say that they are members to get money or other things. Non-gang girls are more likely to report being members of their group of friends to keep out of trouble, to participate in group activities, and to share secrets. Of the four gang girls who report sharing secrets as important, one is a member of an all-female gang, and the other three are young (twelve, thirteen and fourteen) and had joined not long before our interview took place.

The composition of girls' peer groups are also different for gang and non-gang girls, as shown in Table 5-19. Non-gang girls are significantly more likely to report

that their friendship groups were all female. Of the two gang members who report having all female friends, one is a member of an all-female gang, and the other had recently quit associating with her gang after being raped by a member, and was referring to non-gang friends. The majority of both sets of girls report associating with mixed gender groups (19 gang members, and 14 non-gang girls). Several of the gang members clarified that their set of friends is mostly males, with a few females. Gang members also report having a significantly larger number of friends in their peer groups than non-gang girls. Almost half of the gang members report their friendship groups consist of ten or more members, versus only three non-gang girls. The majority of non-gang girls (66.7

**Table 5-19 Peer Group Characteristics**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
Gender of Peers		
All Females	2 (9.5%)	11 (44.0%)
Both Females and Males	19 (90.5%)	14 (56.0%)***
Number of Peer Group Members		
1-6	5 (23.8%)	16 (64.0%)
7 or more	16 (76.2%)	9 (37.5%)***
Adults in Peer Group	8 (38.1%)	3 (12.5%)*

\* p < .05

\*\*\* p < .01

**Table 5-20 Peer Activities**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=24) <sup>1</sup>
Hang out	21 (100.0%)	24 (100.0%)
Watch TV or videos	14 (66.7%)	19 (79.2%)
Go to the movies	13 (61.9%)	19 (79.2%)
Listen to music	21 (100.0%)	24 (100.0%)
Go dancing	12 (57.1%)	17 (70.8%)
Go to sports events	8 (38.1%)	16 (66.7%)
Try to meet guys	6 (28.6%)	17 (70.8%) <sup>***</sup>
Go shopping	10 (47.6%)	21 (87.4%) <sup>***</sup>
Drink beer, wine or liquor	17 (81.0%)	8 (33.3%) <sup>***</sup>
Do drugs	18 (85.7%)	7 (29.2%) <sup>****</sup>

<sup>1</sup> one missing case

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> p < .01

<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup> p < .001

percent) have six or fewer friends in their friendship group, versus only five (23.8 percent) of the gang members.

Gang members also have a wider age range of friends, reflecting the age composition of the gangs they are members of. While 62.5 percent (15) of non-gang girls report that their friends are all within four years in age of one another, 61.9 percent (13) of gang girls describe their peer group as having members who are six to ten years apart in

age. In fact, eight of the gang members (38.1 percent) report having adults in their friendship groups (versus three non-gang girls).

Table 5-20 provides data on girls' responses to what kinds of activities they do with their friends. The majority of respondents report hanging out, watching television and videos, listening to music and dancing with their friends. Non-gang girls are significantly more likely to report shopping and trying to meet guys with their friends, and are also more likely to report going to sports events together--all conventional activities. Gang members are more likely to report drinking, and especially doing drugs (smoking 'bud') with their friends.

Gang members' peers are also significantly more likely to be delinquent, as shown in Table 5-21. All of the gang members report that their friends engage in illegal activities as a group, while only eight of the non-gang girls report this. Of these eight non-gang girls, five are girls who are gang affiliates and/or whose primary peers are gang members. About three quarters of gang members report that their friends spend a lot or some of their time talking about the illegal things they have done or plan to do, while only five of the non-gang girls report this. Delinquency is thus more of a primary focus of gang members' peer groups than it is for non-gang girls' peer groups.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 5-21 Peer Delinquency**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=24) <sup>1</sup>
Peer Delinquency	21 (100.0%)	8 (33.3%)****
Delinquency as Focus of Group	16 (76.2%)	5 (20.8%)****

<sup>1</sup> one missing case

\*\*\*\* p < .001

DELINQUENCY, MARIJUANA USE AND ARREST

Given the greater participation of gang girls' friends in delinquency, and the importance of peer delinquency as a factor for explaining youths' delinquency (Elliott et al., 1985; Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992), the next set of comparisons of gang and non-gang girls is the extent of their delinquency. I will also discuss marijuana use and arrest patterns in this section. As Table 5-22 shows, gang and non-gang girls do not differ when it comes to whether they have ever engaged in delinquent acts classified as minor or moderate (see chapter four). However, gang members are significantly more likely to report committing acts classified as serious delinquency, and smoking marijuana, and they are also more likely to report using alcohol. There are no differences in the age at onset of delinquency for gang and non-gang girls.

**Table 5-22 Delinquency**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
Minor Delinquency	21 (100.0%)	22 (88.0%)
Mean age at onset	11.0	11.27
Moderate Delinquency	20 (95.2%)	25 (100.0%)
Mean age at onset	10.75	10.24
Serious Delinquency	21 (100.0%)	14 (56.0%) ****
Mean age at onset	12.67	12.36
Alcohol Use	21 (100.0%)	18 (72.0%)
Mean age at onset	12.38	12.39
Marijuana Use	21 (100.0%)	14 (56.0%) ****
Mean age at onset	12.62	12.93

\*\*\*\* p < .001

In Table 5-22, a girl is classified as having committed delinquency if she answers yes to having ever committed one of a series of delinquent acts classified as minor, moderate or serious. In order to better understand girls' patterns of delinquency, it is also necessary to examine these delinquent acts individually. Tables 5-23, 5-24, 5-25 and 5-26 present data on minor delinquency, moderate delinquency, serious delinquency, and substance use, respectively. These tables list whether girls have ever committed each delinquent act in each category, and whether they have done so in the last six months. Overall what they reveal is that more gang girls have committed a wider range of delinquent acts than non-gang



**Table 5-23 Minor Delinquency**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
<u>Have you:</u>		
Run away from home?		
Ever	19 (90.5%)	20 (80.0%)
Last six months	14 (66.7%)	14 (56.0%)
Skipped classes without an excuse?		
Ever	20 (95.2%)	19 (76.0%)
Last six months	15 (71.4%)	12 (48.0%)
Lied about your age to get into someplace or to buy something?		
Ever	16 (76.2%)	10 (40.0%)*
Last six months	14 (66.7%)	8 (32.0%)*
Been loud or rowdy in a public place where someone complained and got you in trouble?		
Ever	14 (66.7%)	12 (48.0%)
Last six months	13 (61.9%)	10 (40.0%)
Avoided paying for things, like a movie, taking bus rides, or anything else?		
Ever	10 (47.6%)	9 (36.0%)
Last six months	8 (38.1%)	5 (20.0%)
Tried to steal or actually stolen money or things worth \$5 or less?		
Ever	8 (38.1%)	10 (40.0%)
Last six months	3 (14.3%)	5 (20.0%)

p < .05

**Table 5-24 Moderate Delinquency**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
<u>Have you:</u>		
Been drunk in a public place?		
Ever	17 (81.0%)	5 (20.0%)****
Last six months	16 (76.2%)	5 (20.0%)****
Damaged, destroyed or marked up someone else's property on purpose?		
Ever	16 (76.2%)	9 (36.0%)***
Last six months	15 (71.4%)	6 (24.0%)***
Tried to steal or actually stolen money or things worth between \$5 and \$50?		
Ever	8 (38.1%)	8 (32.0%)
Last six months	7 (33.3%)	4 (16.0%)
Taken a car or motorcycle for a ride without permission?		
Ever	13 (61.9%)	7 (28.0%)**
Last six months	9 (42.9%)	5 (20.0%)
Thrown objects like bottles or rocks at people?		
Ever	19 (90.5%)	17 (68.0%)
Last six months	14 (66.7%)	8 (32.0%)**
Hit someone with the idea of hurting them? <sup>1</sup>		
Ever	13 (61.9%)	20 (80.0%)
Last six months	8 (38.1%)	9 (36.0%)

<sup>1</sup> This question concludes "other than what you've already mentioned," referring specifically to affirmative responses to the question "attacked someone with a weapon or with the idea of seriously hurting or killing them?"

\*\* p < .025  
 \*\*\* p < .01  
 \*\*\*\* p < .001

**Table 5-25 Serious Delinquency**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
<u>Have you:</u>		
Tried to steal or actually stolen money or things worth between \$50 and \$100?		
Ever	8 (38.1%)	7 (28.0%)
Last six months	6 (28.6%)	4 (16.0%)
Tried to steal or actually stolen money or things worth over \$100?		
Ever	7 (33.3%)	6 (24.0%)
Last six months	5 (23.8%)	3 (12.0%)
Stolen or tried to steal a car or other motor vehicle?		
Ever	11 (52.4%)	6 (24.0%)*
Last six months	8 (38.1%)	3 (12.0%)*
Attacked someone with a weapon or with the idea of seriously hurting or killing them?		
Ever	12 (57.1%)	9 (36.0%)
Last six months	12 (57.1%)	8 (32.0%)
Been involved in a gang fight?		
Ever	20 (95.2%)	3 (12.0%****
Last six months	14 (66.7%)	2 (8.0%****
Used a weapon or force to make someone give you money or things?		
Ever	6 (28.6%)	3 (12.0%)
Last six months	5 (23.8%)	3 (12.0%)

p < .05  
\*\*\*\* p < .001

**Table 5-26 Alcohol and Marijuana Use**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
<u>Have you:</u>		
Drunk beer or wine without your parents' permission?		
Ever	20 (95.2%)	18 (72.0%)
Last six months	18 (85.7%)	13 (52.0%)**
Drunk hard liquor without your parents' permission?		
Ever	16 (76.2%)	11 (44.0%)*
Last six months	15 (71.4%)	6 (24.0%)***
Used marijuana?		
Ever	21 (100.0%)	14 (56.0%)****
Last six months	20 (95.2%)	12 (48.0%)****

\* p < .05  
 \*\* p < .025  
 \*\*\* p < .01  
 \*\*\*\* p < .001

girls, and more of them have committed a range of delinquent acts in the last six months. The most prevalent forms of delinquency among gang members are smoking marijuana and drinking, being drunk in public, skipping classes, and damaging property. More than 70 percent of gang members report engaging in these acts in the last six months. Except for running away and drinking beer or wine, less than half of the non-gang girls have engaged in these forms of delinquency in the last six months. While gang girls have committed a wide range of delinquent acts, they mostly engage in non-

**Table 5-27 Arrests**

	Gang (n=21)	NonGang (n=25)
<u>Number of Arrests</u>		
None	3 (14.3%)	7 (28.0%)
1-2	11 (52.4%)	12 (48.0%)
3 or more	7 (33.3%)	6 (24.0%)
Arrested for Status Offense	13 (61.9%)	9 (36.0%)
Arrested for Property Offense	8 (38.1%)	9 (36.0%)
Arrested for Violent Offense	9 (42.9%)	8 (32.0%)

serious delinquency, and tend mostly to be oriented toward drinking and smoking marijuana. This is not to downplay the fact that many of these girls have engaged in serious criminal acts, but rather to highlight the routine contexts of their gang involvement. Data from the in-depth interviews also support this picture of gang delinquency among girls in Columbus (see chapter eight).

Table 5-27 shows the number of self-reported arrests for gang and non-gang girls, along with whether girls in each group have been arrested for status, property, and violent offenses. For the most part, gang and non-gang girls have similar arrest histories, with around half having been arrested once or twice in the last year. Fewer gang than non-gang girls have not been arrested, and a larger

percentage of gang members have been arrested for status and violent offenses, but these differences are not statistically significant.

#### SUMMARY

In many aspects of their lives, gang and non-gang girls in this study are quite similar. School performance, educational expectations, family attachment and self esteem are all variables previous researchers indicate as possible risk factors for gang involvement among girls, yet differences among gang and non-gang girls along these variables were not revealed in the survey. Several clusters of factors did emerge as significantly related to gang involvement for girls in Columbus. While overall, structural measures were similar for gang and non-gang girls, gang members did indicate some differences in their neighborhood contexts, as compared to non-gang members. These include a greater likelihood of living in neighborhoods with double the poverty rates of the city as a whole, living in neighborhoods and on streets with gangs and gang members, witnessing and experiencing violence in the neighborhood, and greater residential instability.

Gang members were also significantly more likely to come from families with a great deal of conflict, including violence and child abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, and

incarceration. While only experiences with child abuse and drug abuse were significantly different for gang and non-gang girls independently, gang members were significantly more likely to come from homes where multiple conflicts existed. Finally, female gang members are significantly more likely than non-gang girls to report that they have immediate family members in gangs, including brothers, sisters and/or parents. Each of these issues--neighborhood contexts, serious family problems, and gang-involved family members--will emerge again in different ways in chapter six, as I examine themes emerging from the in-depth interviews regarding girls' pathways into gangs.

Other themes emerging from the survey speak to the meanings and nature of girls' gang involvement. Gang members are also less likely to hold traditional views of marriage and motherhood. About a third of gang members say marriage and motherhood are very important, but for the other two thirds, they are not particularly important. It may be that for some girls, gang involvement is a route of enacting a gender identity resistant to traditional feminine constraints and values. That gang girls are significantly more likely to report being in the gang "to get money or other things" and are significantly less likely to report being involved "to share secrets" is another indication that many gang girls may hold values divergent from stereotypical feminine ones, as is

their likelihood of being in mixed gender, mostly male friendship groups. Gang members' peers are significantly more delinquent than are non-gang girls', they tend to have a wider age range of friends and associate with larger groups. Not surprisingly, gang members report greater delinquency than their non-gang counterparts, though most of their delinquent activities tend to emerge in the context of "partying." They have also been exposed to greater violence, probably as a result of their gang involvement. Their arrest patterns are not very different than those of non-gang girls however.

Some of these themes will resurface again in chapters seven and eight. Chapter seven focuses on the structures and characteristics of gangs in Columbus, giving attention to such things as size, age range, gender composition, leadership and organization. Chapter eight expands this discussion of the character of gangs by examining the activities that gang members participate in, including initiation rituals, everyday activities, inter-gang rivalries, and delinquency. In both of these chapters, the place of gender within the gang will be examined.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Of the 25 non-gang girls, two answered "no" to the first five questions listed in Table 5-3. One said gangs are "somewhat important" to kids in the neighborhood. The other said that she has considered joining a gang. These two cases represent the least amount of gang knowledge or contact reported by non-gang girls.

<sup>2</sup> I do not include mother's and father's educational attainment in Table 5-6 because the distributions for gang and non-gang girls were virtually the same: 21.4 percent of gang members' mothers didn't graduate from high school, versus 17.6 percent of non-gang girls; 28.6 percent of gang members' mothers were high school graduates without further education, versus 29.4 percent of non-gang girls; and 52.9 percent of gang members' mothers were education beyond high school, versus 50 percent of non-gang girls. For gang girls' father's education, two each didn't graduate from high school, graduated, and went beyond high school, for non-gang, two each didn't graduate, went beyond high school, and one was a high school graduate.

<sup>3</sup> The Barriers to Success Scale is a five item scale, where respondents choose from the following stems: strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree. When scores were tallied, questions with positive connotations toward opportunities (ex. "The world is usually good to people like me") were coded with strongly agree as one and strongly disagree as five. Questions with negative connotations (ex. "My family can't give me the opportunities most kids have") were coded with strongly agree as five and strongly disagree as one. According to David Huizinga, with whom I discussed this finding, girls' lack of recognition of blocked opportunities is consistent with other studies.

<sup>4</sup> As noted in chapter four, it is likely these grades are overinflated in part as a response to my being a female college student. This interaction may also have inflated their reported educational expectations.

<sup>5</sup> The Attitudes Toward School Scale is a four item scale, where respondents choose from the following stems: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. When scores were tallied, questions with positive connotations toward school (ex. "I like school") were coded with strongly agree as one and strongly disagree as four. Questions with negative connotations (ex. "School is boring") were coded with strongly agree as four and strongly disagree as one. Other scales noted below were scored in the same fashion.

<sup>6</sup> The Hare Self-Esteem Scale is also a four item scale, where one represents a positive sense of self in relation to others at school, and four represents a negative sense of self.

<sup>7</sup> The Teacher Labeling Scale is a five item scale, with one representing positive teacher perceptions and five representing negative teacher perceptions.

<sup>8</sup> The Hare Self-Esteem Scale is a four item scale, where one represents a positive sense of self in family relationships, and four represents a negative sense of self.

<sup>9</sup> Both of these scales ranged from one to three, with one representing greater supervision or discipline, and three representing less. Stems were often (1), sometimes (2), and almost never (3).

<sup>10</sup> Only two girls report having a parent who is a gang member, and both are gang members themselves.

<sup>11</sup> Two participated in the in-depth interview for gang affiliates. I attempted to do a follow-up interview with the third, but on the scheduled date she was very distracted and wasn't paying attention, so I discontinued the interview.

<sup>12</sup> Scores for the Eastwood Scale range from one to four, with one representing strong agreement with the statement measuring perceptions of self (as good, bad, sick), and four representing strong disagreement with the statement. Stems were very well (1), pretty well (2), a little (3), and not at all (4).

<sup>13</sup> Given the current focus on teen pregnancy, I also asked about whether girls had been pregnant (and the outcomes). Only five gang members report having been pregnant, versus nine non-gang girls. Of the five gang members reporting pregnancy, one was pregnant at the time of the interview and planning to have the baby, two did not go full term, and two had the babies but were not currently raising them themselves. Two of the non-gang girls were currently pregnant, four had babies, and three did not go full term.

<sup>14</sup> During the survey, when a respondent reported that her friends are not delinquent as a group, the next series of questions on types of peer delinquency was skipped. Because the majority of non-gang girls reported that their friends are not delinquent, specific data on peer delinquency was not collected. Presenting a gang/nongang comparison of this data would not be accurate, because girls who said their friends

were not delinquent may very well have admitted that their friends engage in numerous delinquent acts were they asked. I will present data on the delinquency of gang members' peers in chapter eight.

## VI. CONTEXTS OF GANG INVOLVEMENT

As I discussed in the introduction to this text, it is critical that research on female gang involvement recognizes and highlights the diversity of experiences of girls in gangs. In this chapter, my goal is to present an analysis of the patterns of life contexts that influence girls' choices to join gangs. In the last chapter, I examined the correlates of female gang involvement in Columbus, and several themes emerged that tend to distinguish gang members from non-gang girls. Gang members have a significantly greater likelihood of coming from a family with multiple problems, including violence and substance abuse. Nearly three quarters of the gang members I spoke with report at least three of the following five problems within their home: violence between adults, child abuse, regular alcohol use, regular drug use, and the incarceration of a family member. In addition, nearly half of the gang members have immediate family members in gangs. Finally, there are a number of variables indicating that gang members tend to come from neighborhoods where gang activity and violence are a more visible presence.

The survey uncovered variables that are related to gang

involvement for girls in Columbus. In this chapter, I would like to push the analysis further by examining the processes through which girls' life circumstances (including family problems, family members in gangs, and active gang neighborhoods) lead them to the decision to join gangs. To better understand gang involvement, we need both the statistical indicators of gang/non-gang differences, and a means by which to understand in greater detail and context just how these factors shape girls' gang membership. In this chapter, I will discuss themes emerging primarily from the in-depth interviews regarding girls' decisions to become gang-involved. Specifically, I will discuss what they see as the factors in their lives that influenced them to join their gangs. Doing so will also allow me to address some of the meanings of gangs in the lives of young women, as they address how they perceive the gang as fulfilling particular needs in their lives.

There are various trajectories by which girls become gang-involved, as gangs fulfill a variety of needs in the lives of gang members. To understand the causes of gang participation among young women, it is necessary to assess the functions of gang membership, and how these functions relate to the meanings and benefits gang members attribute to their participation in the gang (Campbell, 1990a, 1990b; Hagedorn, 1990; Quicker, 1983).

Research suggests that gangs comprise an important element of the social support systems of their members, providing them with identity, status, excitement and belonging, and a way of adapting to constraints imposed by their social and economic environments. "[G]ang members, like any other individuals, experience universal human needs—physical, psychological, and social" (Soriano, 1993: 454), and gangs are a means by which some girls attempt to meet these needs, given particular life contexts.

Themes arose in the in-depth interviews suggesting that certain life experiences and environmental contexts influence girls' choices to become gang-involved. Here I will present four patterns of circumstances that emerged in the interviews as motivating factors leading girls to gang membership, and shaping the meanings of gangs in their lives. The patterns that emerge from the in-depth interviews complement those uncovered in the survey interview. They include a perceived or actual lack of parental relationships;<sup>1</sup> having an adolescent sibling or relative in a gang; gang or criminal involvement as an entrenched family pattern; and exposure to gangs in the neighborhood or through friends. Figure 6-1 gives a visual diagram of where the girls I interviewed fit in this typology of motivating contexts for gang involvement.

These four categories are not cut and dry scenarios in which all girls neatly fit. Instead, they are overlapping

**Figure 6-1 Motivating Contexts for Gang Involvement**

---

ADOLESCENT GANG-INVOLVED

Combined With  
Lack of Parental  
Relationships

Veronica  
Brandi  
Lisa  
Michelle\*

Not Combined With  
Lack of Parental  
Relationships

Tamika  
Cathy

INTERGENERATIONAL CRIME  
OR GANG INVOLVEMENT

Combined With  
Lack of Parental  
Relationships

Diane  
Stephanie  
Kim\*

Not Combined With  
Lack of Parental  
Relationships

Monica

EXPOSURE THROUGH  
NEIGHBORHOOD OR FRIENDS

Combined With  
Lack of Parental  
Relationships

Traci  
LaShawna  
Jennifer  
Keisha  
Sonita  
Erica

Not Combined With  
Lack of Parental  
Relationships

Angie  
Chantell  
Heather  
Leslie  
Nikkie

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\* Kim and Michelle did not participate in the in-depth interview. Their placement in Figure 6-1 is based on responses from the survey interview, combined with information that emerged during conversations at the time of the survey interview (as noted in field notes).

patterns which represent useful ways of differentiating themes within the interviews. Some girls' experiences fall clearly into one of the categories, while others fall into dual categories. Different degrees of influence from these varying circumstances shape girls' decisions to join gangs, and influence the meanings they attribute to their gang involvement. For clarity, I have categorized girls in Figure 6-1 according to the predominant theme(s) the girls discuss in their interview. Lack of parental relationships resulting from the types of family conflicts described in the survey (violence, child abuse, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, and/or incarceration) is an overarching theme for the majority of the gang members in the study. Only six young women do not indicate three or more family problems in the survey: Angie, Heather, Leslie, Monica, Jennifer, and Chantell.<sup>2</sup> Of those girls reporting multiple family problems in the survey, twelve specifically describe (in the context of the survey, in-depth interview, or both) what they perceive as a lack of parental relationships which has influenced their decision to join a gang. Three girls (Tamika, Cathy and Nikkie) report multiple family problems in the survey, but do not report that a lack of parental relationships has influenced their decision to join a gang. Finally, though Jennifer does not report multiple family problems, she nonetheless describes how a lack of parental



relationships (her mother is deceased and her father is in prison) influenced her decision to join a gang.

The primary overlap between the four categories described above (lack of parental relationships, adolescent sibling/relative in gang, gang or criminal involvement as an entrenched family pattern, exposure to gangs in the neighborhood or through friends) is when lack of parental relationships is a theme in combination with one of the other three. Thus, in Figure 6-1, I list two columns: one column for girls who discuss how lack of parental relationships worked in conjunction with the other theme (a gang-involved adolescent family member, intergenerational crime or gang involvement, or exposure through friends/neighborhood), and one column for girls who focus more exclusively on the latter. In the next sections, I will discuss these themes in greater detail, then will provide case studies to further illustrate their effects on the lives of the young women I interviewed.

#### LACK OF PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

Research has long suggested that "the gang can serve as a surrogate extended family for adolescents who do not see their own families as meeting their needs for belonging, nurturance, and acceptance" (Huff, 1993). Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) report that the gang is a place where its members

can find a support network that both acts as a family and provides an outlet to escape from troubled families. As chapter five revealed, the majority of gang members in my study come from families in which serious problems such as violence, substance abuse, and incarceration exist. For some girls, these problems are serious enough to impair severely their ability to have emotional and physical needs met by the family, due to the absence of a stable and supportive parental relationship with an adult family member.

The most common cause of a 'lack' of family reported by gang girls was a mother addicted to crack or heroin. Keisha is an African American fourteen year old who has spent the last couple of years in and out of placements, spending no more than a few months at a time living at home with her mother. Her neighborhood "ain't nothin' but Folks and Crips," and she joined her set<sup>3</sup> when she was thirteen. She explains, "my family wasn't there for me. My mom smokin' crack and she act like she didn't wanna be a part of my life, so I just choose the negative family, you know what I'm saying." Keisha's story is not unique. Of the girls I interviewed, seven (33.3 percent) related their gang involvement to their mother's addiction: Keisha, Sonita, Veronica, Brandi, Traci, Diane and Stephanie (see Diane's story below).

Other girls report a variety of additional family

problems which have led them to seek a sense of family elsewhere. For Erica and Michelle the primary cause was abuse (see Erica's story below). While these two were not the only girls who reported being abused by adult(s) in the family, or even by parents, for both the abuse they suffered led to removal from the home. Erica was put into foster care, and Michelle ran away and lived for an extended period with friends. Similarly, LaShawna was sent to Columbus to live with relatives when she was thirteen and has spent most of her adolescence moving from placement to placement. She got involved in her gang when she "hooked up" with a gang member while in a residential facility for girls.

The death or incarceration of a parent is also reported by a number of girls. Lisa's mother died two years ago and her father is distant and abusive. Jennifer's mother was killed when she was young, creating what she describes as a psychological void in her life, even though she was raised by relatives. She describes joining her gang at a time when she was "going through a depression 'cause I missed my mom." In addition, for Erica, Veronica, Brandi, Diane, Sonita, Michelle, and Lisa, family problems were exacerbated by the incarceration of a parent with whom they had lived.

## AN ADOLESCENT GANG-INVOLVED FAMILY MEMBER

Some girls who are missing close relationships with the adults in their families can turn to siblings to maintain a sense of family. However, if those siblings are gang-involved, it is likely that the girls will choose to join gangs themselves. As noted in chapter five, gang involvement among immediate family members is significantly related to gang involvement for girls. Nine (42.9 percent) of the girls I interviewed had siblings in gangs: Tamika, Cathy, Veronica, Brandi, Lisa, Michelle, Stephanie, Monica and Nikkie (see Lisa's story below). Of these, only Stephanie and Nikkie do not believe their siblings' involvement significantly influenced their own.<sup>4</sup>

Most often, girls who joined gangs to be with or like their older siblings did so in the context of the types of family problems noted above. For example, Veronica, a fifteen year old African American, joined her set when she was "gettin' ready to be twelve," after her older brothers joined. The gang was "right there in my neighborhood . . . then I seen that my brothers, 'cause I seen my brothers get put in. So then I said I wanna be put in." She goes on to explain:

I was just doin' what I wanted to 'cause when I found out my mom was doin' drugs and stuff, so she wasn't never in the house, so she didn't know. Then my little brother wanted to get put in. And he was only like about six (laugh). And they told him no (laugh).

Though this was the most common pattern, there are also a couple of girls who said family problems did not accompany their decisions to join their siblings' gangs (though both report multiple family problems in the survey). Instead, over a course of time they became friends with their siblings' friends, began affiliating, and eventually decided to join themselves. Cathy is a sixteen year old white girl who joined her set when she was fourteen. Her sister had been a member of the group for about a year and Cathy spent most of her time hanging out with them. On the spur of the moment, she decided to get in:

It was like, just, like, all of us was [out] one day and there was, like, this girl. She was a Crip. And it's the same girl my sister had to beat up to get in it. And, uh, she started sayin' somethin' to me and den my sister, they was just all like, you know, "Beat her up. Beat her up. And you'll be a Blood." And I was, like, "Ok." So I beat her up. And then after I was done, it was like the top leader of the gang just handed me a rag. And I was in it.

Tamika, who is a fifteen year old African American, enjoys the attention she gets from being the little sister of a well known gang member. "Everybody know me. Everybody know me as his little sister. They be like, oh, there go Stan's little sister." After affiliating with his set for some time, she decided to join. She explains:

I had been waiting a long, long time. Like, for like a year and a half to do it. But I always thought, naw, that's wrong. That's wrong. That's bad. But, I ran with 'em. You know, I knew how to do everything they did. I, you know, any time they was there, any time they did, like, drive-by

or whatever I was always with 'em. So I'm figuring, like, if I'm with 'em, you know, I might as well just be, you know, officiated with 'em.

Some research suggests that young women who join gangs because of a sibling then actively recruit additional female friends to join the group (Klein, 1971). In this study, only Tamika provide evidence of this sort. She told me that she was working on putting more young women in her set as a means of gaining more rank in the group. No other young women with siblings described this phenomenon, and no young women described joining because of a female friend who had a sibling in the gang.

#### INTERGENERATIONAL CRIME/GANG INVOLVEMENT

The majority of gang members in the study have family members in gangs. For most, these other family members are also adolescents, and gang affiliation thus remains a youthful endeavor. For a few of the girls I interviewed, their gang-involved family members are adults, and this appears to shape the context of their gang affiliation. Here the decision to join a gang doesn't result from an absence of adult family members, but of learning about gangs and crime via adults in the family. As a result, their commitment to the gang is stronger than many of the other girls'. These girls are atypical cases, but nevertheless represent an important pattern to examine. As Columbus matures as a gang

city, intergenerational dynamics may become more prevalent.

Monica and Kim both have a gang-affiliated parent. Kim's mother still claims her gang, while Monica's father does not. Both girls' parents were originally affiliated in cities other than Columbus. Kim also has several cousins who are OG's<sup>5</sup> in gangs, and they told her "you need to be down." Monica has several adult brothers who are members of her set, and she places her decision to join clearly as a result of "wanting to be like them" (see Monica's story below).

Diane's circumstances are somewhat different. While she does not have intergenerational gang membership in her family, her father is a "career" criminal, and she has gained a great deal of knowledge about how to commit a wide variety of crimes from him. This knowledge has resulted in a great deal of status for her among her gang peers. She says, "my dad is just so cool. Everybody, everybody in my little clique, even people that aren't in my set, just my regular friends, they all love my dad." In fact, at the time of our interview, she was locked up for a robbery she committed with her father.

What is significant about these particular girls is that they appear to be involved in more serious crime, and crime that is more organized than most of the other girls I spoke with. They were among the most knowledgeable about their sets during the interviews, and also among the most

"true" and unwavering in their commitment to the gang. As Diane passionately noted, "I love my cousins. I love 'em."

#### EXPOSURE THROUGH NEIGHBORHOOD AND/OR FRIENDS

For some girls in the study, the decision to become gang-involved stemmed directly from exposure to gangs through friends or in the neighborhood. According to Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995), one function of gangs is to alleviate the boredom experienced by inner city youths, who have few options for recreation and entertainment. Quicker summarizes: "To be in a gang is to be part of something. It means having a place to go, friends to talk with, and parties to attend. It means recognition and respected status" (1983: 80). Likewise, the gang is a means for these girls to adapt to oppressive living conditions, including poverty, neighborhood crime, lack of opportunities, racism, and sexism (Brown, 1977; Campbell, 1990a; Fishman, 1988; Vigil and Long, 1990).

To some degree, of course, all of the girls joined as a result of exposure to gangs in the neighborhood or through friends. Here I place girls in this category specifically when they describe their primary reasons for joining as being drawn by the excitement of gangs, desiring to be with or like their peers, and/or because it was the thing to do since it was all around them. Eight girls described their motivations



for joining in these ways, including Angie, Chantell, Heather, Leslie, Nikkie, Traci, LaShawna and Jennifer (see Chantell's story below).

Sometimes gang affiliation resulted when girls began to hang out with older, gang-involved kids around the neighborhood as they were reaching adolescence. For example, Angie is an African American fifteen year old who joined her gang when she was eleven. She describes how changes in her neighborhood as she was growing up made her want to be in a gang:

It's like, our neighborhood started changing a little bit, people started movin' in and out, and I was associating with the people who moved in and out, you know, and I was just, then, they was, a lot of 'em was in gangs, or things like that, and I wanted to be in a gang.

Because she was so young when she joined, it was a couple of years before she became actively involved. From her description, it does not appear the other members expected much of her at the time, they just thought it was cute that a young girl from the neighborhood wanted to be in. She explains:

They was just like, "Hey, you wanna be a member?" I was like, one day, and I was like, "Yeah, yeah! I wanna be one, I wanna be one, I wanna be one!" Then they put me in and I was in, but then I, and as the years went by that's when I started really gettin' involved wid 'em, but then I didn't, I didn't see them that much.

Similarly, Traci, Nikkie and Diane each had a teenaged boy living next door to them at the time they joined, and

each joined the set that their neighbor was in. It is probably not coincidence that of the gang members I interviewed, these girls were among the youngest when they joined. Diane began affiliating when she was ten and joined at eleven; Traci and Nikkie each joined shortly after their twelfth birthdays. Especially for Traci and Nikkie, the desire they articulated was wanting to fit in and belong to a group--typical desires of early adolescents. As Nikkie notes, "if you ain't in it you just be . . . you just be feelin' left out. You be like, oh, they all in a gang and I'm just sittin' here." As a result, she says, "I was like, 'I wanna get in it.' And I got in it."

Traci had only recently moved to Columbus. Moving to a new city, she explained that she "wanted to be like other people." She noticed "all these blue scarves and red scarves and stuff," found out the boy living in the apartment above hers was a Crip, and asked him how she could get in. She explained: "I just wanted to join. I don't know why. I just had to join a gang. When I moved out here I just had to." Joining the gang was a way to make friends and fit into a new environment.

Jennifer, Heather and Leslie became gang-involved after they were introduced to gang members by a close friend. Heather, a white fifteen year old who joined when she was twelve, said of her decision to join:

I's at my friend Chad's house and they had just

came over 'cause they was friends with Chads, and we just started talkin' and hangin' out and then they started talkin' about a gang and it's like that, I just got in there.

Likewise, Jennifer is a white sixteen year old who joined when she was fifteen, after her best friend introduced her to the OG. She explains, "well, my friend was already in it and she would come over and she'd talk about all the, how it's real, it's just real cool to be in and everything like that." Many of the girls I spoke with noted that gang members are among the more popular and recognized youths in school and around the neighborhood, which further explains girls' motivations for joining. With the exception of Jennifer and LaShawna, most of the girls in this category, though drawn to the excitement of gangs, were not 'hardcore' members. They enjoyed the fun and recognition, but were not seriously involved in the criminal aspects of gang membership.

#### CASE STUDIES

Thus far, I have mapped out a number of trajectories that lead young women in Columbus to join gangs. Here I will provide more detailed case studies of several of the girls I interviewed, including Erica, Diane, Lisa, Monica and Chantell. My goal is to shed further light on both the diversity of experiences of girls in gangs, and the similar life contexts that influence their choices to join gangs.

## Erica

Erica is a seventeen year old African American girl who joined a gang at the age of fifteen. She lived with her father and stepmother throughout most of her childhood, until her father and uncle raped her at the age of eleven and she was removed from the home. Since that time, she has been shuffled back and forth between foster homes, group homes, and residential facilities. She has had little contact with her family since she was eleven, because family members turned their backs on her. She explains, "I didn't have no family. Because of incidents with my dad and my uncle. After that, they just deserted me and I didn't, I had nothin' else." Though she says her stepmother was the primary person who raised her as a child, their relationship was severely damaged by the rape. "She doesn't, she doesn't believe it. I mean, even after he pleaded guilty she still doesn't believe it."

Erica's childhood up to that point had been filled with violence as well. Her father was physically abusive toward her stepmother, herself and her siblings, and as a young child, Erica witnessed the rape of her biological mother. Both her father and stepmother have spent time in jail, and there was regular alcohol and drug use in the home as she was growing up. As a result, she was a physically aggressive child. She explains, "in elementary school before I even

knew anything about gangs, I'd just get in a lot of fights."

Her initial contact with gangs came when she was fourteen and living in a foster home. During her stay there, she met a group of kids that she began spending time with:

I didn't know 'em, but I just started talkin' to 'em. And, they always wore them blue rags and black rags and all that. And, I asked them, I said, "well you part of a gang?" And they tell me what they're a part of. So, it was like, everywhere I went, I was with them. I was never by myself. If they went out to [a] club I went with them. If they did anything, I was with them. And, um, we went down to some club one night and it was like a whole bunch of 'em got together and um, I asked to join. I wanted to join.

Erica says she joined the gang "just to be in somethin'," and so that it could be "like a family to me since I don't really have one of my own." Being in the gang has allowed her to develop meaningful relationships. She explains, "people trust me and I trust them. It's like that bond that we have that some of us don't have outside of that. Or didn't have at all. That we have inside of that gang, or that set."

Nonetheless, sometimes Erica feels ambivalent about being in a gang. "It's just weird, 'cause, I mean I don't know, I guess it's just not the right picture of my life would be to be part of a gang." One problem she grapples with is that being in a gang means projecting a particular identity, not the one she's most interested in cultivating:

I gotta be more aggressive than I have to be with my friends. 'Cause I, I mean, if I really wanted to I could be a nice person. But around them, I,

sometimes I just don't act like that. I act like I'm some real mean bully type person.

Her decision to join was in part a search for belonging and a sense of family. In some ways the gang has met those needs, and in other ways it has not. As she nears adulthood, Erica plans to quit associating with her gang, and instead work on building her future. "I want out of it, as it is now. I want out of it. I'm trying to get my life back. On track . . . . 'Cause I'm 17, almost 18." Perhaps because of her own experiences, Erica doesn't want a family. She does hope to be more assertive in the future, "without having to have that gang behind me to do it."

#### Diane

Diane is a fifteen year old white girl who has been a gang member since the age of eleven. She was only ten when she began hanging out with members of the gang, including the seventeen year old young man who lived next door.

I think I was about ten and a half years old and we started hanging out over there, over at his house and all his friends would come over and I just got into, just hangin' out, just becomin' friends with everybody that was there. And then I started smokin' weed and doin' all that stuff and then when I turned eleven it was like, well, 'cause they seen me get in fights and they seen how my attitude was and they said, well I think that you would be, you would be a true, a very true Lady Crip.

The time she spent with this group, and her decision to join, were predictable results of her life history up to that

point. As a young child, the family moved around a lot because her father was on the run from the law. She was exposed to crime and drugs at an early age, and started smoking marijuana herself at age nine. Her father had friends over all the time and dealt drugs out of the home. As Diane notes, "I was just growin' up watchin' that stuff." Her life changed dramatically when she was ten and her father was arrested and sent to prison:

We didn't have very much money at all. Like, my mom was on welfare. My dad had just gone to jail. My dad had just gone to federal prison for four years . . . . My mom was on drugs. My, see my dad, always sellin' acid, quaaludes, cocaine and my mom was on just smokin' marijuana and doin' crack. Back then she was just real drugged out, had a lot of problems and it was just me and my little brother and my little sister and that's all that was goin' on, besides me goin' to school and comin' home to seein' my mom do whatever, hit the pipe, and goin' next door and hangin' out.

She remains very dedicated to the gang and to the members of her gang in part because of what they provided her at a time in her life when she needed something:

That neighborhood's not a good neighborhood anyway, so. I had nothin' to look forward to, but these people that helped me out, you know? I mean, I was a young kid on my own . . . . I was just a little girl, my dad's gone and my mom's on drugs.

Though she will "probably always [be] sellin' drugs," Diane believes that eventually she will quit gangbanging as she is now. She surmises:

There'll be some day in my life where I will be mature enough to say, "No, I don't need y'all." I might find a man and settle down and have him take

care of me. I see a man takin' care of me. I'll still love 'em. I'll still, if they need me I'll be there. But I think when I get older it's not gonna be all Crip, Crip, Crip, Crip this, all that stuff.

### Lisa

Lisa is a thirteen year old white girl who joined her gang shortly before our interview. Her brother Mike had been a member of the Folks for several years, and when the family moved to another area of Columbus, he decided to start his own set in the new neighborhood. At the time that we spoke, their set had seven members, including Lisa and Mike, Mike's girlfriend, Lisa's boyfriend, and several additional friends.

Lisa's mother died when she was eleven, and she doesn't get along well with her father, who is sometimes physically abusive and spends little time with her. She is very close to her brother Mike, and wanting to be with him was her primary reason for joining. Prior to his starting his own set, Lisa says she "claimed [Folks] because that's what my brother was so I wanted to be like that too," but she hadn't considered joining. Then, she explains, "my brother got a high enough rank from doin' whatever he did to get that rank to um . . . have his own set." Several weeks before Lisa joined, her brother's girlfriend (who is her best friend) was initiated into his new set. Then, she explains:

One day [Mike's girlfriend] was like, "well, you wanna be true?" And I was like, "yeah." And they was like, "alright." And they took me behind the railroad tracks and kicked the shit outta me and I



was in it (laughs).

Lisa was initiated into the gang on the same day as her boyfriend and another male friend of theirs. A primary concern for her was making a good impression on her brother. She describes what happened when they were initiated:

The boys was scared. They was like, "man, I don't know, I don't know." And then I was, like, I just looked at my brother. Then I looked at my friend and I looked at them boys and I was, like, "I'll go first." So, I just did it I think . . . why I did it then is just to be, I don't know. Just to show them, my brother, that I was stronger than them boys.

Because Mike just started his own set, it is currently small and primarily made up of Lisa's closest friends. She says:

We all just hang out all the time. We just are always together. If you see me you see my brother. If you see my brother you see his girlfriend. If you see me you see my boyfriend. I mean, it's just like that.

While she enjoys the "fun and games" involved in spending time with her brother and their friends, Lisa is actually ambivalent about being in a gang. She especially expresses concern for her brother, who takes his gang involvement very seriously and puts himself at risk as a result. Reflecting on her brother, she says: My brother, when he was little, he was a little geeky, little kid that wore glasses. But now he's like, you know, and I don't understand it but uh, I wish he was still a little kid that wore glasses. Of her own gang involvement, she surmises:

Right now I wish, I kinda wish I never got into it but I'm already in it so, like, um, I just, I don't know. I don't think I'm gonna be that heavy as my brother is. Like, all the time, you know, yeah yeah.

### Monica

Monica is a sixteen year old African American, who joined her gang when she was thirteen. She has four older brothers between the ages of 23 and 31, and all are members of the same set. Her father was also in a gang when he was younger (in another city), though he is no longer a member. Her relationship with her mother is strained because of the trouble she gets into, and she has been living with her grandmother for the last few years. She has a close relationship with her father, who was supportive of her decision to join her brothers' set: "He was like, 'Well, it's up to you. I'm not gonna tell you no and I'm not gonna tell you yes. It's up to you.'"

Monica is the youngest member of her set, and joined because she "wanted to be like" her brothers. She said she "always followed them around," so when they asked her if she wanted to join, she said yes.

My brothers, all four of my brothers were in so I was like, "Alright, I wanna be in a gang." So I used to ride around with them all the time. And then my brother asked me, he said, "Do you wanna be down or what?" I was like, um, "What do I gotta do?" Then he told me . . . . And I was like, "Fine, I'll do it." So I did.

Monica says "all the little kids wanna be down," but she sees a difference between her set and what some of the adolescent gangs around Columbus are like:

What I see with most 13 and 14 year olds is that they just will not, well, some of 'em, it just seems like they say they're down with a gang just to say they down. And, I mean, if they say they down then it's going to be mostly just their friends . . . . it's probably just their friends. But I know I'm down for real, down for life.

Monica is committed to her gang, and is respected by the other members. She says this is partly "because my brothers is up there," but it is also because the other members "know what I'm all about." She explains:

I am taken very seriously. Everybody knows what I am capable of and what I will and will not do. And they take me very seriously. I'm not tryin' to sound bad or nothin' but they, they really do. Nobody in my set disrespects me by callin' me a bitch or anything like that. And nobody in my set sit there while I'm around and talk about females like that or nothin' because they know I will get a little attitude with 'em.

Monica got her respect "right off the bat" because when she was put in the gang, it was the male members who initiated her rather than the females. "Instead of takin' six [hits to the head] from the girls I took six from four guys . . . . So the girls, they had nothin' to say about me bein' a punk, neither did the guys."

The overwhelming majority of girls I spoke with saw their gang affiliation as an adolescent phenomenon that they would eventually mature out of. However, Monica is an

exception. Perhaps because of the adult role models in her family, because she "grew up around it," Monica is much more serious about her gang membership. As she explains, "I don't see myself ever quittin' or anything, like saying 'I don't wanna be around y'all no more' and just stop doin' it . . . . I joined for life"

### Chantell

Chantell is a fourteen year old African American girl who joined her gang within the past year. She was twelve years old when she decided that she wanted to be in a gang, and began affiliating when she turned thirteen. Chantell lives with her mother, grandmother and siblings in a neighborhood where gangs are "just, like, everywhere." Though she has no contact with her father, her relationship with her mother is good; she reports none of the other family problems that many girls report, such as violence or substance abuse. What she does report is an economically impoverished neighborhood context in which she "grew up with" gangs. She explains:

When I was little, I mean when I was young, I grew up around 'em. Just grew up around 'em, basically. Then when you grow up around 'em and you see 'em so much, until you want to get initiated.

I asked her what was going on in her life at twelve when she decided she wanted to join her gang, and she said,

"like, a lot of gang-banging, I mean, it was just regular, like, people were just like gettin' in it and having fun. Mostly, and stuff like that." She had neighborhood friends who were wanting to join, and she has an older sister who joined around the same time as her as well. At the time, she went through some confusion, "like wondering should I or shouldn't I, stuff like that, or what would happen if I did, or if I didn't." Because she didn't have the direct role models that girls like Monica and Lisa had, and she didn't have the devastating family circumstances of girls like Erica and Diane, the decision to join was not as easy for Chantell. Eventually she decided. "I was around 'em so much, the things they did I did," she says, "so I said, since I grew up with 'em, I'm already hanging' with 'em, couldn't be no difference, so."

Being in the gang means "a lot" to Chantell. "It's like, it don't mean more than my life, but I'm in it and it does take my life." She does believe she will settle down when she gets older, especially when she has children. "Like when I get twenty I will settle down, like move away, but I, move away won't be disrespect, just move away, always have my flag<sup>6</sup> in my room, just like move away, settle down with my baby." Chantell, like most of the girls I interviewed, recognizes her gang involvement as an aspect of her life that is specific to the context of adolescence. Regardless of

what the future holds for them, most girls believe that they will not remain gang and criminally involved into adulthood, but instead will settle into conventional lives. Only those few girls like Diane and Monica, who have gang and/or criminally involved adult role models, expect to remain criminally active into adulthood.

#### NON-GANG ASSOCIATES

The non-gang girls in the study should be viewed not simply as "non-gang," but as having varied degrees of connection to gangs. They range from those who are appalled by what they see in their communities, to those with some peripheral connections to gangs via family and friends, to those who have strong connections with specific gangs and/or with gang members. According to the survey, nearly a quarter of the non-gang girls (six of 25) report that most of their friends are gang members, an additional six say that half of their friends are in gangs, and thirteen (52 percent) say they have no gang friends. Four non-gang girls have boyfriends who are gang members.

As noted in chapter four, three young women who are not gang members participated in in-depth interviews. I decided to conduct exploratory interviews with them because each reported being associated with primarily gang friends or a particular gang, but had chosen thus far not to join. Julie

is a thirteen year old mixed-race girl whose brother and boyfriend are members of rival gangs. Most of her friends are gang members, though she doesn't associate with one particular gang or set. Rachel is a fifteen year old white girl who hangs out primarily with members of Folks sets, though not exclusively. Denise is an African American seventeen year old who is affiliated with a Crips set, but vacillates about whether she wants to join. Though they are only three interviews, these young women each represent a different point on a continuum of gang connections, and their stories are important for what they reveal about the meanings of gangs in their own lives, and by contrast in the lives of gang members. Their connections with gangs and gang members also illustrate the fluid boundaries of gangs in Columbus, given their ability to move across gangs in their friendships, and participate in many gang-related activities without being members.

Julie is attracted to gang members as friends because she says "they're more fun [and] they're more bold" than people who aren't in gangs. She continues, "I don't like hangin' around dull people. I'm one of those people who needs excitement. And just, they're crazy. And I like hangin' around people that are crazy." When I ask her to elaborate on what she means by crazy, Julie explains:

Just, like, they'll do anything, like anything. Like, my boyfriend, if I say I want a pair, I wanted a pair of new shoes, he goes up to the

store and he'll rob the store for a pair of shoes. He's just, they're crazy. Don't think about what could happen to them.

She hangs out with her gang peers, and commits crimes with them, but she doesn't take part in specifically gang-related crimes or conflicts between rival gangs. She explains, "I'm not gonna have to spend a few years of my life in jail because of . . . a gang. I mean, if I'm gonna do somethin', I'm gonna do it for myself not for a clique."

Julie's gang friends come from different gangs, and she knows them from a variety of places. They include friends she's grown up with, people she meets at the mall, movie theaters, skating rinks, the detention center, and people she meets through relatives and other friends. She is clearly drawn to certain elements of the excitement of gang life, particularly her friends' delinquent involvement and overall "craziness." However, she is strongly opposed to joining a gang because of the limitations it would place on her. When I ask her what the benefits of not being a member are, she responds:

Just, like, I can hang out, I mean, if I was a Crip I couldn't hang out with some of my friends that are Bloods 'cause they don't get along. And just, I guess, being able to hang out with who I want. And, wearing what color I want. I mean, that's stupid that, in a certain gang you're not allowed wearin' a certain color.

Like Julie, Rachel expresses a strong resistance to joining gangs because she does not want a group identity to



subsume her individual identity, and because she wants the freedom to act in ways she chooses. She is drawn to gang members for the same reasons as Julie, and is also heavily involved in delinquent activities with her gang friends. She explains:

How I see it is you can do anything you can if you're not in a gang than if you are. You know what I'm saying? . . . I can do all the same stuff they do and if I don't wanna do it no more then I don't gotta lose my life. Like if you get in a gang and do this and that, you can get, like, like, if you're in the gang and you do something that you're not supposed to then you get V's.<sup>7</sup> V's is where your OG, the leader of the gang, can come and give you how many ever blows to the head. So, you know what I'm saying, I can mess up on my own and don't worry about getting no V's, so. I ain't tryin' to get in no gang.

Both Julie and Rachel have a strong sense of self as individuals. As Rachel says, "I don't claim nothin' but Rachel." Though it is not conclusive evidence, it is notable that neither young woman reported family conflict in the survey interview. Julie answered no to each of the five questions in Table 5-13, while Rachel answered yes only to having had a family member spend time in jail (which 68 percent of non-gang girls reported). Perhaps because each has strong relationships with adults in their families, they don't have the same desire for belonging that many gang members describe. Rachel even says as much:

Now, if I lived in Rosemont like half these girls, I think I would be in a gang 'cause I would like, like, if I didn't have no one who cared for me, looked out for me, did this and that for me, then I would get in a gang 'cause that's what most

girls get in the gang for. But, see, I got my mom. I got my family that loves me. My mom takes good care of me. You know what I'm saying?

Unlike Julie and Rachel, Denise is affiliated with a specific gang, and clearly aligns herself with them. She says, "a Blood is a Slob to me . . . . I see somebody dressed in all dred, I look at 'em and go, 'Psssh, whatever.' And I ain't even in a gang but I still call 'em Slobs." The set she hangs out with does not have any female members, but she and a female friend have been spending time with them for the last year. The members have asked her if she wants to join, and sometimes she thinks about it, but says at this point, "I don't think I'm ready to join. I don't feel like getting beat up." The following conversation illustrates some of the tensions she is grappling with:

Jody: You said in the other [survey] interview that sometimes you think you want to be a member and sometimes you don't.

Denise: Yeah, 'cause sometimes we be sittin' there chillin' and they all come out with guns and stuff, you know what I'm sayin'? They load they shit. They look better than the police. They just look hard, you know what I'm sayin'? They all got money. Everybody, all of 'em got money. And it ain't just like one dollar bills. They all got hundreds. And flashin' 'em. Everybody come over there. Nobody disrespect 'em.

'Cause they too scared. They just hard.

Jody: So those are the things that are appealing about it.

Denise: Yeah.

Jody: Um. And then what are some of the reasons that you haven't made that leap yet?

Denise: 'Cause goin' in jail and some of the crimes they be doin'. They like, like you walk down the street and they just mess with somebody just to mess with somebody. They ask this dude if he got a quarter. He was like "no, I don't got no quarter." So they just beat him up. For a stupid quarter. And they didn't need it but, you know what I'm sayin'? Just somethin' to do.

Jody: And you, and so why does that make you not want to join?

Denise: 'Cause what you gonna beat somebody up over a quarter for? And then they got confrontations with the, uh, Slobs. They just be all, they always with them, messin' with them. I ain't tryin' to get shot.

Denise is drawn to the excitement of gang life, and the respect that the gang members get from others around them, but she also has both moral and safety concerns that have kept her from joining. At this point, she has been able to enjoy many of the benefits of the gang without putting herself at tremendous risk. She explains:

It's fun, man. [They] give you money. It's fun.

You get high. You usually gotta buy, but, they sell it, they buy it for you, they smoke wit' you. They smoke wit' you. They got cars, rides, you don't have no car, you like, call 'em up, "you wanna take me to the shop?" They like, "yeah, I'll drop you off, hold on."

An important element of these interviews with Julie, Rachel and Denise is that they highlight the fluid nature of gang boundaries. On the one hand, each girl articulates that she is clearly not a gang member; yet each participates on some level in the activities of gang members, if not gangs. Julie says that her friends in rival gangs always try to get her to "set each other up," yet they trust her not to set them up. She hangs out with them and commits crimes with them despite her connections with rival gangs. Rachel has actually assisted her friends in initiating new members when they were short-handed. She says "I'm not supposed to jump people into a gang unless you're in a gang," but her friend asked her to and "I'd practically do anything for her, 'cause that's my heart." And Denise is privy to many of the gang members crimes. These young women derive some of the same meanings from their gang involvement as gang members, especially delinquent recreational activities and excitement. But they have not felt the need for belonging that many gang members describe as motivating their decisions to join gangs.

## CONCLUSION

Young women in Columbus become gang-involved to meet a variety of social and emotional needs in their lives. A number of circumstances seem to shape girls' decisions to join gangs, most notably the presence of severe family problems such as drug addiction or abuse, the absence of a parent, the involvement of family members in gangs, and exposure to gangs through friends and in the neighborhood. I have discussed each of these scenarios in turn, and have presented evidence of their overlapping nature in young women's lives. The case studies, in addition to telling the story of a particular girl, illustrate the broader patterns of life experiences that make gang involvement a viable choice for some young women in Columbus. Likewise, interviews with non-gang associates provides some preliminary evidence of those factors that may keep young women who are drawn to gangs from joining.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> By "parental relationship," I mean not just mother or father, but any adult family member responsible for raising the girl.

<sup>2</sup> All names are fictitious.

<sup>3</sup> Youths in Columbus refer to their gangs as sets.

<sup>4</sup> Stephanie's involvement was influenced by her mother, however. Her mother's boyfriend is a gang member, and Stephanie's own boyfriend is her mother's boyfriend's cousin and a member of the same gang. Stephanie's main reason for joining was that her boyfriend wanted her to, and her mother "let me do anything I want to."

<sup>5</sup> OG stands for "Original Gangster," and is the term used by girls in Columbus to refer to the leader of their set or gang.

<sup>6</sup> Flags, or rags, are bandannas gang members wear to indicate their gang affiliation. Crips wear blue flags, Folks wear black, and Bloods wear red. Crips and Folks wear them on the right side of their body, and Bloods on the left.

<sup>7</sup> "V's" refers to violations, which are punishments for violating gang rules.

## VII. GANG STRUCTURES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Gangs have been present in Columbus for approximately a decade, and the short duration of their presence is illustrated by the nature of gangs in the city. They are also reflective of the relative socioeconomic success of Columbus, in comparison to other emergent gang cities such as Milwaukee (Hagedorn, 1988) and St. Louis (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996). The goal of the next two chapters is to provide a detailed discussion of gangs in Columbus, as depicted by their female members. It is important to note at the onset that the information in these chapters is partial. Not all Columbus gangs are represented in this study, and in addition, what I have learned has come from a group of gang members (females) who describe their exclusion from some elements of gang activity, particularly serious crime (see chapter eight). Nevertheless, what they have to teach us about the nature of gangs in Columbus is significant. They are actively involved in gangs, and some I would clearly define as core members who choose to participate fully in those aspects of gang life more typically reserved for males.

Though I addressed my definition of a gang in chapter one, here I would like to begin by discussing why the young

women I interviewed describe the groups they are involved with as gangs, and how this fits with research definitions. Though definitions are contested, one of the most widely used gang definitions is that of Klein (1971), who specifies that gangs are groups of youths who are perceived as a distinct aggregate by others in their neighborhood; recognize themselves as a distinct group, typically with a name and a set of signs and symbols to distinguish the group; and have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent acts to call forth consistent negative response from neighborhood residents and/or law enforcement.

The majority of gangs in Columbus adopt nationally recognized gang names, most notably Crips, Bloods and Folks. While there are a few independent groups and there are said to be a handful of Vice Lord sets, Crips, Bloods and Folks predominate. As Table 7-1 shows, the majority of female gang members I spoke with were either Folks (57.1 percent) or Crips (28.6 percent). I interviewed two members of Bloods sets and one member of an independent female gang, the Gangster Girlz.<sup>1</sup>

Young women in gangs cull from a similar set of factors as Klein when describing why the groups they are in can be defined as gangs. When asked "what makes the group you're in a gang?" girls focus on the recognition the gang receives by others, their



**Table 7-1 Gang Member Affiliations**

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Folks	12 (57.1%)
Crips	6 (28.6%)
Bloods	2 (9.5%)
Gangster Girlz	1 (4.8%)

---

distinct symbolic systems (colors, signs, flags,<sup>2</sup> and the like), and their participation in criminal endeavors. For example, Angie emphasizes size, involvement in crime and community recognition:

Uh, it's a lot of, it's a lot of us, and that forms a gang, and then, we don't always do, we don't do a lot of violence, you know, that's what makes them a gang, and plus the violence that they do makes them a gang. Everybody wanna join it, so that's why they call it the gang. 'Cause we have a lot of people and everybody be wantin' to get in.

Likewise, Erica focuses on how others in the community and on the streets respond to the gang:

To me, it's just 'cause it's, it's a group of us, we all walk around sportin' only certain colors. We can only wear certain colors. And it's like people look at us and that's exactly what they think, there's a gang, and they respect us for that. They won't bother us.

Like Erica, most girls mention the symbolism that their gang adopts. Keisha says, "the name, the way we write it, the stackin', the prayer, the throwin' it up, Folk and all that. The colors, blue and black."<sup>3</sup> Traci says, "because we fight against, we fight against, you know, we fight Bloods and stuff. And we wear our scarves and everything." Lisa notes that her gang is a group that:

Claim their territory. That wear their colors.  
That, uh, they just, they just claim that turf.  
And if, like, someone else comes up wearin' the  
wrong color, I don't care if you don't have a rag  
on or not. If you got this color on, a shirt, a  
hat or anything, you're gettin' beat up.

In addition, as noted in chapter one, young women also resist the characterization of their gangs as *only* criminally involved, even when they describe the groups as such. For example, Leslie laments that people "just concentrates on that bad stuff that [gangs] are doin'". 'Cause as soon as they hear about a gang doin' somethin' bad, they're, whew, on it," while "it's very rare that you hear about a gang doin' somethin' good" even though she believes they sometimes do. Likewise, Tamika describes a gang shooting she witnessed, then perhaps to correct the impression she perceives herself creating, she immediately comments on how she sees people:

Just stereotype gang members to be hardcore and to always be shootin' at somebody. They don't stereotype people that could be a gang member but still they could go to school and get straight A's. That's stereotyping because I know, I know a few gang-bangers who go to school, get straight A's, hit the books but still when they on the street, you know, they take good care of theirs. But they, they takin' care of theirs in school and they takin' care of theirs on the street and I don't think that's right to stereotype people.

Young women's gang definitions then, are based on recognized gang names and inter-gang rivalries, symbolic systems, delinquent involvement, and recognition within the larger community, even though they sometimes contest these same definitions. Notably, they also glean some of their

knowledge about gangs from popular culture. As I will discuss below, some of the cultural transmission of gang knowledge comes from youths moving to Columbus from other cities, often taking leadership roles. In addition, a number of girls make direct reference to media imagery of gangs when I ask them questions about their own gangs.<sup>4</sup> When I ask Keisha about whether her set goes out looking for trouble (in reference to a comment she made earlier in the interview), her response switches from a description of her set to a description of a scene in the film *Menace II Society*:

Jody: So, you said that usually your set doesn't just go out looking for trouble?

Keisha: Right. We go out and have fun, but there's, uh, like in the movie *Menace II Society*, you know how like when, alright, you know when they, Kane got shot, he had that white t-shirt and they was like, "bitch I need" that thing, and they went to the emergency room? Like if something like that happened at a party, whoever did it, they gone. They gone. You know what I'm sayin'? Just, like, when Kane got that girl pregnant her cousin went and try to take care of him. But obviously, but, obviously, um, Kane got killed at the end because he fuckin' with the wrong woman. Kane wasn't all that hard, 'cause if he was, he wouldn't've let that happen. But, they did a drive-by on Kane, but

for the simple fact, the girl that he got pregnant told her cousin, her cousin got his ass whooped by Kane in front of his grandfather's house, that day he got put out. If somethin' like that happened, out, see ya.

Here Keisha is specifically describing a process by which she is learning how the gang should act based on what she viewed in a movie, and she is associating her own gang with the popular image of gangs, though she is unable to describe specific events in her own gang that are parallel.

In addition, young women have little sense of the history and origin of their own gangs. Their connection is to larger cities, or to gangs constructed in the media. When I ask Stephanie if she knows the history of her gang, she says she knows a little bit because the members have rented a movie from the video store and watched it over and over. In fact, as the following dialogue with Erica illustrates, these youths have very little actual knowledge of the origin and history of gangs in general:

Jody: Do you know how long [your gang]'s been around? Or like the history of it, how it got started?

Erica: No, but I can find out. I heard there's a movie out on it, how the gang originated, got formed.

Jody: You mean, like, the Folk gang?

Erica: No. Just gangs here, how they got formed.

Jody: Do you know the name of it? the movie?

Erica: Um. I think it's Panther, that's coming out now, Panther. They say that's s'posed to be the one that's the one that's talking about how gangs first got formed and how and why and stuff. It's just come out. I want to see it. It looks good, you know? Really good.

Jody: Yeah. So, do you know about your own set? how they started?

Erica: Nnhnn.

Jody: Or, how long they'd been around before you joined 'em?

Erica: Nnhnn.

Jody: Ok.

Young women seem more interested in their mythic connections to gangs in general rather than expressing particular interest in their own sets' histories. Even Monica, who is a core member of her gang and has been a member for three years, knows little about its history. When I ask her, she notes, "I don't even know. And that's, that's really embarrassing to sit here and tell you that I don't know about [it]." Though young women mention gang "lits" and "knowledge" as part of their gangs, the focus tends to be on a sweeping notion of "Gang" more than anything else.

Given these general characteristics of gangs in Columbus, what of the more specific character of these groups, given Columbus' particular history of gangs and socioeconomic context? Table 7-2 presents a number of

**Table 7-2 Gang Characteristics (n=20)**

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You can join before you are 13	14 (70.0%)
The gang has established leaders	20 (100.0%)
There are initiation rites or rituals	20 (100.0%)
The gang has a territory it claims as its own	15 (75.0%)
The gang has regular meetings	18 (90.0%)
The gang has specific rules or codes	19 (95.0%)
It has special colors, symbols, signs, clothes	19 (95.0%)
Gang members have specific roles	14 (70.0%)
There are roles for each age group	3 (15.0%)
There are specific roles for males and females	6 (30.0%)
The gang is involved in drug sales	16 (80.0%)

---

characteristics present in mixed-gender gangs in Columbus, as reported in the survey interviews. All of them have established leaders and specific initiation processes. Except for the Gangster Girlz, all of the sets also have colors, symbols and signs that represent their gang. Most report that their group has regular meetings, specific rules, have some form of territoriality, and that at least some members are involved in drug sales. While the majority also report that gang members have specific roles, these typically

do not involve subgroupings by gender or age; instead they are based on a hierarchy of ranks that members can move up based on the amount of "dirt" they do for the gang.

In the next chapters, these issues will be examined in greater detail based on information emerging from in-depth interviews. In the next section, I will describe the structures of Columbus gangs, including such characteristics as size, gender composition, age range, and territoriality. Next I will discuss leadership within Columbus gangs and their connections with other cities, then such issues as status, member qualifications and member rankings. Chapter eight will move to a description of the activities of these groups, including initiation rituals, rules and meetings, everyday activities, interaction with rival groups, and involvement in criminal endeavors. As I examine these topics, I will highlight the specific roles of young women in gang activities.

### GANG STRUCTURES

Recent research by Klein and Maxson (1996) has suggested five gang types in cities across the country, with compressed gangs representing the most common pattern.

According to these authors:

The Compressed gang is small--usually in the size range of up to fifty members--and has not formed subgroups. The age range is probably narrow--ten or fewer years between the younger and older members. The small size, absence of subgroups,

and narrow age range may reflect the newness of the group, in existence less than ten years and maybe for only a few years. Some of these Compressed gangs have become territorial, but many have not. (Klein and Maxson, 1996: 21)

Young women I interviewed in Columbus described gangs in ways that are in keeping with the characteristics of Compressed gangs. They are mostly small groups, with relatively narrow age ranges, without subgrouping, and with some territoriality. In terms of size, most of the gangs described by interviewees were groups of thirty or fewer members. Six girls (30 percent)<sup>5</sup> described their gangs as having less than twenty members; an additional eleven girls (55 percent) were in gangs with twenty to thirty members. Only three girls (15 percent) said their gangs had 45 to fifty members, and they reported spending most of their time with a smaller clique of gang friends. These numbers are in contrast to descriptions of gangs in new gang cities like St. Louis and Milwaukee. For example, Decker and Van Winkle note that gangs in St. Louis tend to have 200 or more members, and as a result, involve subgroupings. All of the gang members he interviewed were in gangs with subgroups.

Gangs in Columbus ranged in their gender composition. The vast majority were predominantly male, but the groups were mixed-gender. Six girls (30 percent) reported that females were one-fifth or fewer of the members of their set; eight girls (40 percent) were in sets in which females were



between a quarter and a third of the overall membership; four girls (20 percent) said females were between 44 and fifty percent of the members; one girl reported that her set was two-thirds female and one-third male; and of course the one member of the Gangster Girlz was in a gang that was all female. Girls were thus typically a minority within the group numerically, with eleven girls (55 percent) reporting that there were five or fewer girls in their set.

While most gang researchers have assumed that female members of gangs are in auxiliary subgroups of male gangs, the young women I spoke with described their gangs as integrated, mixed-gender gangs. This pattern is similar to that described by Decker and Van Winkle in St. Louis (1996: 82), and is an important challenge to past descriptions of female gang involvement. The reasons for this difference may be multiple. As noted in chapter two, researchers often fail to examine the structures of gangs that females belong to, focusing instead on the causes and meanings of female gang involvement (cf. Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995) or more recently their criminal involvement (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Fagan, 1990). It is likely that gangs that can be characterized as mixed-gender exist in other settings but simply have not been noted. In addition, because most ethnographic research on female gang members has examined Chicana and Latina groups,

there may be an ethnic component to gendered gang structures (cf. Campbell, 1984a; Harris, 1988; Moore, 1991; Quicker, 1983).

Of all the members of mixed-gender gangs I spoke with, only Diane described her gang as having a specific gender organization: "We're all together, but in a way we're split just because, 'cause we're ladies and they're the males. We're Lady Crips and they're the Crips."<sup>6</sup> All of the other girls I spoke with described no gender divisions in organization or title. While some spoke of gender differences in some activities, particularly participation in serious crime (see chapter eight), most clearly articulated a belief (even when they provided contradictory evidence in their descriptions of activities) that their gangs were gender egalitarian groups in which males and females were part of the same whole: they were treated the same and engaged in the same activities (see chapter nine for an analysis of gendered gang meanings). As Chantell notes again and again throughout our interview, "It's the same. It's all the same."

In keeping with Klein and Maxson's Compressed gang, most of the groups described by girls in Columbus had relatively narrow age ranges. Two thirds of respondents reported that the members of their sets are within ten years in age of one another, while only three describe a span of

fifteen to twenty years between members.<sup>7</sup> A slight majority of these gangs (52.4 percent, or eleven of 21) include members who are 21 or older, while the rest (47.6 percent) do not have members over age 20. Almost without exception, these groups were exclusively or primarily teenagers, with either one adult who was considered the OG (leader), or just a handful of young adults. In terms of lower age limits, six girls (28.6 percent) said that their set included members under the age of thirteen, while the majority (71.4 percent) did not; however, approximately two-thirds of the girls said that youths under age thirteen were permitted to join their sets (see Table 7-2). Though it is sketchy, this evidence suggests that many gangs in Columbus remain primarily adolescent groups, indicating that youths tend to mature out when they reach young adulthood. This is no longer the case in chronic gang cities, nor in emergent cities with serious economic problems (Hagedorn, 1988, 1994; Klein, 1995; Moore, 1991). Columbus' relative economic success and continued job growth provides more opportunities for young people.

The girls themselves typically joined at young ages. In fact, one third of them (seven) report having joined their sets between the ages of eleven and twelve. An additional ten (47.6 percent) joined between age thirteen and fourteen, and only four girls (19 percent) joined at age fifteen or

sixteen. As I mentioned in chapter six, young women typically join at young ages as a result of their association with older peers, particularly older teenage males, either in the neighborhood or in their families. Because girls' roles in the gang are less defined than males' around criminal activities, it appears there is sometimes less concern with their "qualifications" (ie. toughness, ability to fight), particularly when they are pre- or early adolescent. Angie's initiation (described in chapter six) is exemplary: she joined her set at age eleven when she started hanging out with a group in her neighborhood, and "they was like, 'oh you wanna be a gang member, you wanna be' and I was like, 'yeah! yeah! I wanna be one!'" It appears they initiated her at the time, not because they felt she would contribute to the gang, but more on a lark because she was a cute kid. Other researchers have noted that female gang members tend to be younger than males and mature out at earlier ages (Moore, 1991; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995). Most girls in Columbus clearly articulate a recognition that the gang is a transitional part of their lives, and typically suggest that they will discontinue their gang involvement when they get married and/or have children.<sup>8</sup>

Klein and Maxson report that Compressed gangs may or may not be territorial. In Columbus, there is some territoriality, such as when a particular gang includes

youths who are from the same neighborhood, but most gang members report a broader, more loose division of the city by sides of town (north side, east side, west side, south side). Only six girls report that the members of their set are mostly from the same neighborhood, and several of these report that their set claims this as its territory or 'hood. Cathy describes her set's territory as "like a, just mainly one street." Likewise, Brandi says that territories change according to "parts of the street." She elaborates, "If you walk down, like, one street wearing red then, then you end up fightin', it's like, one neighborhood's Folks' neighborhood then there's Slobs,<sup>9</sup> then there's Crips, stuff like that." Nine girls report that the members of their set are from different parts of the city, but all hang out together in a particular area. So while there is some territoriality among Columbus gangs, the boundaries are not as rigid as in some other cities: many of the gangs are not tied to particular neighborhoods, and tend instead to "just get around everywhere." Diane summarizes:

Some places it's where you live, that's your gang. Where you live at. What block you live in or whatever. But in Columbus, it ain't really about that. It's just whatever clique you with. You could live on the west side but your set could be on the east side. Or you could live on the east side and your set could be on the west side. It's, in Columbus, it's all based up in north side, east side, west side, or south side. You know? It's like, like how in New York it's, oh I live, I stand on this block or I stand on this block or I stand on this block. Here it's, I stay out east, I stay out west, I stay out south.

There is more territoriality reported in new gang cities such as Milwaukee and St. Louis, probably a result of both the context of gang emergence in each city and greater economic motivation among gang members. Hagedorn (1988) and Decker and Van Winkle (1996) each report that gangs emerged in the context of pre-existing rival groups, typically breakdancers. A lack of these rivalries at the time of gangs' emergence in Columbus has likely resulted in their lesser territoriality. In addition, given the economic contexts of Milwaukee and St. Louis, there appears to be more organized economic crime among gangs in these cities as compared to Columbus (see chapter eight). Economic motivations also contribute to territoriality among gangs (Padilla, 1992).

#### LEADERSHIP

As Table 7-2 shows, all of the girls say that their gang (or set) has established leadership. Each girl reports that the set has one leader, whom they call the OG. Leadership in gang sets in Columbus is almost exclusively male. While LaShawna reports that she is the leader of her set (which has a membership that is two thirds female), all of the other girls (except Jennifer from the Gangster Girlz) report that their OG is a male. In fact, several young women clarified that only males can be leaders. As Leslie says,

"there's only, the highest rank a girl can get is the Princess Disciple [see below for discussion of ranks]. You can't get no higher. There would be no girl leader." Six girls (four Folks, two Crips) do report that there is a high ranking female in their group, in some cases a separate female OG who is under the male OG. As Keisha describes:

There's this girl. She, uh, she up high, she's like second best. You know what I'm sayin'? You mean, you can like, if the leader's like gone somewhere, you go to her. I mean, she's like a vice president. You know, the president and vice president. She like that. But, she his peon and I'm her peon.

Two patterns emerged concerning the relationship of the OG to the group. Twelve girls report that the leader of their set is an adult (Sonita, Erica, Veronica, Leslie, Keisha, Angie, Monica, Diane, Cathy, Michelle, Kim and Jennifer) while nine have leaders who are under age 20 (Heather, Nikkie, Stephanie, Brandi, Lisa, LaShawna, Traci, Tamika and Chantell).<sup>10</sup> Among the girls in Folks sets, there were six adult OG's and four juveniles; among Crips there were three and three respectively; both girls in Bloods sets have adult leaders, as does the Gangster Girlz. Girls in sets with juvenile OG's report that their OG has that rank because "he's been in the gang for a long time" and/or because he's "got a high enough rank from doin' whatever he did to get that rank" [ie. dirt, crime] that he could start his own set.

Of the girls who report having an adult leader, only Monica is in a gang in which the majority of the members are not adolescents. She is sixteen years old and the youngest member of her set. The other girls are in groups that are primarily adolescent, with one or several adult members. This pattern is reflected in the leadership role some adult OG's take, which is supervisory in nature. For example, Erica is in a large Folks set with an OG who is 24 years old. She hangs out with a small group of adolescent gang friends, and they check in with their OG:

He's the leader, just like when we have meetings he's the one that does the meetings. We have to, or like, I don't know, but. But, uh, like when we take off and run from here [Rosemont], we go and see him. It's like, he's, I don't know, he's like our probation officer. We check in with him all the time, so he knows how we're doin' and all that he's doin'. And, like, if we're doin' somethin' wrong, out of the gang, that we know we're not supposed to, he'll check us for it.

It appears that the OG's leadership is accepted uncritically. Usually this is in part because he is an adult, and is perceived as particularly powerful or dangerous; in a few cases it is also because he is originally from a more hardcore gang city such as Chicago or Los Angeles. In terms of the former, Veronica describes her OG as follows: "He's just crazy, but we gotta listen to 'im. He's just the type that if you don't listen to 'im he gonna blow your head off. He's just crazy." Likewise, Keisha responds to the question "what is it about him that makes



people want to listen to him?":

I mean, that's the top. That's the top G. If you don't do it, he can shoot you. He can kill you. So, to defy him, you have some fear in your heart in a way. Like, if, if you was the leader and you told me to shoot this Slob and I didn't do it, I's like backin' down, I'm gettin' my ass kicked for the simple fact I'm disobeyin' you. And that's a no-no. I came close to doin' that. Talked back to 'im. Got slapped (laugh). Got slapped pretty hard, too. I never do that again . . . . Our leader, I'd say, he about 6'9", close to seven feet, I'm not gonna fuck with him. Don't nobody wanna fuck with him. That's the big dog. Can't hang with the big dog, you better stay your ass on the porch with the poodles. I know for the fact that I'm stayin' on the porch. I ain't comin' off the porch. When it comes to him, no, no, no, no. His hands is like twice [the size] of Shaq's.

Five of the young women I spoke with report having OG's who came to Columbus from other cities. LaShawna is herself from New York, and says she was a member of the Folks there; she began affiliating with Folks shortly after her arrival in Columbus and eventually started her own set.<sup>11</sup> Diane's OG is originally from Los Angeles, and started his own Crips set in Columbus. She says:

See I'm in the Gangster Crips and they broke off of Rolling 20s because the OG, K-Gun, he came from Los Angeles, he was a Rolling 20 . . . . Gangster C's is just a set broke off the Rolling 20s set and that's been around, Gangster Crips has been around since K-Gun came down here.

Cathy, who is a Blood, reports that her OG is from Chicago. Unlike K-Gun, he didn't start his own set, but joined a set when he arrived in Columbus and eventually became the leader. He gained status in the eyes of Columbus

youth because he was from a hardcore gang city. Cathy explains:

I mean he just came down here, and like the Bloods down here, he started hangin' out with people and it was like, he knew so much about it and talked to them so much, it was like everybody started lookin' up to him. And then when people wanted to get initiated they just went to him.

Sonita and Leslie, who are both members of Folks sets, each report that their OG is originally from Chicago. The following dialogue with Leslie is illustrative:

Leslie: Our gang was started up in Chicago. And, that's it.

Two, two, the guy, our leader had came back down from Chicago and started his set up north. And, then, it's just grown from there.

Jody: Like, what, the north end of Columbus?

Leslie: Yeah. The north, like, right off of High Street.

Jody: Ok. And so, the leader that you are referring to, would he be the leader of just of your set, or other sets?

Leslie: Yeah. He's just a leader of our set. The Governor is just our, the Governor is the leader of the set. Then, you have, like, the highest one, the highest one that we have, he doesn't live in Ohio. He lives in Chicago. And, he's the leader, like, of all sets.

Jody: And, does anybody have any contact with him?

Leslie: The leader of, that, like, of our set, has contact with him. But, we really don't know who it is. We

just know there is one. But, we don't know who it is.

In fact, the majority of girls in Folks sets that I spoke with articulate some sense of connection between their sets and Folks in Chicago.<sup>12</sup> Except for the two cases in which the Columbus OG is from Chicago originally and may maintain some contact with associates there, these cross-city connections appear to be rather ephemeral, more of a vague passed-down knowledge of the history of the Folks nation than direct connections to Folks in Chicago. For example, Sonita, Leslie and Lisa each make reference to Larry Hoover, one of the original leaders of the Folks who is currently in prison for murder; but only Lisa mentions him by name (as King Hoover), and she reports that he choked on a fishbone and is dead. In explaining that her OG is originally from Chicago, Sonita says, "that's where half of 'em are and that's where our OG came from, that's where we started to learn about the leader, why, he was in jail for I think murder or something like that, robbery or something."

These reported connections to other gang cities are very much in keeping with the descriptions of Hagedorn (1988), Huff (1989) and others, who report that rather than organized gang migration, individuals move to new cities and bring with them gang knowledge. They either start or join sets in the new city and receive respect by local youth because of their knowledge and connections (perceived or

real) with gang members in their old cities. Of gangs in emergent cities such as Milwaukee, Hagedorn summarizes that these groups "tend to follow big-city gang traditions, borrow ideas about big-city gang structure, and respond favorably to the image of big city gangs" (Hagedorn, 1988: 78), though "[t]he use of big-city names and symbols by local gangs indicates a process of cultural diffusion, rather than structural ties." This is the case in Columbus as well.

#### STATUS AMONG FEMALE MEMBERS

Given that nearly all of the girls are in gangs with male leaders, a corollary question is whether and how young women are able to achieve high status within the gang. As noted above, several girls mention that there is at least one high ranking female in their set, and most could describe those factors most likely to provide young women with status in the gang. Girls gain influence and status within their gangs in two ways: via their connections to influential males, and/or by being particularly hard and true to the set.

Six girls specifically note that high status females in the gang attain that status, at least in part, by their connections to high status males. Typically this is because they are either related to the OG or another high ranking male, or they are the girlfriend of the OG. Veronica says in her gang there's "kind of like the leader for the girls" who

is the OG's "sister or his cousin, one of 'em." In her set, the OG's girlfriend also has status, but she says "most of us just look up to our OG." Tamika describes receiving a great deal of recognition since joining the set that her brother is the OG of (her boyfriend is a member of the same set):

It seem like now I'm just highly respected by people. Like, I came up in here [detention center] and just because my brother, me and my boyfriend came in together, they just like, everybody was like, "What's up Mika." I mean, mass people walkin' by be like, "Ain't you Mika?" "Yeah, why?" They be like, "Aw, what's up? You cool in my book." You know.

Likewise, Monica believes that part of the reason she gets respect in her set is because of her brothers. I asked her, "do you think it [your being taken seriously] has something to do with your relationship with your brothers?"

Yeah. I think it has a lot to do because they just be puttin' the other girls off. Like Andrea, man. Oh my God, they dog Andrea so bad. They like "Bitch, go to the store." She like, "Alright I be right back." She will go to the store and go and get them whatever they want and come back with it. If she don't get it right they be like, "Why you do that bitch?" I mean, and one dude even smacked her. And, I mean, and, I don't, I told my brother once. I was like, "Man, it ain't even like that. If you ever see someone tryin' to disrespect me like that or hit me, if you do not hit them or at least say somethin' to them, I will tell my dad." I'll be threatenin' them with my dad all the time. I'll be like, "I'm gonna tell daddy on y'all." And they know I will. So my brothers, they kinda watch out for me and it's, I mean, they don't overprotect me but they make sure that if I need them then I got 'em. It's like that.

Monica is also respected because she is a serious

member: tough, willing to fight, and true (see chapter six). Eight girls specifically note that females receive status in the gang when they exhibit these types of characteristics. Heather describes the most influential female member as "the hardest girl, the one that don't take no crap, will stand up to anybody." Likewise, Traci says she's a "girl who's been in for a long time, [and] hasn't gotten beaten up or run from Bloods." Diane gives the most thorough description of the high status females in her set:

I think I have a influence in the set because my mind is so much on makin' money. See, I don't care about if you're a Blood or if you're a Crip. I mean, I know I'm a Crip. I'm over any Blood anyways. You respect me. You either bounce or you get bounced. You respect me or you gonna get messed up. That's how I see it. But my mind goes past that. My mind's all about money. Because I love money. I mean, I'm in here [detention] for money. I robbed a . . . store for [a large amount of money]. I love money. And people look up to me because I'm always, I've always got a way. "Oh, I found this lick. We're gonna do this." "This time we'll do this." People look like, Diane, you're only 15. Look at all this. I mean, my name is in the book of the Crips for doin' so much dirt. So I think, so I know people look up to me.

People look up to Janeen just 'cause she's so crazy. People just look up to her 'cause she don't care about nothin'. She don't even care about makin' money. Her, her thing is, "oh, you're a Slob? You're a Slob? You talkin' to me? You talkin' shit to me?" Pow, pow! And that's it. That's it. That's it. She don't care. But this, I'd say females, we don't even talk nothin'. When it comes down to fightin' or whatever, no more of that talk, it completely shuts up. It's all about the fists. It's all about doin' what you gotta do. We all learn that. We learn that from her. 'Cause that's how she was, see? I used to be, I used to be, I used to always run at the mouth. When I was gettin' ready to fight I'd say, "Aw,

bitch! Fuck, I'm gonna fuck you up." Then, boom boom. It's like, Diane, don't do that 'cause one day while you're talkin' all that shit, whoever's gonna come over and just fuck you up. When it comes down to fightin', you don't say nothin'. Someone say's somethin' to you, the only thing, "Who you talkin' to?" "Oh, I'm talkin' to you." "Alright." Pop, pop, pop! And that's it. That's it. So I think me and her be the most ones looked up to.

#### MEMBER QUALIFICATIONS AND RANKS

Many of the qualities the gang members look for, either when considering potential members or when raising the rank of fellow members, are the same for males and females, and parallel those discussed above concerning which girls have high status within the group. Here I will discuss the qualities girls report looking for in new members, the internal ranking systems within the gangs, and how gang members can raise their ranks.

On the question of determining who to let in the gang, a couple of themes emerge in the interviews. First, the potential member should be tough, willing and able to fight and to engage in criminal activities. Second, they should be loyal to the group, "down" for them, willing to put themselves at risk for the gang.<sup>13</sup> The following dialogue with Erica illustrates the desire for someone who is tough:

Jody: What do you look for in someone when you let them join the set? Like, what do you expect out of them?

Erica: That they're not a punk. And, that um, when

something goes down that they're there.

Jody: What do you mean by punk?

Erica: Well, they're not a scaredy cat. 'Cause, when you, when you join something like that, you might as well expect that there's gonna be fights. I mean, just a lot of stuff. And, if you're a punk, or if you're scared of stuff like that, then don't join.

Jody: Ok. So how do you know ahead of time?

Erica: Um. Actually, you can tell. Just like, the people, the Folks I hung around with before I got put in I fought all the time when I was with them. I mean, even when I wasn't in it, I fought all the time. I never backed down from anybody. I didn't care, either. So, they knew I wasn't gonna, you can mostly just tell. If you hang around with them before you're put in and they test you before you're put in, with things to see if you'll do it. And that was mostly what was with mine. I fought all the time when I was with them.

One measure of toughness is the ability of the potential member to get through the initiation, which typically involves either taking a set number of "blows" to the head and/or chest, or involves being beaten in by some of the gang members (see chapter eight). Heather describes the initiation as an important event for determining whether someone is "gang material":

When you get beat in if you don't fight back and



if you just like stop and you start cryin' or somethin' or beggin' 'em to stop and stuff like that, then, they ain't gonna, they'll just stop and they'll say that you're not gang material because you gotta be hard, gotta be able to fight, take punches, stuff like that. So, that's basically what they look for.

As noted above, a second element considered important by gang members is that the potential member be loyal to the gang, as Diane says, "they're gonna be down for theirs, they're gonna be ready to fight for theirs." The following dialogue with Cathy elaborates:

Jody: What do you look for in someone when they want to join the gang? Like what do you expect out of them?

Cathy: Um. To be true to our gang and to have our backs. I mean, we don't want nobody that's been out here, uh, wantin' to be a Crip or been, you know, false flaggin'<sup>14</sup> with Crips or somethin'. We don't want that.

Jody: Mmhmm. And what does it mean to be true to the gang?

Cathy: Like, uh, if you say you're a Blood, you be a Blood. You wear your rag even when you're by yourself. You know, don't let anybody intimidate you and be like, "Take that rag off." You know, "you better get with our set." Or something like that.

Jody: Ok. Anything else that being true to the set means?

Cathy: Um. Yeah, I mean, just, just, you know, I mean it's, you got a whole bunch of people comin' up in your face and if you're by yourself they ask you what's your

claimin', you tell 'em. Don't say "nothin'."

Jody: Even if it means getting beat up or something?

Cathy: Mmhmm.

In some cases, as Erica noted above, "they test you before you're put in" for qualities such as toughness, willingness to commit crime and loyalty. In the following dialogue, Lisa describes how her brother chooses to let someone join their set:

Jody: What do you look for in somebody that, you know, that you would let them in the gang?

Lisa: It's just, you know, if you, if you like, my brother, to choose someone to get into the gang, he'll go and he'll like um, have 'em go here and then he'll steal somethin' knowin' he'll get caught, he's gonna have the other person steal it or somethin' like that. He's gonna have 'em steal it and he's gonna be with 'em and he's gonna see if that boy would tell that my brother told him to steal this. And then that, or he'll have him go in a mall and steal a pair of shoes and run out the door or whatever. Or have 'em do really anything almost just to, he'll just test 'em. Like, um, or if they seen somebody, you know, comin' up wearin' the wrong color, he'll see if that boy's gonna help 'im beat them boys up. You know what I'm saying? He'll do pretty much like that.

Jody: So he's testing them. What's he looking for?

Lisa: Like how strong you are. If you will rat on somebody.

In addition to looking for these qualities in potential gang members, most of these gangs also have some form of internal ranking, with members at various levels, depending on the amount of time they have been in the gang, and the amount of "dirt" they have done in the gang (this is in many ways a measure of the application of those qualities described above).<sup>15</sup> Nearly all of the girls describe a relatively uncomplicated set of ranks that members can move up that includes a series of three to five ranks, usually including foot soldiers at the entry level, on up to OG.<sup>16</sup> For example, Lisa says, "there's like Foot Soldier One, Foot Soldier Two, Foot Soldier Three and then there's like, I think Chief Enforcer after that." Monica says, "like, we have a Governor and then on down. We got OG, Governor, and then, um, just regular gangsters, G's and all that shit." Leslie describes a similar set of ranks, but hers have more fanciful titles:

When you first enter the gang the guy is a Disciple, the girl is, like, the Disciple or Disciple Princess, somethin' like that. But, the second level is the guy will move up he's still a Disciple, but he's a Disciple Prince. Then the girl is a Disciple Princess. Then, when you move up to the third level it's just Prince and Princess. Then, the highest one you can get for a girl is a, the, it's changes around to Princess Disciple. Then, that's the highest for a girl. A Prince Disciple is like the one before the highest for a guy [the OG].

These ranking systems are part of gang culture and structure diffused from chronic to emerging gang cities that I discussed above. In terms of structure, they raise two issues: first, do the ranks involve role specialization; and second, what are the requirements for moving up the ranks? Almost uniformly, girls note that there are no special roles assigned to individuals according to their rank. Sonita says, "there ain't really no roles, there ain't no parts either, just everybody do everything." Likewise Angie says, "we all do the same thing," and Brandi says there are "not really different roles." Instead, rank comes from primarily from length of time in the gang (and the amount of knowledge that results) and from engaging in criminal endeavors, including economic crimes and fights with rivals. Monica says in her set, ranks are determined "just [by] the length of time you been in there." And Keisha says, "the longer you're in it, the higher you go." Most girls describe criminal acts (doing dirt) as the way to raise your rank. Lisa says you can raise your rank by "beatin' up somebody or somethin', or like fightin' a rival gang. Somethin' like that," and Chantell mentions car-jacking. Likewise, the following dialogue with Sonita highlights the same behaviors:

Sonita: It's like, steps you gotta do. First become a foot soldier, and that's just gettin' in, learnin' about it, then you become a G and that's when you know almost

everything about it. And you done did something to get your G or whatever, earn it. Then you become a OG.

Jody: What kind of things would you do to earn a G?

Sonita: Whatever they told you to do. Shoot at somebody, go beat somebody up, go steal a car, go do a whole bunch of stuff they tell you to do, anything they tell you to do you gotta do it. Without gettin' caught. Then, and that's it.

As these examples illustrate, girls are describing pretty ordinary forms of delinquent activities as means of raising ranks--they are not describing the types of sensationalized crimes (homicide, drive-by shootings) typically associated with gangs. In part this is because girls tend to be excluded from engaging in these types of crimes in Columbus gangs (see chapter eight), but this is also reflective of the nature of gangs in Columbus. Gangs are a fairly new phenomenon in Columbus, comprised primarily of adolescents with little or no generational dynamics, and do not involve complex organization. They tend not to be involved in economic crimes in any organized way, nor are they particularly violent. While girls are often excluded from these types of serious offenses when they do occur, they nevertheless appear to have knowledge of them. As such, their descriptions should be seen as indicative of the nature of gang activities and crime in Columbus.

This chapter has described some of the internal dynamics and structures of mixed-gender gangs in Columbus, painting part of the picture of the nature of gangs in the city. In chapter eight, I will continue with this discussion by describing many of the activities of Columbus gangs, including initiation rituals, rules and meetings, everyday activities, interaction with rival groups, and involvement in criminal endeavors.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Gangster Girlz is a pseudonym, as are all set names and gang monikers. I cannot explain why there are such a small number of Bloods in my sample. According to officers I spoke with in the Columbus Police Department, Bloods sets are a strong presence in Columbus, and my interviews with members of Bloods, Crips and Folks sets indicate that females are part of this presence.

<sup>2</sup> Flags are also called rags or scarves. As noted in chapter seven, they are bandannas worn to indicate gang affiliation.

<sup>3</sup> Throwing it up refers to throwing up gang signs; stacking is a more complicated form of throwing signs that involves the telling of a story.

<sup>4</sup> Decker and Van Winkle (1996: 88-89) report a similar transmission of gang culture through the media in St. Louis.

<sup>5</sup> These percentages are based on twenty cases. As I described in chapter four, one young woman was reclassified as a gang member after completion of the survey, and thus information gathered about the gang during the survey was unavailable.

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, Diane was a member of what I would characterize as one of the more organized gangs described to me, with a comparatively long history in Columbus (seven or eight years), and more sophisticated involvement in economic crimes than many other groups I learned about. Diane said her OG was originally from Los Angeles, where he had been a member of a Crips gang. It could be that he brought a particular notion of what the gender organization of his set should be based on the organization of his gang in Los Angeles.

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, this information is missing for four of the young women I spoke with, who either specified only that the oldest member was 21 or older, or in their twenties.

<sup>8</sup> Ironically, this contradict their statements in the survey that motherhood and marriage are unimportant.

<sup>9</sup> "Slobs" is a derogatory term for Bloods, Craps is derogatory for Crips, and Forks is derogatory for Folks.

<sup>10</sup> Veronica's OG is twenty, all of the other adult OG's were 21 or older.

<sup>11</sup> LaShawna has spent most of her adolescence moving around placement facilities. I can't say with certainty, but my sense is that her set is one that she has created while in placement, with much of the membership made up of girls whom she initiates while being held at the facility. She remains affiliated with the set she joined under in Columbus, but her own set appears to have rather loose boundaries. She even had Rachel, a non-gang member who is "tight" with LaShawna, help her initiate several girls into her set. One of the new initiates Rachel helped put into LaShawna's set had never actually fought before. Rachel says, "she's never been in a fight before but how she got jumped in. That was her first fight ever."

<sup>12</sup> Sonita and Leslie are both from Folks sets, and may in fact be in the same set; thus the OG from Chicago they each describe may be the same young man.

<sup>13</sup> While girls articulate that these qualities are important, it should be noted that there is evidence in many girls' comments that sometimes the qualifications are simply the desire to be a member. Angie's example of being allowed to join at age eleven without having been involved and Rachel's description of her friend who was initiated into LaShawna's set (see note eight) are two examples of this. Likewise, Lisa also notes that her brother's girlfriend, who is a member of her set, has never been in a fight before. This "lack" of qualifications may be unique to girls. At least one girl (Leslie) notes that "guys are more important to the gang than girls are" because they are involved in more crime, therefore it's harder for them to both join and get out of the gang, "'cause, I mean, you can always, you can always find a girl that'll be willing and easier to join the gang."

<sup>14</sup> False flagging is when an individual claims to be a gang member when are not. This is not the same as affiliating with or "claiming" a set, which is a practice gang members accept. False flagging is looked down upon because it means the individual has lied about participating in an initiation.

<sup>15</sup> The Gangster Girlz does not have ranks. There is an OG, who founded the gang, and otherwise all of the members engage in the same activities. Like the mixed-gender gangs, the qualities Jennifer reports they expect of members include being true and willing to fight.

<sup>16</sup> Only Diane describes a more complicated series of ranks that includes nine for the females and ten for the males. She is also the only girl to suggest that each rank has a



particular criminal specialization. She says, "everybody's rank is different. Everybody's rank has a, has somethin' to do. Like my rank, I'm Governor. I'm, my position is to go out and I find licks [robbery targets]. I keep the money. I like, money, like when we sell drugs we keep our own money. But I keep track of like, like who, like who's doin' what. Again, this more complex pattern of organization is likely a result of particular knowledge her OG brought with him from Los Angeles.

## VIII. GANG ACTIVITIES, RIVALRIES AND CRIME

Gang members in Columbus engage in a number of activities, reflective of the fact that they are part of a group that is adolescent in makeup, has a group identity, and is oriented around both inter-group rivalries and crime. In this chapter, I will discuss the everyday activities of gang members, highlighting the place of initiation rituals, inter-gang rivalries, delinquency, and non-criminal behaviors, in order to illustrate the range of activities that gangs and gang members in Columbus engage in. I will make note of the significance of gender in these activities where it emerges as a theme.

### INITIATIONS

First and foremost, gangs are groups of adolescents who are seeking recognition, acceptance and companionship among their peers. Initiation into the gang is an important rite of passage for gang members, as they move from affiliation with their group to full membership and participation. The initiate's willingness to subject herself to an assault at the hands of their initiators signals her induction into the group, which promises her love, respect, and acceptance. As

Diane explains, "if you can take a beat down from us, we're gonna take care of you and we're gonna love you forever."

Young women describe several forms of initiation rituals. The majority of girls (thirteen) report receiving a series of punches (five for Bloods, six for Crips and Folks)<sup>1</sup>, to the head, chest or both. This is by far the most common pattern, though there is variation in how it occurs. Cathy and Lisa were initiated via a series of punches, and both walked through a line of gang members to receive them. Cathy describes: "It was like, five was on this side and five was on this side. I walked through the middle and got hit five times in the head and then got another rag at the end."<sup>2</sup> Most girls who were initiated this way describe being prostrate when they receive their punches. As Veronica describes, "you take six blows to your head and your chest. You get down with your left knee of the ground and you throw up your Folks sign." Leslie describes a similar initiation:

I had to be punched in the chest by this girl, by my friend that was there. She punched me in my chest six times. And I had to put the Folks sign up and then I had to say, "Folks live forever" four times. The whole time she was punching me in my chest. And, I, if you fell you couldn't be one. And then if you, if you got up off, 'cause you have to be down on one knee and one knee in the air, and, if somethin' else, like if you would fall or somethin' or start cryin' or somethin' they would say, "well, you can't be in it 'cause you're not strong enough."

Five girls report being jumped or beaten into their gangs, a situation that required them to fight multiple gang

members for a set period of time (one or several minutes).

Heather describes being beaten in by several male members of her set:

There's like a bunch of people around and then, see, one comes in and you start fighting with that one then you fight with that one for about two minutes and then another one comes in and you fight 'em both for a while and then they just gradually pull a bunch of 'em in and then all the sudden you're gettin' your butt beat (laugh). . . . I cried a little bit, but I didn't show it 'cause I was cussin' at 'em. I was mad at 'em. I was like, "I can't believe you guys beat me up. I hate you guys." (laugh) They's like, "well you wanted to be in the gang." I was like, "you're not supposed to be hittin' me that hard." (laugh) 'Cause I was beat up real bad. I had a black eye and some bruises all over me, and these red marks around, kick red marks all over my head and stuff. I was so mad. I was crying. I was like, "I hate all you guys." They was like, "you want to fight again?" I was like, "yeah, what's up." I was mad.

Tamika was also jumped in by male gang members, but she reports that the males didn't really fight hard: "they was just like, they was taggin' me. It hurted, but you know, it really didn't hurt." Diane was jumped in by three girls:

I got beat in for sixty seconds and it just, it . . . was out in a field behind this little backyard. It was like, "You ready, you ready?" I was like, "Yeah, I'm ready." I was like, "Do I get to fight back?" They was like, "Do what you gotta do." I don't wanna get beat down regardless. So I just, so what happened was they just started throwin' their punches. And I didn't cry at all. I'm surprised I didn't cry but after sixty seconds I was down on the ground, just like, "ooh, ooh." And then when I got up they was like, "Oh, give me some love. Give me some love." And then they all gave me a hug and then I got down on my right knee and they, they put my flag over my right shoulder and they blessed me, with the flag, they blessed me into their set. Blessing means

they say a prayer over you. You gotta repeat the prayer and that's what happened.

After the initiation, Keisha and Kim both report going out with gang members to commit a crime, as a test "to see how hard" they were.<sup>3</sup> Kim robbed somebody, while Keisha "shot up [a] school building [and] set some woods on fire." Other girls report having a party to celebrate or just hanging out together with other members after the initiation. Monica says, "they had the biggest party for me after we got done. I was sittin' up there sore as hell but they had the biggest party." Traci says:

I was happy. I was laughin' and stuff. And my friends, they started huggin' me and everything, givin' me love with my right hand and everything. I was like, "Thank you." And then I just left, we went, they drove me to the, um, crib, and then I washed up, put on my clothes and everything and then we just went back out. And then I had, they brought me to, um, Woolworth to get me a blue scarf and then that's it. A blue and white scarf and then we just started walkin', drivin', we just was chillin' for the rest of the night.

One of the stereotypes of female gang member initiations is that rather than a physical confrontation, they involve sexual intercourse with a series of male gang members. The young women I spoke with were both disturbed by and resistant to these and other sexual connotations placed on them as female members of gangs, and held very derogatory opinions of young women who fit these descriptions. Monica explains:

They be showin' these little movies on TV, like, well, the females have to get sexed in and the

males have to get jumped in and like that. You know, you seen 'em on TV. And they, they just figure, well, if you a girl gang member then you got sexed in. And I, I really didn't. I wasn't even down for nothin' like that.

None of the young women report having been sexed into their gangs, and they articulate strong feelings about what it means to be sexed in, describing girls who were sexed in as 'other' than themselves. All of them say it is possible to get sexed into gangs, and most say this is an option even within their own set (typically it involves having sex with either all or most male members of the set), however, I was told consistently that girls who are sexed into their gangs are not respected. This is both because they are perceived as sexually promiscuous and because they were not strong enough to go through a physical initiation (these themes will be explored in greater detail in chapter nine).

An interesting contrast to the initiations described here is provided by Hagedorn (1988), who notes that the majority of the gang members he interviewed described informal entree into their gangs, rather than structured initiations like those described by young women in Columbus. However, Decker and Van Winkle's gangs in St. Louis report the same types of initiation rites described in Columbus, including being beaten in, taking blows, committing a crime, and for females, being sexed in (1996: 69-72). Like the young women in Columbus, none of the females they interviewed

in St. Louis reported having been sexed in.

#### EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES

The everyday activities of gang members are much like those of non-gang adolescents, though a more extreme version of 'ordinary' adolescent behaviors. While gang members do engage in criminal activities together (see below), most of their time is spent hanging out at someone's house or around the neighborhood, talking and laughing, playing games, listening to music or watching television, along with drinking and smoking marijuana. This seems to be a common pattern, across contexts, among gangs in chronic and emergent cities. The primary activities of gang members are either non-criminal, or non-serious forms of delinquency (Hagedorn, 1988: 94; Klein, 1995). When I asked young women to describe a typical day with their gang friends, their responses were nearly uniform. Brandi says:

A typical day would be sittin' back at the park or somethin' like that or one of our friend's houses, or a gang member's house, gettin' drunk, gettin' high and, you know, watchin' TV, listenin' to the radio. Actually, we listen to tapes and stuff, stackin' and all this stuff.

And Veronica says:

Most of the time is on a weekend, like a Friday or a Saturday. Um. We just be, like, when we was over at my cousin's house, we just be sittin' there watching TV, everybody puttin' in money, orderin' pizzas and stuff. Just listen to music, dancin'. They be sittin' around playin' with guns, drinkin' and stuff, smokin' weed. That's really, that's all. Crackin' on people (laugh).

Nikkie describes a similar scenario:

We just, it's just like we got a, our OG, he got a house and his girlfriend live with him, and we all be over there playin' video games and stuff. We just be havin' fun. And sometimes we go to the movies, sometimes we steal cars, um, we don't do nothin' else really.

As does Monica:

Play cards, smoke bud,<sup>4</sup> play dominos, play video games. That's basically all we do is play. It's a, you would be surprised. This is a bunch of big kids. It's a bunch of big old kids in my set. They will fight over a Nintendo game in a minute. They, I mean, they will seriously go out into the front yard and go to blows over a Nintendo game. They just big ol' kids. We just have fun playin' around and stuff like that but when it come time to get down to business, you gotta get down to business.

For Monica and Diane, getting "down to business" means involvement in planned criminal activities such as drug sales in Monica's case, and drug sales and property crimes in Diane's case. Most of the young women report much less organized involvement in crime though. For them, it tends to be sporadic, unplanned, and happened upon rather than specifically intended. There is some fighting involved in everyday activities, particularly when gang members walk around the neighborhood, but it isn't necessarily rival gang members they are fighting. Erica says she and her friends walk around the neighborhood "pick[ing] on people," and "beating people up." She explains: "if somebody's bored and they have nothin' to do, then they'll start a fight."



Likewise, Traci says she and the other members of her set "go out and look for trouble, like go out and look for fights and stuff, start trouble and stuff." Veronica says sometimes they fight "with people that's not even in gangs" that "mess with" them while they're hanging around on the streets.

Most of the gang members report that the gang has meetings, once a week or once or twice a month, but they see one another much more regularly. The meetings are usually planned ahead of time, and held in the same location, for instance a park, parking lot, or someone's house. For example, Erica says her set has meetings "mostly every Friday night," and the meetings are always at the same place, which she describes as "a closed off area." Sonita's set has meetings once a month, either "at a school in they field or at somebody's house in they yard." She says "the OG'd go around tellin' everybody so they won't miss it."

The meetings are usually to take care of "business," which typically involves discussing what is going on with rival gangs. Heather explains:

They say, like, you know, they'll say like "some slobs have been doin' this," you know "we need to get a couple people to take care of that problem," or you know what I'm saying, it's more like a business meeting really. It really is. And then, they just, everyone just talks about what's been going on and, you know, things that need to be taken care of, and that's about it.

Likewise, Diane says her set has meetings twice a week, usually at a member's house:

Everybody brings bud. The forties. Sit there and get fucked up, talk about what we're gonna do, what we plan on doin' for the next week, how we're gonna make money, who's tryin' to trip, who, who is after us, who we're after and it's just set up.

Monica says the members of her set see one another often enough that they only have meetings on special occasions, when "you all gotta sit down and discuss something for real like discuss puttin' somebody else down or something like that." When something like that comes up, they usually meet at "somebody's house, closest house to where you at or whatever." Almost all of the girls report seeing one another on a daily or near daily basis. Twelve report getting together with members of their gang every day, four say they see one another three or four times a week, and two get together with members one or two times a week.<sup>5</sup>

Ten young women (Angie, Veronica, Lisa, Leslie, Keisha, Traci, Tamika, Kim, LaShawna and Stephanie) have a boyfriend who is in their set, though only Stephanie describes her boyfriend as a primary reason she joined. In terms of dating, most girls downplay this as a significant element of their gang interactions. They resist talking about dating, again most likely a form of resistance to being categorized as sexual objects within the gang (see chapter nine for further discussion of this issue). In fact five girls (Heather, Erica, Cathy, Nikkie and Chantell) say that members of their set do not go out with one another. Heather says

they are "all buddies," and Erica says they "just have that friendship relationship and nothing crosses that." Cathy explains, "I mean sometimes it would happen but very rarely. I mean, just because they're more cool with each other and you know, more like brothers and sisters than boyfriend and girlfriend." Often girls go out with guys who are in other sets of the same gang, or guys who are not in gangs.

The girls who report that there is some dating within their gang describe it as an inevitable result of spending time together. Lisa says, "most of the time it works out that way . . . because you're all the time around them and it just, it just happens." Diane says:

It just works like, say you's a guy, saw a girl. Like say he was in my set, you like me and I like you, why not? We're both Crips. Why not go, go for it. Now, if if you like me and, now just say you is a guy. If you like me and I didn't like you, then hopefully I would be woman to say, well, look, you're my cousin and I just wanna keep it like this. Just as you bein' my cousin.

Most girls downplay any tension that might arise as a result of dating relationships and break-ups, but a few allude to this problem. Stephanie says that while girls in her set go out with guys from the same set, "all they do is just play them. I know their boyfriends play them hard. They be goin' out having sex with every girl." Nikkie says members can get a violation<sup>6</sup> for playing another member. "If you go with 'em and you play 'em or somethin', they'll like, you will get in trouble for it. You can't go with somebody

and play 'em. They'll like, they'll hit you on your head like five times." Keisha had a boyfriend in the gang whom another female gang member had sex with. She describes the nature of her relationship with the girl now:

We ain't cool no more. For the simple fact she did it to my boyfriend, and, know what I'm sayin'? We still, we in the gang, I got love for her but, as far as verbally talkin' to her, no. We have nothin' to say to each other.

Because they are members of the same set, Keisha has to maintain some civility toward the young woman who slept with her boyfriend. One of the rules the majority of girls describe is that they are required to get along with one another. LaShawna says "you're not supposed to fight one another," but it happens:

Sometimes they beef and everything and then they just squash it. Like forget about it, or they make up. Whatever, show each other love. Regardless, if they get into a scrap though, and one of us is there that's over them, we make 'em show 'em love anyway. Just tell 'em to squash it and if they don't they get a violation.

Additional rules mentioned by young women include the following: they are supposed to attend scheduled meetings, and may get a violation for missing them; they are not allowed to date members of rival gangs; they are supposed to be true to the gang, and not back down when confronted by rivals; gang business and knowledge is supposed to be kept within the gang; and there are rules against using crack cocaine, even though some members sell it. In fact, most

young women have strong feelings against smoking crack, because they see the effects of the drug around them. Keisha says, "that's just not allowed. I mean, that's like disrespectin' yourself and your members. You gonna smoke crack you might as well just go, go ahead and join the Slobs." The rules described above are common across gangs, as they are mentioned by numerous girls from different sets. The typical consequence for breaking a rule is a violation, though in the case of cross-gang dating, the individual may be beaten out of the gang. Both Brandi and Diane describe incidents in their sets where this occurred.

It appears once again that these rules are adaptations of what Columbus gang youth believe to be more universal gang rules. In the course of conversation, they provide evidence of the transgression of these rules, even as they insist on their importance. Decker and Van Winkle note the existence of informal rules such as these in St. Louis, which they describe as "evolv[ing] out of practice, lore, or common sense." Gang members in Columbus have quite effectively picked up pieces of gang knowledge from other cities and/or from media imagery, though it remains fragmented, and their application inconsistent.

### INTER-GANG RIVALRIES

Crips and Folks are aligned with one another in Columbus, typically referring to one another as "cousins." Thus, both consider Bloods their rivals. Vice Lords are also rivals of Folks, but they are not a visible presence in Columbus. Cultural influences shaping Milwaukee gangs are clearly those of Chicago, with most groups aligned with either the People or Folks nations; in St. Louis, the predominant cultural influence is Los Angeles style Crips and Bloods. Columbus gangs and gang rivalries reflect an interesting mix of influence from both Chicago and Los Angeles. As noted in chapter seven, a number of young women draw the connection between their gangs and those in Chicago (mostly but not exclusively members of Folks sets), typically because they know or know of someone from Chicago who is gang-involved in Columbus. Except for Diane's OG K-Gun, information about Crips and Bloods appears to be gained more from media imagery of Los Angeles gangs, rather than contact with individuals with actual knowledge or experience with gangs in the city.

One element of gang life involves spending time and energy challenging and fighting with rival gangs; this message is a central theme of the cultural imagery of gangs that youths adopt.<sup>7</sup> The young women I interviewed describe gang confrontations as likely to occur in places such as the

mall, skating rink, on the streets, in school, and in facilities like the detention center and Rosemont. Though serious gang violence does occur in Columbus, it is far from the norm; confrontations typically are either avoided or involve derogatory talk and physical fights. Sonita says members of her set "don't go nowhere by the Bloods area 'cause that's the one they get in a fight with and all that."

And Cathy says if a Crip or Folk came into her neighborhood, "we would harass 'em, yell at 'em. And then if they started runnin' their mouth probably beat 'em up." The following conversation with Erica is also illustrative of the nature of gang rivalries in Columbus:

Erica: Just the other day, we saw a, um, a group of Bloods walkin' around. Only reason why we knew, for one, they had a rag on. And, for two, they were just all in red in this one group, walkin' around. We just knew it (laugh).

Jody: So what did you do?

Erica: We couldn't do anything. We were in a van. I'm sure if we were out in the streets there would have been a fight 'cause we were wearing blue rags and here they are wearing red. And, I could see us walking, right on the same street, by the crosswalk. That wouldn't go too well.

On an everyday basis, then, gang rivalries in Columbus

are not particularly violent. This distinguishes Columbus from chronic gang cities, as well as other emergent gang cities such as Milwaukee and St. Louis, where gang violence is more prevalent (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Hagedorn, 1988; Klein, 1995). In the example described above, Erica and her friends did not pull out guns and shoot at the Bloods they saw, neither did they park the van, jump out and start an altercation. Instead they drove by, and probably engaged in bravado among themselves about what would have happened to those Bloods if they had been walking down the street instead of "stuck" in their van.

Fights in Columbus are usually the result of symbolic confrontations, rather than ongoing "warfare" and retaliations. These motives, and specifically the lack of ongoing retaliatory fighting, also tend to distinguish Columbus gangs from those in different types of gang cities. Gang members announce their gang identity through the use of symbolism--most often colors, flags and hand signs. Traci says, "it seems like everything I do be blue. When I get my hair done I get blue stuff in it and everything." LaShawna explains, "I don't like the color dred [red]. I just wear black all the time." And Tamika says:

Like we'll go to the mall and I'll have on my blue khakis outfit, my blue rag, you know, my pager and everything and everybody be like, "Dag!" 'Cause my pager is blue. Everybody be like, "Dag!" My shoes is blue. My outfit is blue. They be like, "Dag, dag, she blued out!"



As I mentioned above, encounters with rival gangs are likely to occur in the types of places where adolescents congregate--school, the mall, the detention center. Heather explains, "you can just be in the mall, and somebody can, you know, just mostly be throwin' up their signs and, you see somebody throwin' up their Blood sign then you'll throw up your Folk sign." At the detention center, Lisa says, "staff can't watch you 24-7 so you know, we be goin', and in the windows you can tell the boys be throwin' up Bloods or whatever, we be throwin' up BK [Blood Killer]." Monica describes a typical interaction she had with a rival gang member at her school: One time I got this girl, oh man, this girl was in the bathroom and I was writin' BK all over the bathroom and she came in the bathroom. She was like, "What you writin' BK for? Are you a Crip or somethin'?" I was like, "Yeah. I'm a Crip. Fuck them Slobs." And she was, she was like, "Whatever." Then the next day I saw her comin' into the school sportin' a red rag.

Again, it is telling that the two young women were not involved in a violent altercation at the time, instead the young woman from the Bloods set chose to avoid a direct confrontation, and challenge Monica in a less threatening way. Likewise, Nikkie says when members of her gang see rivals, "they'd fight 'em but they wouldn't try to kill 'em because they got on some flu [blue] or they stackin' in they

face, but they will fight 'em."

This is not to suggest that serious gang violence (including gang-related homicides) does not occur in Columbus, but to show that it is not part of most of the young women's mindset. A few of the girls I spoke with had been involved in serious assaults on rival gang members, and one admitted to having killed a rival gang member in Columbus; but they were by far the exception. This is probably gender-related, but it is also related to the nature of gangs in Columbus: for the most part they have not evolved into extremely violent groups.

In terms of gender, a number of girls point out that they feel the males tend to be more hardcore when it comes to gang rivalries, are more likely to resort to violence and exclude girls from participating (see below), and to leave confrontations with rival female gang members to the females in their own gang. Diane says that male gang members "don't wanna go waste their time hittin' on some little girls. They're gonna go get their little cats to go get 'em." And Lisa remarks:

Girls don't face much violence as [guys]. They see a girl, they say "we'll just smack her and send her on." They see a guy. 'Cause guys are like a lot more into it than girls are. I've noticed that. And they like, well, "we'll shoot him."

The dynamics of gender within gang rivalries can work both ways, however. While girls may be shielded from some

serious violence, they also face the particular danger of being raped. Again, this is a topic most girls are resistant to talking about because of the victimization it implies, but it does come up on occasion. One young woman describes having helped beat up a rival female gang member and then watching while the males in her set brutally gang-raped the girl. Nikkie has a friend who was raped by a rival gang member; Sonita and Keisha were both raped by gang members-- Sonita by a young man in her set, and Keisha by a group of Bloods (more on these issues in chapter nine).

About the nature of Columbus, many young women are aware that they live in a city with much less gang violence than in other places, but some also express concern that it is becoming more violent. Monica says, "Columbus is small time compared to like Cleveland and Cincinnati and all that. We, we is small time." And Diane says:

To me, Columbus is very weak. 'Cause there's this, so many fakes out there . . . . There's a lot of that going around in Columbus, with people, they say, "Ok. I'm a Crip. And this is my, these are my six friends right here so we're all gonna fight and beat each other in and now we're Crips."

Sonita compares Columbus to Chicago, where she says there's a great deal more "fighting every day, shooting every day." She explains, "now down here it's startin' to get like that, it's startin' to get worse like that. But it really ain't because now everybody tryin' to stay to theyself." Veronica says the increase in violence has changed her own

patterns of behavior: "I think it's dumb they have to use weapons and everything. I like to fist fight. But, I always gotta carry somethin' because if somebody pulls somethin' out on me, I'm gonna be ready." So while Columbus gang rivalries have not been particularly violent in the past, there are some early warning signs that gang violence may escalate.

#### CRIMINAL INVOLVEMENT

Table 8-1 shows the results of survey responses regarding the criminal involvement of gang members and female members in particular. Girls were first asked whether members of their gang engaged in a number of illegal activities, then were asked specifically whether female members engaged in these activities.<sup>8</sup> Girls report slightly more male than female involvement in most crimes, though they report that girls are more likely to steal things worth less than fifty dollars. The two crimes with the largest reported difference between males and females are stealing things worth more than fifty dollars and robbing people. As Traci noted, "girls don't rob people like the guys do. They rob every day, they steal cars, they do stuff like that. Only thing girls do really mostly is smoke bud." In all, nine young women (45 percent) gave identical responses for the categories "members" and "female members." As noted in chapter seven, many young women are firm on the point that

the gang involves equals who participate in the same activities, regardless of gender or any other social category. Chantell comments, "it's the same set, so why should we do different things?" And as Table 8-1 illustrates, gang members engage in a wide range of criminal activities, including property crimes, violent crimes, and drug sales.

**Table 8-1 Gang Delinquency (n=20)**

Illegal Activities	Members	Females
Steal things worth less than \$50	6 (30%)	9 (45%)
Steal things worth more than \$50	16 (80%)	11 (55%)
Go joyriding in stolen vehicles	18 (90%)	17 (85%)
Damage or destroy things	13 (65%)	11 (55%)
Intimidate or threaten people	13 (65%)	13 (65%)
Rob people	14 (70%)	10 (52.6%)*
Attack others with the intent to seriously hurt them	12 (60%)	11 (55%)
Sell marijuana	18 (90%)	16 (80%)
Sell other drugs	14 (70%)	12 (60%)

\*n=19, one missing case

There are two points I hope to make regarding gang members' criminal activities. First is that much of their crime is not organized or planned, but tends to be happened upon as they hang around the neighborhood, bored, looking for something to do. I have noted this above in the discussion of gang rivalries, and it is equally true of other crimes. Veronica's comments are illustrative:

When I was leavin' outta here [running from Rosemont] to go over to my cousin's house all the time and everyday my OG would be over there. And, it just seemed like we always had been, it just seemed like every day that I was over there we'd get in a fight with somebody or somethin'. So. Somebody end up gettin' stabbed or cut or somethin' or some of the boys be out startin' trouble with people. Sit there and robbin' people for no, just to be doin' it, just doin' little stupid stuff. That's, they have jacked the Pizza man. They had stolen the car. They took a cab over to my cousin's house and didn't pay for it. Just let somebody else pay for it. I don't know who paid for it. And then, some of the girls, like, some of the girls that ain't in, but they just hang around us, they, uh, they stole the car. And one of 'em went to jail for it. It was just bein' stupid. One of them jacked this girl for a dollar. I was like, "y'all are so stupid."

This tends to be the nature of gang crime in general, though it is also situational to a city like Columbus. Research suggests that much gang crime tends to be of this happened-upon variety (Klein, 1995). The difference distinguishing a city like Columbus, which is both a new gang city and one in which gangs have thus far remained primarily a loosely structured adolescent phenomenon, is that those forms of serious crime often associated with the image of

gangs--drive-by shootings, serious inter-gang violence, and drug sales--appear to be even less typical than in both chronic cities and emergent cities heavily affected by deindustrialization and population loss. Gang members in Columbus tend to be young, less socially isolated in large communities with high rates of criminal activities, and are less economically motivated in their crime than those described in other cities. In addition, as I noted previously, because Columbus gangs did not evolve out of pre-existing rival groups, the levels of inter-gang violence seem to be smaller than in other cities.

The second point is that, despite many young women's insistence that they are equally involved in the gang, there appear to be two consistent patterns, one in which males exclude females from participation in certain types of crimes, and another in which females tend to exclude themselves from serious criminal endeavors. There are definite exceptions to this pattern; based on their self-reported delinquency and discussions during the in-depth interviews, I would estimate that about a fifth of the girls I spoke with are involved in serious gang crime. This means that four fifths tend not to be.

During the survey, when I asked young women if female members of the gang do things when male members aren't around, only one young woman mentioned involvement in crime

(robbing people). However, when I asked what males do when female members aren't around, eight mentioned involvement in crime, including several mentions of drug sales and drive-by's. Comments in the in-depth interviews provide further support that young women tend to be excluded from these types of crimes. LaShawna explains, "we don't really let the females [sell drugs] unless they really wanna and they know how to do it and not to get caught and everything." Keisha says, "I'm the only girl that's in it that is sellin'." Monica is one of two young women in her gang that sells drugs, and she says this is because the other young women do not want to. "They're like, 'No, I ain't gonna do it.' Like, 'I'm scared I'm gonna get caught.'" Erica elaborates:

It's mostly the guys that does all the selling and the, uh, buying. And, um, with us, as far as females when it goes to selling, we're always supposed to have a male with us. Always. Or, at least two or three males with us all the time. That way, we can't be robbed or anything. Or, if somethin' was to go down, we would always have somebody there with us, instead of by ourselves.

Young women also report that they are usually excluded from drive-by's when they occur. The following dialogue with Veronica is illustrative:

Veronica: They [male members] went to go do a drive-by on, um, all of them [people they had fought with]. They wouldn't let us [females] go. But, we wanted to go, but they wouldn't let us.

Jody: What'd they say?



Veronica: They was like, all of y'all stay here in the house just in case some of, some of 'em try to come down here, y'all have you all's gats<sup>9</sup> and stuff ready so if they come down here and try to shoot up the house, y'all be in the house and y'all can call the police and everything and y'all can get away. They'd be the ones to get caught, so.

Jody: Why do you think they--

Veronica: So we won't go to jail if they was to get caught. Or, if one of 'em was to get shot, they wouldn't want it to happen to us.

This story and numerous others indicate that young women are systematically excluded from participating in some crimes. Sometimes the guise for this is protectiveness. Sonita says, "if they wanna do somethin' bad and they think one of the females gonna get hurt they don't let 'em do it with them . . . . Like if they involved with shooting or whatever, [girls] can't go." Likewise, LaShawna says, "we don't want our females to get hurt, you know? And boys is, they just crazy and everything." When I point out that she is actively involved in more serious crime, she explains:

Yeah, I do a lot of stuff 'cause I'm tough. I likes, I likes messin' with boys. I fight boys. Girls ain't nothin' to me. I just knock them out, it's just a thang. That's the way I was raised. Don't let no nigger put hands on you . . . . I got, I got a couple a girls in there that's tough like me so we roll a lot. We roll a lot. But I still have to look out for 'em.

Other times, girls are excluded because they are perceived as not as capable--a circumstance that young women find frustrating. Chantell says "they [rival gang members] think that you're more of a punk, or that there's a hole in you . . . that they can go right through you. That you just another punk." The following dialogue with Brandi illustrates this pattern within the gang:

Jody: Is there anything about the gang you dislike?

Brandi: Not really. Sometimes I dislike that the boys, sometimes, always gotta take charge and they think, sometimes, that the girls don't know how to take charge 'cause we're like girls, we're females and, like that.

Jody: Can you describe something like that? Like, what happens?

Brandi: Like, a guy'll say, like, they're going to have, like, a shoot-out, sometimes they'll say, the guy'll, I'll be, the girl'll be like sayin' "well, this is what we'll do" then a guy will take charge, "well, you're a girl, you don't know nothin' about that," then, like, we'll get really offended and stuff. But, he's just playin', he says he's just playin' around or somethin'.

Jody: And so, do you ever get to take charge, do you fight to--

Brandi: No, not really. We just let him go ahead and, 'cause he's been in longer, he knows more about it and

he's been through more stuff than we have.

These findings parallel those of Bowker et al. (1980), who note that young men in gangs report excluding girls from serious crime, both under the guise of "protecting" them from danger, and because they perceive girls as untrustworthy. Each of these themes also emerge when young women talk about gender, and gender dynamics within gangs (see chapter nine). Many young women also perceive girls as both "weak" and generally untrustworthy, and thus support their exclusion from certain activities.

Young women also report that they exclude themselves from serious criminal involvement, as a number of them express some ambivalence about these aspects of gang life.

Angie explains:

I don't be gettin' involved, no I don't get involved like that. Be out there goin' and just beat up people like that or go stealin', things like that. That's not me. The boys, mostly the boys do all that, the girls we just sit back and chill, you know.

Likewise, Stephanie says that she dislikes the criminal aspects of the gang: "violence, stealing, I don't like a lot of it." when I ask why she's in the gang given this ambivalence, she says, "'Cause I want to. I don't go rob and steal. I stay at home or I watch out. And I don't get nothing out of robbin' and stealin'." Lisa comments:

I don't think most the girls would go out there and kill somebody. It just depends on how crazy you are and how much you hate that person. But I don't really think, I don't think they would do as

much as the boys would do. I wouldn't. I wouldn't go out there and kill somebody just 'cause they wearin' that color. I wouldn't do that. I might beat 'em up or get me, I might get beat up. But I would never go out to that certain extent to kill 'em.

This evidence that female gang members tend to be less involved in serious delinquency than their male counterparts mirrors the findings of other studies examining gang member crime patterns (Fagan, 1990; Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992), as does the data suggesting that young women are excluded by males from participation in certain types of crime (Bowker et al., 1980).

This chapter and the last have presented evidence which suggests that Columbus gangs have not evolved into organized, violent groups, but very much remain groups of adolescents looking for trouble, something to do, friendship, belonging, status and identity. Though Columbus gangs appear to share many similarities with those described in other emergent gang cities, the city's socioeconomic character has thus far provided a buffer that has kept Columbus gangs from showing some of the more problematic characteristics of gangs in other cities, such as the failure of older members to mature out of their gang and criminal involvement, lethal gang rivalries, and serious economic crime. Young women's roles in these groups appear to be somewhat contradictory, with the belief in equality posited while numerous descriptions of gendered structural inequalities emerge.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The significance of the number is tied to the star that is part of the symbolism of the gang. Crips and Folks both adopt a six point star as one of their symbols, while Bloods adopt a five point star. Also significant are the left and right sides of the body: Crips and Folks wear their symbols (such as flags, pushed up pants legs, hats, earrings) to the right, while Bloods wear theirs to the left.

<sup>2</sup> This initiation followed her beating up a Crip, described in chapter six.

<sup>3</sup> Jennifer's initiation into the Gangster Girlz did not involve a physical altercation. Instead, she had to engage in a series of crimes, including jumping a girl and robbing a "geeker" (crack addict).

<sup>4</sup> Bud refers to marijuana.

<sup>5</sup> Michelle reports not seeing members of her gang often because she has been living at a friend's house on the other side of town. Two girls did not respond.

<sup>6</sup> A violation is a punishment for violating one of the gang's rules. Typically it involves five or six strikes to the head, depending on the gang affiliation (see note one).

<sup>7</sup> The Gangster Girlz are not involved in gang rivalries, instead they focus on economic crimes. They do get in fights with other people, but these fights are not gang-related.

<sup>8</sup> Though they were not specifically asked which crimes males participate in, I assume where differences emerge between the category "member" and the category "female member," they are making gendered distinctions.

<sup>9</sup> Gat refers to gun.

## IX. GENDER DYNAMICS IN COLUMBUS GANGS

Chapters seven and eight have provided evidence of the structures and activities of mixed-gender gangs in Columbus, and in doing so, have shed light on the contradictory gender dynamics within these groups. On the one hand is a predominant 'myth system' of gender equality; on the other hand, a very distinct gender hierarchy within the gang, which includes male leadership, the sexual exploitation of some young women, and girls' exclusion from serious gang crime (specifically those types of crime that build status within the group). In this chapter, my goal is to explore how and why these contradictions operate seemingly unnoticed by most of the young women. Specifically, how is it that they can participate in a group that they themselves perceive as justly hierarchical by gender, and yet describe it as one in which young women and men are equals?

To understand the gender dynamics in gangs, it is first necessary to view gangs within the larger gendered contexts of these young women's lives. Gangs are not unique in their gender inequality and sexual exploitation of young women. Instead, they are part of larger social worlds in which these patterns operate. Two social worlds in particular are of

relevance: the urban street world and the world of adolescence.

The streets are an arena where gendered power relations are played out (Bernard and Schlaffer, 1989; Bourgois, 1989; Bourgois and Dunlap, 1993; Connell, 1987), and research suggests that the influx of crack into urban settings has intensified the degradation of women in these environments (Bourgois and Dunlap, 1993; Fullilove et al., 1992; Inciardi et al., 1993; Miller, 1995; Ratner, 1993). This is one of the social contexts in which young women in gangs operate. Regardless of their own experiences, the victimization and exploitation of women (typically addicts) is both widespread and highly visible around them, providing a vivid example of what they do not want to become.

The social world of adolescence is highly gendered as well (Eder, 1995; Lees, 1993; Thorne, 1993). As noted in chapter four, adolescence is a transitional period of life in which peer relationships increase in significance in shaping youths attitudes and behaviors. Research suggests that early adolescents, especially girls, are highly self-conscious and sensitive to others' perceptions of them (Elkind and Bowen, 1979; Pesce and Harding, 1986; Simmons et al., 1973). This period of life is characterized by a "shift from the relatively asexual gender system of childhood to the overtly sexualized gender systems of adolescence and adulthood"

(Thorne, 1993: 135). Young women find themselves in a contradictory position. Increasingly, they receive status from their peers as a result of their association with and attractiveness to males. At the same time, they are denigrated for their sexual activity, and threatened with the labels "slut" and "ho" (Eder, 1995; Lees, 1993).

Added to these two powerful social worlds are the individual experiences of young women in gangs: many have been sexually abused, have witnessed violence against other women in their lives including adults in their households, and a number have crack-addicted mothers whom they likely know of or have witnessed the degradation of (see chapters five and six). The worlds around them are not particularly safe spaces to negotiate adolescence and identity for these young women. Though the gang reproduces some of these same structures of gender inequality, it is also a space in which there is at least the spoken value of gender equality (though as I will discuss, it is of a very particular sort).

In this chapter, I will further explore the contradictions that emerge in my conversations with young women in gangs. I will start by examining the stated value of gender equality, then discuss the ways in which young women's own values and attitudes towards other females undermine the notion of equality, and finally the ways in which the activities of gang members are based on and



maintain gender inequality. From here I will attempt to draw out why and how I believe young women can both participate in male-dominated gangs (and value them as such), and simultaneously define themselves as "equals." To do so, I will first describe how girls individualize and justify the mistreatment of females, then draw on Kandiyoti's (1988) conception of a "patriarchal bargain," a situation in which women support structures of gender inequality as a means of gaining or maintaining particular benefits for themselves.

#### GENDER EQUALITY AS A NORMATIVE FEATURE OF GANGS

As noted previously, many of the young women I interviewed strongly articulate a belief that their gang is a place in which males and females are equals. This is reflected in the structures of the groups, which are not segregated by gender, but are integrated mixed-gender groups. When I ask young women questions pertaining to gender differences in gang members' activities or treatment, they are very resistant to any notion of gender inequality, emphasizing instead that everyone in the gang is "all the same." Sonita says, "they give every last one of us [females] respect the way they give the males." This is a prevailing discourse in the interviews, even as young women describe activities to the contrary.

For example, Monica answers a series of questions with

the same response. When I ask if there are differences in the activities of males and females, she says "they basically do the same thing." I ask about member qualifications and she responds, "it's basically the same for both sexes." And of the benefits of gang membership, "it's basically the same for both of 'em." Chantell actually gets frustrated by my line of questioning and repeatedly cuts me off in response:

Jody: You said before that it was about half girls and half guys? Can you tell me more about that? Like you said you don't think there are any differences in terms of what--

Chantell: There isn't.

Jody: Ok, can you tell me more--

Chantell: Like what? There isn't, there isn't, like, there's nothing, boy, girl, white, black, Mexican, Chinese.

Jody: Everybody does the same thing.

Chantell: Yeah.

Erica even makes specific reference to the women's movement in response to a question I ask about whether young women in gangs are perceived differently than males:

I mean, a lot of people I know look up to it. They call it, what, the, the women's rights civil group, or somethin' like that, they call it. It's funny . . . . They say that, "it's about time you got some women involved around here!" (laughs) It's funny though, they say that.

One means of describing the reasons for this equality

is by differentiating between themselves and young women who aren't in gangs. It is not the case that all young women are treated equally, only those who are deserving because of their attitudes and behavior. Brandi says that girls in gangs are different from other girls because they "act more, more like guys. Not like guys, guys, guys, but act different from most girls." Likewise, Veronica describes the differences between young women in gangs and girls who aren't in gangs as follows:

A lot of girls get scared. Don't wanna break their nails and stuff like that. So, ain't no need for them to try to be in no gang. And the one's that's in, most of the girls that's in act like boys. That's why they in, 'cause they like to fight and stuff. They know how to fight and they use guns and stuff.

This theme of differentiating between gang and non-gang girls reveals a great deal about the attitudes many young women in gangs have about females in general. In describing themselves as "acting like boys," they highlight what they perceive as the importance of being tough and physically aggressive, and of not being preoccupied with "feminine" concerns about their appearance and attractiveness. Girls who are not in gangs, in contrast, may be perceived as stuck up, prissy, and/or weak. Specifically, it is because they are not like other girls that they deserve to be treated equally by the young men in their gangs. However, as the next section reveals, young women's devaluation of "feminine"

qualities does not apply only to girls who aren't in gangs, but to other female gang members as well. This provides them with a justification for male dominance within the gang in terms of leadership and activities, while still allowing them to believe in their individual equal treatment.

#### CONTRADICTORY ATTITUDES TOWARD FEMALES

Listening to the stories of young women in gangs, it becomes apparent they do not believe all girls are deserving of "equal" treatment and respect by males (and male gang members). In fact, there is a great deal of misogyny underlying the ways in which they talk about other girls. Ironically, this talk involves their descriptions, not just of non-gang girls, but of other girls in gangs. Often they compare the relative strengths of the qualities of male gang members with the perceived weaknesses of female gang members. This undermines their claims of gender equality, but also goes one step further--their descriptions reveal their own support of the gangs' gender hierarchies.

#### The Devaluation of Girls

A general theme running through many interviews was that these young women devalue other girls in general, instead preferring the company of males. Brandi says, "I don't get along with girls that much." Likewise, Veronica notes, "I never really hang around a whole bunch of girls, I

just mostly hang around a whole bunch of guys." When I ask Tamika to explain her own preference for hanging out with guys, she says it is "'cause they more mature. Girls, they little peons. Like they be like, I don't know. Girls, they just run they mouth too much and they get jealous over the stupidest stuff." Leslie, ironically the only girl I interviewed who is highly critical of male's sexist treatment of females in gangs, engages in the following diatribe about girls:

I don't like girls 'cause, I mean, I'm the type of person that I'll talk, I like guys, I mean, I like to be around guys 'cause you can tell a guy, I mean, you can tell a guy some stuff and then you can tell a girl somethin' and next week anybody and everything know it. And, with a guy, it's more than likely they're gonna be, I mean, either they forget about it or somethin'. But, they don't tell it. Then a girl's mouth is movin' fifty miles an hour, they're just "aaah," tellin' everything. And, they're always in the middle of something. They wanna argue, fight, all the time. That's all they wanna do. And talk about each other behind their back. And, that's why I don't like girls. Girls get too much stuff started. They always in somethin'. I mean, I have a couple of girls as friends. But, that's only, I have two. And, I don't trust them that well because girls are just. Their mouth. If, I don't think, if God didn't make girls with mouths they would be just fine and dandy. They wouldn't be as much problems as they are and if their mouth was just zipped up and shut they wouldn't have as much problems as they have.

In addition to these generally negative attitudes towards girls, two additional themes emerge as well: the denigration of girls who are seen as sexually promiscuous, and the belief that females are not as "hard" as males, and thus are less

important to their gangs and less deserving of leadership.

### The Sexual Denigration of Girls

The most vivid description of female gang members' participation in the sexual denigration of young women comes from their discussions of girls who are 'sexed in' gangs by having sexual intercourse with multiple male members. As noted in chapter eight, none of the young women I spoke with said they had been sexed into their gangs, though as Erica comments, "if they have, they ain't sayin' nothin'." The young women I spoke with construct gang identities for themselves as tough and true members, and depict girls who were sexed in as easy, nasty and "ho's." Monica says, "if she got sexed in, she would be a ho. Everybody, all of 'em would call her a ho." According to Keisha:

If you get sexed in, you have no respect. That means you gotta go ho'in' for 'em, when they say you give 'em the pussy you gotta give it to 'em. If you don't you gonna get your ass beat. I ain't down for that.

One girl in her set was sexed in and Keisha says the girl "just do everything they tell her to do, like a dummy." Keisha places blame for the situation squarely on the young woman, and not on the young men who exploit her: "But she brought that on herself, by bein' the fact, bein' sexed in." Two girls were sexed into Nikkie's set whom she reports eventually quit hanging around with the set because they were harassed about it so much:

Everybody told 'em, too. They was like, "why

y'all get done it in?" They used to just say "stop askin' us about that." So, they just stopped hanging out with us . . . . They know that they was gettin' looked at as ho's. We just look at 'em. Sometimes we tell 'em, too, we be like, "ooh, y'all look, y'all some little ho's," or "why y'all do that?" They be like, "So." They be like, "that's our business." And when we said that to them and they ain't never come around no more.

In fact, Veronica says the young men in her set purposely trick girls into believing they are being sexed into the gang, and target girls they do not like:

If some girls wanted to get in, if they don't like the girl they have sex with 'em. They run trains on 'em or either have the girl suck their thang. And then they used to, the girls used to think they was in. So, then the girls used to just come try to hang around us and all this little bull, just 'cause, 'cause they thinkin' they in.

Our continuing dialogue on the topic is illustrative of the derision these girls face, not just by male members, but by female members like Veronica:

Veronica: You can't get sexed in . . . . They're playin' with girls' heads. And then, once they leave them girls, them girls be gettin' mad.

Jody: So, basically, it's just a game to just let the girls think they can be let in?

Veronica: Mhmm. Yep. Can't get sexed in. I don't know why they, ooh, that's nasty, why would you even wanna do, ooh, that's nasty. (laugh) That's nasty.

Jody: So, has that happened in your set? Where they've tricked a girl into thinking that she's--

Veronica: Mmhhh. Yep. They used to do it all the time.

All the time. I used to think it was funny. If girls wanna be dumb and fall for it, let 'em. They used to just think they was in. Used to always just, just, try to come hang around us.

Jody: And then what would happen?

Veronica: I mean when all the, once all the boys done, you know, rammed up in 'em, when they through with 'em, they just find them with another girl and them girls be gettin' mad. 'Cause, if, if, a girl thinkin' they get sexed in, they gotta do whatever, whatever the boys tell 'em to do when they want 'em to do it, right then and there, in front of whoever. And, I think, that's just sick. That's nasty, that's dumb.

Part of the reason girls are disrespected for being sexed in is because they are perceived to have chosen what Heather describes as "the easy way in." Tamika elaborates:

That don't make you no woman . . . to let four or five niggers run train on you just to get put into the gang. To me, it makes you a woman if you gonna be bold enough to let someone hit you in your head or in your chest six times.

Likewise, Diane says girls get sexed in "because they're weak. 'Cause they're too, they're too weak to take a beat down." Girls are not sexed into her set because they do not bring qualities with them that are important to the gang: "The girls in my set is true. And they, they've all taken



beat downs . . . . All that ho shit can go on in the little ho pussy gangs in Columbus, but not Gangster Crips."

One reason for this concern is that gang members are supposed to be "down for theirs," willing to fight and back each other up during confrontations. A girl who is sexed in is not perceived to have these qualities. Chantell explains:

That's just showin' how good you can fuck. But if it just us, we have to have each other's back. You don't know how good she can fight, because you never seen her fight, you've just seen how good she can fuck . . . . Like, just say there was three girls that had sex in, and there was one girl that fought in. And if we went to the mall, we seen all these Slobs, and they came to us. We don't know, and I'm just by myself, I don't know how good they could fight. They prob'ly can't fight and I get beat down, because of them.

Finally, Tamika describes a girl in her set who was sexed in, stigmatized as a result, and fought to build her reputation as a true Crip:

Tamika: She be like, "Well, I didn't wanna take six to the head." But some people, at first, they call her "little ho" and all that. But then, now she startin' to get bold.

Jody: What do you mean she's startin' to get bold?

Tamika: She's startin' to get real bold, like, like, they be like "Ooh, look at the little ho. She fucked me and my boy." She be like, "Man, forget y'all. Man, what? What?" She be ready to squat with 'em. I be like, "Ah, look at her!" Uh huh. . . . At first we looked at

her like, "Ooh, man, she a ho, man." But now we look at her like she just our kickin' it partner. You know, however she got in that's her business.

All of these discussions illustrate, by way of contrasting with the 'other,' those characteristics female gang members value in one another. What is noteworthy is that these young women are very disrespectful of girls who are sexually promiscuous, and girls who are sexually victimized or taken advantage of. They are extremely judgmental of other young women, but do not hold young men accountable for the parts they play in these scenarios. Veronica says it doesn't matter if young men are sexually promiscuous, "as long as they hardcore."

Creating this rigid dichotomy between themselves and girls who are sexed into the gang, they can maintain their desired identity within the group, at least in their own eyes. They can believe that the young men in their gang treat and discuss 'other' young women in sexually derogatory ways, young women who deserve it because they are "weak" and "nasty." This distinction allows the young women I interviewed to believe that they are, as Leslie says, "one of the niggers," or "one of the guys." This is a necessary belief in order for the gang to remain a meaningful place for identity, status and positive recognition.

Girls as Weak: The 'Rightness' of Male-Dominated Gangs

The irony in girls' constructions of themselves as equals in the gang, and as 'other' than non-gang girls is that they also describe female gang members as less tough, hardcore, and valuable than male members.<sup>1</sup> This is vividly reflected in their responses when I asked if they know of any all-female gangs in Columbus. Veronica remembers one all-female gang from a few years ago, which she calls "stupid," and says the boys referred to as "pussy-infected." She notes, "they try to have their own little girl group goin' on. (laugh) It was silly." The following conversation with LaShawna is also illustrative:

Jody: Do you know of any gangs in Columbus that are all females?

LaShawna: Aw, no! No.

Jody: Why do you think that's the case?

LaShawna: I don't know. I guess they need somebody to protect 'em or something. But I don't know. I ain't never seen it.

Jody: You haven't heard of any?

LaShawna: No.

Jody: Ok. What do you think the reaction would be if there were?

LaShawna: I'd probably *laugh* or something, 'cause I ain't never seen it.

Jody: Ok. And why would you laugh?

LaShawna: 'Cause, what, they gonna do? They can't do nothin' about it, nothin' about nothin'. They're probably could be, though, they probably could be hard or whatever. But they wouldn't have no props. They wouldn't get no props.

Jody: What's props?

LaShawna: Like, you know, "yeah, I heard they be doin' all this stuff, man." You just get your props, you know, like "yeah, they bad." "You gotta watch out for them," or somethin' like that. Naw, it's not like that.

Jody: Ok. So they wouldn't get any kind of respect?

LaShawna: Naw.

There is at least a moment where she is torn, and admits that they could be "hard," but her first reaction, like Veronica's, is to laugh, and part of the reason both find the notion ridiculous is because they recognize that without males, the group would not be respected. The true irony here is that if Jennifer's description of her all-female gang, the Gangster Girlz, is any indication, all-female groups are capable of being very hardcore, involved in serious economic crime.<sup>2</sup>

LaShawna's comment that girls "need somebody to protect 'em" is a theme in many interviews. No matter how much they speak of the gang as a place of gender equality, most young

women still perceive girls as needing male protection. Heather notes, "you feel more secure when, you know, a guy's around protectin' you, you know, than you would a girl." Keisha notes, "the guys, they just harder." She explains, "guys is more rougher. We have our, our G's back but, it ain't gonna be like the guys, they just don't give a fuck. They gonna shoot you in a minute."

Sometimes their construction of these gender differences is extreme, as with Lisa's comment that "fifty girls have to get on five guys" in order to win a fight. Erica says, "when you think of a girl, you think of her bein' all small and fragile." She explains that the males are integral to the gang because "they're stronger. Just, just imagine what if one of us got wounded. They would have to carry us. We couldn't carry ourselves (laugh)." Her comments on why females need male protection are perhaps the most ironic, as she is a very large strong girl, nicknamed after a famous fighter. In fact, she is probably stronger than a number of the young men in her set.

As a result of their overall devaluation of young women and belief that males tend to be harder and stronger, girls accept that the gang is male-dominated. All of them accept male leadership uncritically (see chapter seven). Diane puts it most succinctly, though her response goes further than some girls might take it. I ask her why gang leadership is

male and she explains:

It's just, it's just like, how could I put it? Like in a family. Like in a regular family there might be the dad and four brothers, and the mom and three sisters. And the dad and the four brothers, you know, they're guys. They wanna go out and do guy stuff and the girls are gonna go out and do girl stuff. But when mom says do somethin', but dad's over mom and dad says no, you do this, then it all go back, then it all goes back to dad, you see?

What these young women do not see is that with male leadership and a tendency to over-value the contributions of young men and under-value the contributions of young women, the chance for them to truly be treated as "equals" is slim. Jennifer makes this point, in distinguishing between the leader of the Gangster Girlz and the male leaders of mixed-gender sets:

They're, it's like when they're in control they know it. So they're gonna take advantage of it. They like tell stupid things. Like, I know, for example, about a part of the Crip gang, the OG got mad at one of the members and um made her have sex with like 5 different guys, just 'cause he was mad at her about something, somethin' petty. Like with our OG, she's not like that.

Jennifer's discussion shows none of the benevolent "father figure" Diane describes. She is not in a mixed-gender gang herself, so her comments are coming from an outsider looking in. Nonetheless, she has a number of friends in mixed-gender gangs that she hangs out with, providing her with some exposure to them. She comments again later in the interview:

Most of the girls that I've seen in different gangs, they have no respect for themselves. They're, they're too easily taken advantage of

because they're with a boys' group. If an OG tells 'em to do something, like a boy OG tells 'em to do something, they're gonna do it. No matter what he says, they're gonna have to do, they're gonna do it. Like, with us, our OG, she's not gonna go out like that. She's not gonna tell us somethin' stupid to where one of us is gonna get caught. She knows when to stop and everything, 'cause she doesn't want any of us, so far none of us has gone to jail.

#### GENDER INEQUALITY AS A FEATURE OF GANG ACTIVITIES

Elsewhere I have described some of the features of gender inequality within Columbus gangs, including male leadership and girls' status deriving at least in part from their connections to high-status males (see chapter seven), girls' exclusion from some of the gangs' criminal activities (see chapter eight), and the one-sided sexual initiation of at least some girls (see above). Here I would like to elaborate on male gang members' sexual disrespect of young women in their gangs. A number of young women allude to this aspect of the gang. Sonita says that males in the gang have "little man talk, and then the females find out about it, they don't like it, then they get mad." Likewise, both Nikkie and Stephanie comment that "boys be playin' girls" in the gang. Nikkie elaborates, "they tell us like, um, 'we'll play girls in a minute,' and they don't care. And they'll tell you to your face if they went with your or whatever." Part of the reason some girls say males and females in their gangs don't date one another (see chapter eight) is

specifically to avoid these types of problems. As a necessary means of differentiating themselves from 'other' girls and maintaining their place in the gang as equals, most young women try to downplay this aspect of male gang members' behavior toward them. To look too critically at this behavior would destroy their tenuous belief in equality. Two young women though, because of their close connection to one or more males in the gang, are able to directly observe this aspect of their gangs. As noted above, Leslie is highly critical of male gang members' disrespect of females. The following dialogue reveals the nature of her concerns. She earlier made a comment that "the girls are mainly used for sex" and I ask her to elaborate:

Leslie: The talk I was hearin', 'cause they would talk about, like, 'cause whenever I was with the males I would be, my boyfriend would be right there. I was never around the males by myself. So, and they didn't refer to me like they referred to them [other girls] because I, 'cause I had a boyfriend that was in there [the gang]. They referred to the girls that didn't. They talked, "Yeah, I'm gonna get her," and all this. "Yeah, uh huh, we need to take her out," and all this 'n stuff. And, I thought that was very disrespectful . . . . I mean, 'cause, they, gangs, I mean, our leader had respect for us. But, the guys that were in the gang



didn't have respect for us.

Jody: And, did the other girls, did the other girls know it? Or, were they only disrespectful when they weren't around?

Leslie: They were disrespectful mainly when they weren't around. Sometimes they would call 'em bitches 'n stuff. But, they would just shrug it off like, ah, he's just playin'. But, I was never talked to like that. But, I mean, if I was, see, I don't like, that's why I don't like the B-word. I don't, I mean, if I don't call you one, I, you don't call me one. And, they, they, they are, were very disrespectful. Very disrespectful to women.

Jody: So, like, the girls, well, 'cause you had a boyfriend. The other ones, like, they, did they see themselves as primarily as only, as only there to give sex to the guys?

Leslie: They thought they were, like, one of the, one of the niggers. That's what they said. They was one of the guys. They should act like a guy and all this. So, guys were doin' it to everybody so they would do it to everybody. So, they actually didn't see what was goin' on. They were walkin' like they had blindfolds on. And, bein' where I was, I could see everything that was goin' on. So, that's, I was, nnnnn.

Jody: So, you kinda had the inside--

Leslie: Right.

Jody: Because of your boyfriend.

Leslie: If I didn't have him, I'd a been just like one of them.

Jody: And, now, were you friends with the other girls?

Leslie: Oh, I was friends. I would tell 'em, I'd be like, "y'all are stupid. Y'all just need to find one and just be with that one instead of doin' it to every, anything and everybody." And, they would, "oh, girl, they just jokin' around. We just be doin' it," they call it "the low-key" so don't nobody know about it. But, when they say "low-key" or whatever, when they're actually the girls aren't around and the guys are sittin' there talkin'. They're not low-key no more 'cause the guys are braggin', "well yeah, she did this to me," and all this. I mean, it's just stupid.

Jody: So, the girls thought that the guys were being quiet but they really weren't.

Leslie: Right. They was really tellin' everybody and anything about what they did. And, even if they wanted to they added a couple little pieces that didn't happen.

Jody: And, then, how would the guys be when the girls were around?

Leslie: "Oh, hey baby, how ya doin'?" And, just real, real respectful when they were around. But, very disrespectful when they weren't. So, they were bein', like, very two-faced.

This conversation with Leslie provides several interesting revelations. First, of course, is that young men in the gang disrespect young women. Interestingly, though, Leslie does allude to equal treatment and respect of girls as part of the gang's normative system when she describes the OG as having "respect for us." She also provides insight into how young women choose to overlook and minimize young men's disrespect of them, and how young men play on their desire for equal treatment by behaving that way to their face. As a result, Leslie notes:

They thought that they were being like the guys. Or, they respect me as I'm a guy. They respect the girls as a guy. But, they, that was just one of the misconceptions that they showed you. And that really wasn't what happened.

Monica also is privy to male gang members' conversations about females, because of her relationship with her older brothers. She reveals her own struggle to maintain the belief that "it's basically the same for both sexes," given the contradictory evidence she is faced with. Early in the interview, she tells me:

Nobody in my set disrespects me by callin' me a bitch or anything like that. And nobody in my set sit there while I'm around and talk about females like that or nothin' because they know I will get a little attitude with 'em.

However, later she reveals:

I mean the guys, they have their little comments about 'em [girls in the gang] because, I hear more because my brothers are all up there with the guys and everything and I hear more just sittin' around, just listenin'. And they'll have their little jokes about "Well, ha I had her," and then and everybody else will jump in and say, "Well, I had her, too." And then they'll laugh about it. So I'll just sit back and just listen and stuff.

I ask, "how does it make you feel being female and hearing the way that they talk about females?" and Monica responds:

At first, when I first ever started listening to them talk it made me mad and I would jump in and say my little piece. And my brother would look at me like, "Are you going to sit here and join the conversation or just butt in when you get mad?" So I just learned to just sit back and just keep mine to myself. That's the only person I let get smart on me is my brother . . . but everybody else I, I'll jump in and say my piece if they make me mad and, uh. Because, I mean, it's like, it's like I be hearin' guys talk about girls so much. I haven't heard no guys talk about me or nothin' like that. I know, I mean, there will be guys that will talk about me but I've never heard it myself. Because I hang around guys most the time. And they'll sit back and they'll be like, "Yeah, she's a ho. I know all about her." And they'll sit back and discuss it with me like, "Yeah, she did all of this for me and she did this and this and this and then I told her to get up and go home." I mean, stuff like that. So, I be like, "Oh, you did, for real?" And I just learned to say, "Mhmm. Alright. Mhmm. Yeah. Whatever." I mean, and just listen.

In this passage, Monica reveals her own struggle between challenging male sexism (which risks alienating her from the group), and accepting it (which risks self-alienation). She suggests that she tends to confront the men

in her gang for their treatment of young women, but also contradicts this statement by admitting that often it is easier to simply "sit back and just listen." Ultimately, in order to participate equally in the gang, Monica has to silence herself and accept male members' disrespect of young women. One means by which she does so is to place responsibility for getting respect in the hands of individual girls. Describing one young woman in her gang that is treated particularly badly, Monica notes, "I put that, I put that on her. They ain't gotta do her like that. But she don't gotta let them do her like that either." To contrast, she describes what happens when young women stand up for themselves:

Dude called Tari a bitch one time and she went off. She just went off. Didn't nobody call her a bitch from then on. I mean, it's like that. If she wanted to get her respect she stand up and say somethin'.

## MAKING SENSE OF GENDER CONTRADICTIONS

### Individualizing and Justifying Girls' Mistreatment

In order to maintain a sense that they are valued in the gang, it is necessary for young women to make sense of the contradictions they are faced with. They have to be able to explain why girls are mistreated, and do so in a way that doesn't challenge their central belief in their own significance and importance to the group. To rectify discrepancies between the norm of gender equality and the

features of gender inequality within their gangs, young women draw on two types of frames. First, they individualize acts they describe and recognize as involving the mistreatment of females. Second, they justify particular acts as deserved because of the behaviors of the young women in question. Sometimes this is because of a specific act, but it is also where the misogynistic beliefs I described above come into play: girls deserve what happens to them because they are weak, or ho's, or bigmouths. In taking these approaches, each of which single out and blame the victims of mistreatment, young women in gangs are adopting methods that are part of larger cultural traditions in the United States.

This is particularly the case when we examine the sexual exploitation of women, which historically has and continues to hold women responsible for their victimization (Estrich, 1987; Hatty, 1989; Miller and Schwartz, 1995; Schur, 1984). Female gang members cull from these cultural traditions when they describe and evaluate the exploitation of young women around them.

One means by which girls can uphold their belief in the gang's gender equality in the face of undeniable evidence to the contrary is to describe that evidence as atypical and aberrant, not representative of the overall value system of the gang or its members. This is most apparent in two examples of sexual assault described by young women. Sonita

resists talking about gender differences in her interview, yet she had previously explained to me that she was raped by one of the young men in her set, and had quit spending time with them after he was not punished by the OG. In the following dialogue, I remind her of this event as a means of eliciting information about gender inequality:

Jody: Do girls face any kind of particular dangers?

Sonita: Gettin' shot at, that's about it. Goin' to jail.

Jody: What about like what happened with you? Is that, remember on Monday you told me about when one of the gang members raped you?

Sonita: Mm hm.

Jody: Is that something that's a--

Sonita: That only happened once, to me, and I was the only female it ever happened to, so.

Jody: So it wasn't something that was a danger for girls usually?

Sonita: (shakes head)

Jody: It was just like an isolated incident?

Sonita: Yep. Didn't nobody know about it, and it happened only to one girl.

Sonita discounts my attempt to frame her experience as representative of girls' treatment in gangs, insisting instead that her experience is unique. Only by seeing it as such could she make the statement (see above) that young

women receive the same respect in her gang as young men.

Framing the sexual assaults of young women as exceptional events allows female gang members to ignore the endemic nature of gender inequality in their gangs. What follows is a long excerpt from one of the interviews concerning the young woman's participation in the assault of a rival female gang member.<sup>3</sup> I have included the discussion in its entirety because it illustrates a number of layers to be explored. I should note that it is a unique description. Though several young women describe being or knowing of victims of gang-related rapes, only this one speaks specifically of participating in a retaliatory attack of this nature. She and several of the young women in her set beat the girl, then to their surprise, a group of young men in her set took over the beating, one of them began ripping off the girl's clothes, and the group proceeded to gang-rape her.

Jody: I wanna ask you some more, or ask you to talk again about the situation that you described yesterday about the girl that was in a [rival] set that you guys picked up or that the guys in your set picked up--

Interviewee: Oh, when they raped her?

Jody: Yeah. Now is that something that--

Interviewee: No, that's not somethin', that's not somethin' that goes on. That was because the female was was supposedly goin' out with one of ours, went back and



told a bunch of [rivals] what was goin' on and got the [rivals] to jump my boy. And he ended up in the hospital. Ok? They beat him up real bad. He had like fractured skull bones, I mean, they beat him bad. Baseball bats, cut him, everything. He was in the hospital [for about two months]. And so you wanted me to tell you about it? Or--

Jody: Yeah. Well you told me about it yesterday. I guess I have my notes from that. But I'm just thinking about how it affected you--

Interviewee: It scared me. I don't never want anythin' like that to happen to me. And I pray to God that it doesn't. 'Cause God said that whatever you sow you're gonna reap. And like, you know, beatin' a girl up and then sittin' there watchin' somethin' like that happen, well, Jesus that could come back on me. I mean, I felt, I really did feel sorry for her even though my boy was in the hospital and was really hurt. I mean, we coulda just shot her. You know, and it coulda been just over. We coulda just taken her life. But they went farther than that. They really hurt her. I think, she's gonna have, I mean, you don't understand. Four guys are makin' her, carrying her in, I mean I don't wanna be vulgar, but in this, to talk about this you gotta be vulgar, grab her by her hair, stickin'

their dick in her mouth, makin' her suck their dick, makin' her, punchin' her, boom! "You better suck, try to bite." I remember she bit one of my boys and she just got beat and he brought her face up again. He was like, "Suck!" Callin' her "Little [rival] Bitch" and all that stuff. I was like, "Whoa!" I was like, my people do some violence. But she, she was suckin' this dude's dick. The other one put his stuff in her butt. So she's screamin' like, "Ah! Ah!" So she's screamin' and so after he, the one got his nut off, the other one spread her legs and started doin' it in the front. And then I was just sittin' there like, "Oh my goodness" I mean, me and a group of us already done beat her up, we already beat her up so she was all beat up plus they were beatin' on her, callin' her names, callin' her [a derogatory name for rival], fuckin' her every which way. I mean, and then we just drug her out, put her in the trunk and dropped her off [in this park]. I don't know what happened to her. Maybe she died. Maybe, maybe someone came and helped her. I mean, I don't know.

Jody: How did it affect you? Like did it affect, 'cause--

Interviewee: Like my head? Like--

Jody: Yeah.

Interviewee: It just made me feel like, like, like that's,

like that's really bad, like like when I was talkin' to my boy . . . he was one of the ones who did it. I was talkin' to him, like, "Did you get off on that?" He's like "I got off on that fact because my boy is on a life line." I was like, "Ok, I can understand what you're saying." You know, our boy's in the hospital 'cause of her. Ok I can understand what you're saying. But I was lookin' like, "Wow." That's, that's, I mean, I've seen people get shot. I've seen people get stabbed, cut, anything. But that is the most brutal I've ever seen. That's like something worse than O.J. Simpson could have done to Nicole Simpson. I mean, that's something really brutal I seen. I was like, "Whoa." If I coulda videotaped this I coulda got a million dollars for the videotape.

Jody: Did it bother you that--

Interviewee: But, did it bother me that it was my friends doin' it to a female? Not really, no. Just because of the fact of what she did. If it was any other female I think it would have bothered me. I think I woulda had to say something. But since it was her and I know the situation. You gotta look at the situation we was in. I was in the wrong anyways, I had just gotten done beatin' the girl up. Beatin' her bad up. So what am I gonna do? "Oh, stop! Oh, stop!" That'd be such a

hypocrite of me. And they be lookin' like, "Stop what?" You're like a, you wasn't, I mean, no one was, she wasn't tellin' her, the [rivals] to stop when old boy was gettin' beat in his face and he was gettin' slammed and, you know, when he was doin' all that. So basically I had no place to say nothin'. And how I feel about it is, I feel that it was the most brutal thing I've ever seen in my life and pray to God nothin' ever happens to me like that. And I pray I don't have to witness anything like that.

This young woman describes the gang-rape she witnessed as "*the most brutal thing*" she has ever seen in her life, and admits to being witness to and taking part in a great deal of violence. Because of the brutality, it was necessary for her to engage in serious and multiple rationalizations in order to maintain her sense of her gang, fellow gang members, and young women's place and value within her group. She rationalizes by describing the event as unique, by allowing herself to believe that the male gang members (her friends) who participated were not sexually aroused by the attack, and by describing it as justified because of the girl's prior actions.

While it is probably true that this gang-rape was an unusual event, this does not take away from the fact that it was a gendered act that could take place specifically because

young women are not perceived as equals. Had this girl been an "equal," the attack would have remained a physical one. As the interviewee herself notes, "we coulda just shot her." What the interviewee did not or would not allow herself to see is that the vicious and brutal nature of the attack against this young woman was not just because she set up a member of the gang. The young men who gang-raped this girl were not just enacting revenge on a rival, but on a *female* who had dared to treat a male in this way. In order to maintain her sense of identity within the group, the interviewee is willing to believe that the males were not sexually aroused by the attack, even after having witnessed it, and tries to justify it by describing how the girl's prior acts provoked it.

Though this particular event was unique, female gang members' use of justifications to explain the mistreatment of young women is common. In their stories, they create distance between themselves and other girls as a means of differentiating between those who deserve "equal" treatment and those who do not. This pattern can be seen vividly in the descriptions of girls who are sexed into gangs (see above). Young women who are sexed in "deserve" the derogatory treatment they endure because they are seen as sexually promiscuous, willing to degrade themselves to get into the gang, and too weak to endure a physical

confrontation. In addition, girls' descriptions of females as having "big mouths" (see above) is also used as a justification for their treatment. Keisha explains:

If the female goin' on so much, she gonna have to get her ass beat, she gonna have to suffer the consequence. But, it's different for the guys. They know how our mouth is. We keep goin' and goin' and goin' until we push the limit. Know what I'm sayin'?

Justifications for their mistreatment are grounded both in girls' specific acts, and in their general characteristics. However, there is more to understanding how girls make sense of and live with the gender contradictions they face in their gangs than looking only at the ways they rationalize what happens. Given the devaluation of young women, an obvious question is what do girls get out of their gang affiliation and its treatment of females? In the last section, I will explore this question, and will address the corollary question, at what cost?

#### "Patriarchal Bargains"

It is important to keep in mind, as I described at the beginning of this chapter, that gangs are not uniquely sexist groups. They operate within larger social contexts that include members' past experiences with family members and other women and men in their lives, the street milieu, and adolescent social worlds, all of which have gender hierarchies similar to those existing within gangs. While the specific nature of gender relations in gangs may be

distinctive, its overarching gender hierarchy is really no different than in any other social setting. To the extent that there is normative space for the concept of "gender equality," it may actually provide young women with a means of empowerment and self-definition not available in other contexts.

Here I would like to explore further the concept of a "patriarchal bargain" to illuminate girls' gendered experiences within gangs. Kandiyoti (1988) coined the phrase patriarchal bargain to explain women's strategies of action arising within particular sets of gendered constraints:

Different forms of patriarchy present women with distinct 'rules of the game' and call for different strategies to maximize security and optimize life options with varying potential for active or passive resistance in the face of oppression. (Kandiyoti, 1988: 274)

Young women in gangs are negotiating in social worlds of unequal power, where they are attempting to create identities and empower themselves. Participation in gangs gives them one opportunity to do so, providing they are willing to go along with the "rules of the game." In exchange for taking part in the denigration of young women in general (or their willingness to let it go on unchallenged), they are able to create a status hierarchy among females with the potential of being on top. They can define themselves as 'other than' those exploited females they see around them, and as tougher than other girls in general. They define

themselves as a distinct category of young women. The gang thus offers to provide them with a sense of empowerment.

A number of young women describe being in gangs as providing them with this sense of power. Lisa says that girls in gangs "wanna be like, aw, I'm hard, you know, you can't beat me up. And, when you're in a gang that's how you feel. You just feel like, oh my God, you know, they got my back. I don't need to worry about it." Erica says that being in a gang, "people don't bother you. Especially if they don't know you and they know that, that you're in a gang. They don't bother you. It's like you put that intimidation in somebody." Diane explains that being a Crip means "that I'm to be respected, and if I'm not, you fuckin' with the wrong person, ok. That's what that means. I'm to be respected. That's all it means. I'm a Crip." Leslie says when she joined her gang, "I felt, like, yeah, now I'm gonna be cool, I'm gonna be Miss Thang in the gang and walk around Miss Bad Butt. Nobody can mess with me now because I'm in a gang and all this." She explains that being in the gang "gave me somethin' to stand on my own with, tell people, well look, I'm not gonna take what y'all dishin' out no more."

A related theme is that of protection, and this is where young women's belief in male's greater power over females, regardless of their assertion of gender equality,



comes into play in their negotiation of the bargain. Being in a gang with young men means at least the semblance of protection from (and retaliation against) predatory males in the social environment. Heather says that being in her gang, "you get protected by guys," and "not many people mess with you" as a result. Erica notes, "they can, they're like protectors over us. When it comes to the girls in the set, they're like our protectors." Nikkie has a friend who was raped by a rival gang member, and she explains, "it was a Crab that raped my girl in Miller Ales. And um, they was, um, they was ready to kill him." Likewise, Keisha elaborates:

If I got beat up by a guy, all I gotta do is go tell one of the niggers, you know what I'm sayin'? Or one of the guys, they'd take care of it. 'Cause I know I ain't gonna fight no guy that's bigger than me. You know what I'm sayin'?

The acceptance of gang structures as male-dominated provides young women with an additional benefit. Their gang involvement is defined as more transitory than young men's. In relation to committing serious crime, Diane notes:

For maybe a drive-by they might wanna have a bunch of dudes. They might not put the females in that. Maybe the females might be weak inside, not strong enough to do something like that, just on the insides . . . . If a female wants to go forward and doin' that, and she wants to risk her whole life for doin' that, then she can. But the majority of the time, that job is given to a man.

It is not just that males are stronger than females that Diane is alluding to. She infers that young women are able

to get out of committing serious crime, more so than young men, because a girl shouldn't have to "risk her whole life" for the gang. In accepting that young men are more central members of the gang, young women can more easily participate in gangs without jeopardizing their adult lives.

There are specific costs associated with the bargain girls strike in their gangs. First, given the assumption that girls are weaker than boys, they have to fight harder to prove how tough they are. Diane explains:

A female has to show that she's tough. A guy can just, you can just look at him. But a female, she's gotta show. She's gotta go out and do some dirt. She's gotta go whip some girl's ass, shoot somebody, rob somebody or something. To show that she is tough.

In addition, there is a constant threat to the sexual integrity of young women in gangs. Monica laments the assumption people outside gangs have that female members are sexed in (see chapter eight). The fact that there is such an option as "sexing in" serves to keep girls disempowered, because they always face the question of how they got in, of whether they are "true" members. Except for among the members of her set who were present, there is no way for young women to prove how they were initiated. As Denise notes, "I mean, they tell you that [they weren't sexed in], but you don't know how they really got in."

Perhaps the most significant cost of this bargain for young women, though they do not seem to recognize it

themselves, is the ways in which it alienates them from their own gender, and thus themselves. Derogatory views of females are reinforced within the gang, and girls participate in this process. They distance themselves from and cover up their own mistreatment, and silence themselves from challenging young men's treatment of women.

### CONCLUSION

Young women resist the characterization of themselves as sexual objects, victims, or unequal partners in their gangs, and instead depict themselves as "equals." However, the notion of "equality" they adopt is not one which encourages solidarity with other women, but instead a version suggesting that females who are capable of doing so can participate in "male" activities. One element of being capable appears to be a willingness to denigrate or accept the denigration of other females. Thus their belief in gender equality in the gang is a reflection of perceived "respect" as compared to young women lower on the stratification hierarchy than themselves, namely, young women who are "weak" and easily exploitable, and/or sexually promiscuous. In contrast to recent claims by other researchers (cf. Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Lauderback et al., 1992; Taylor, 1993), I see very little evidence of gender solidarity among the girls I spoke with. Instead

their means of resisting gender oppression appears to be an individualized response of creating gendered gang identities as separate from and 'other than' the girls and women around them in their social environments.

Even as they define themselves as equals, their statements reveal the many ways in which they continue to face forms of disempowerment in relation to young men in their gangs, including a more intense need to prove themselves worthy of respect, and the never-ending threat of sexual denigration born out of the existence of "sexing in" as an accepted initiation ritual. Ironically, as with any "patriarchal bargain," their participation in and support of an oppressive gender structure ultimately maintains their own inequality, assuring that their own power and options remain less than those of the young men in their gangs.

However, gender inequality in gangs is not so different than in other areas of girls' lives; some girls may actually find a better deal in the gang than elsewhere. It provides them with a sense of empowerment (though typically at the expense of other girls), provides them with protection (or the semblance of protection) from other young men (and women), and their marginalization in the group relative to males allows them to see their involvement as comparably transitory. These are key elements of young women's "patriarchal bargain" in Columbus gangs. They live in social

worlds in which females are devalued; their means of resisting their own devaluation is not to challenge the premise of this treatment of females, but instead to define themselves as outside its boundaries (by being 'different from' and 'better than' other girls), and to use it to their own benefit by gaining male protection and limiting the depth of their involvement in gang crime.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Chantell is an exception. She was consistently firm on the equal activities and value of males and females in her gang, though she did note that being perceived as weak was one of the problems girls face.

<sup>2</sup> This may be where the difference lies--in different motivations driving gang activities. Jennifer's group is not looking for recognition on the streets, but on taking care of their business without drawing attention to themselves. They do not have rivalries (and thus are not oriented toward violence per se), and do not wear colors or throw signs. She notes, "if we's walkin' down the street, you couldn't tell we was in a gang. You'd think we were just a group of girls going to the mall or something." She calls other gangs "sloppy" because they announce the criminal activity they're involved in by their attention-seeking behavior. "We just try not to make mistakes. Like, like, Bloods, if they do somethin', they're gonna write their name on the wall. That, I mean, what the point is that? You're tellin' on yourselves." In contrast, though they are routinely involved in serious economic crimes such as robberies, none of the members of her gang have been caught or arrested for their gang-involved crime.

<sup>3</sup> Because this excerpt provides a detailed description of a serious crime (and chapter six includes demographic information on gang members), I have chosen to conceal the pseudonym and gang affiliation of the young woman who told me the story.

## X. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The goals of this project were to explore in detail various facets of gang involvement among young women in Columbus, including what factors are correlated with gang involvement among girls here and how these factors may contribute to gang involvement, the structures, nature and activities of gangs that young women are a part of, and the gendered meanings and roles within these groups. In this chapter, I will recap the major findings of the study, outline new contributions to the field that result from the project, discuss directions for future research, and explore the policy implications emerging from my findings.

Columbus was chosen as the first city for a multiple city project because it clearly represents one type of emergent gang city: one where the growth of gangs is not the result of the worsening of entrenched 'underclass' conditions. Columbus' recent development of gangs provides an opportunity to study in detail the nature of gangs and of young women's place within them when these groups are relatively new. Columbus is not special in and of itself, but is significant for what it reveals about newly emerging gangs in non-traditional gang cities. We know from much

recent evidence that these new gang cities are growing in number (Spergel and Curry, 1993; Klein, 1995; Maxson et al., 1995). As noted in chapter three, according to the Maxson-Klein national gang migration survey, there are four cities in the U.S. similar to Columbus in size (200,000 to 800,000 people) with a post-1985 emergence of gangs. These include Jacksonville, Nashville, New Orleans, and Portland. Columbus may provide information that is generalizable to these cities, as the relative institutionalization of gang cultures and structures are likely to be similar.

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

##### Correlates of Gang Involvement

The first primary concern of the project was to explore what factors may help distinguish female gang members from their non-gang counterparts in areas where gangs are prevalent. Two sets of data emerge from the survey research described in chapter five. These include differences that speak to etiological concerns, as well as differences that likely emerge as a result of gang affiliation or the lack thereof. I will review and discuss each of these sets of findings in turn.

Many researchers have noted the relationship between structural factors such as neighborhood characteristics, poverty, educational and occupational opportunities and rates



of gang participation in general (Fagan, 1990; Hagedorn, 1988, 1993; Jackson, 1991), and among girls in particular (Campbell, 1984a; Chesney-Lind, 1993; Fishman, 1988; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Quicker, 1983). Though Columbus is thriving by standard socioeconomic measures, it exhibits a tremendous amount of relative inequality--more so than some cities with long term underclass conditions (see chapter three). The majority of both gang and non-gang girls in this project come from neighborhoods that fall below Columbus' city-wide averages on measures of socioeconomic well being. More gang than non-gang girls come from neighborhoods that fall well below average. Over half of the gang members lived in neighborhoods with 75 percent or less of the median income, and double the rates of poverty, unemployment, public assistance, and percent African American. Though both groups of girls tend to be from relatively impoverished neighborhoods, gang members are significantly more likely to report having gangs in their neighborhoods, gang members living on their streets, and having witnessed and experienced violence in their neighborhoods. They also report significantly greater residential instability when compared to non-gang girls.

A number of studies have reported that female gang members tend to come from homes with severe family problems. Like Bjerregaard and Smith, I found no significant

correlation between parental supervision or attachment and female gang involvement. My findings did support the conclusion that having a family member in a gang is often related to gang involvement for girls (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995). The strongest family indicators in Columbus are in keeping with a growing body of evidence that girls in gangs frequently experience violence in their families, including sexual abuse (Campbell, 1984a; Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995; Moore, 1991), and that they often experience other problems in the home such as substance abuse (Moore, 1991). While Moore's work showed that female gang members were more likely than their male counterparts to have these experiences, my project provides evidence that female gang members are more likely than non-gang girls to face these problems as well.

Though some researchers have found a relationship between self esteem and female gang involvement (Bowker and Klein, 1983), my findings parallel those of Bjerregaard and Smith (1992), who do not. Several researchers suggest that early sexual activity is linked to gang participation for girls (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Moore, 1991), but my findings do not show significant differences between gang and non-gang girls on this measure. They do reveal that gang members are significantly more likely to have been sexually abused, and are significantly more likely to report having

multiple sexual partners in the last year.

Gang members are also significantly less likely to report that marriage and motherhood are important to them, indicating less adherence to traditional feminine values. It may be that their gang involvement, and the values and norms learned from the gang, shape their perceptions of these institutions; or young women most drawn to gangs may be those who have these attitudes to begin with. Much has been made in the literature on teen pregnancy of motherhood as an avenue for young women to find love, attention and a sense of achievement (Anderson, 1990; Dash, 1989); it may be that the gang membership can provide an alternative avenue for young women seeking belonging and identity.

Gang and non-gang girls report significant differences in the composition and activities of their peer groups. Given the nature of the gangs they belong to, nearly all of the gang members describe their peer group as having both males and females in it, while 44 percent of the non-gang girls report having only female friends in their immediate peer group. Gang members have larger peer groups and are more likely to report having adults in their peer group. Again, both of these characteristics are indicative of the composition of their gangs. All of the gang members describe their group as one that engages in delinquency, and three quarters report that delinquency is a central focus of the

group.

### Motivating Contexts Shaping Gang Membership

Given these differences in peer group contexts, it is not surprising that gang members report significantly more involvement in crime and substance use. As discussed in chapter two, research on gangs has consistently shown that gang members tend to be more criminally active than non-gang youth (Esbensen et al., 1993; Fagan, 1990; Klein, 1971; Thornberry et al., 1993). Recent evidence suggests that this tends to hold for females as well (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Fagan, 1990), though female gang members tend to be less involved in serious delinquency than their male counterparts (Fagan, 1990; Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Bowker et al., 1980). Information from the in-depth interviews in this project confirm that this pattern holds in Columbus as well, as girls describe a tendency to be less involved in the most serious aspects of gang-related crime.

The survey interviews provide an initial means of differentiating gang and non-gang youth along dimensions that may be related to their decisions to join gangs. These same themes surface again within the in-depth interviews, as girls articulate their reasons for joining gangs, and those aspects of their lives lacking in other ways that they believe the gang can fulfill. The in-depth interviews give more insight into the processes behind the decision to be in gangs, giving

context to the variables discerned in the survey.

The overarching theme in the vast majority of interviews is a desire to join the gang in order to construct a sense of family, given a lack of parental relationships due to drug addiction, abuse, and/or the death or incarceration of a parent. Just a quarter of the young women I interviewed did not report multiple family problems, and many articulated in the in-depth interviews that this was one of their primary motivating contexts for joining the gang.

In addition, young women report joining gangs when they have close family members who are members. Notably, the young women with adolescent siblings in gangs were comparably less committed to the gang than were those young women with adult gang members in the immediate family. Finally, either in the context of family problems or not, young women report joining gangs in part because their friends and/or neighbors are gang members. Being in the gang for these young women means fitting in with their peers, the opportunity to have fun and hang out with people their own age, a sense of belonging, and status among their peers. Notably, young women interviewed who are not gang members but associate with primarily gang peers enjoy the excitement and fun of the gangs activities, particularly their delinquent involvement and "craziness," but did not report a desire for belonging that was strong enough to risk subsuming their individual

identity to the group.

### Gang Structures and Activities

When we turn to issues of gang structures and activities, and girls roles within these groups, the project provides evidence of the character of gangs in emergent gang cities without serious economic problems. Their discussions provide evidence of the cultural diffusion of gang lore, symbolism and structures, but affirm the reports of other researchers that connections between emergent and chronic gang cities tend to be ephemeral at best, and often more of a vague knowledge than real interaction with gang members in these cities (Hagedorn, 1988; Huff, 1989). Typical gangs in Columbus appear to be small in size, mixed-gender in composition, and include primarily adolescent members. Leaders are sometimes young adults, though only one gang member described her gang as composed primarily of adults. Young women gain status in these gangs via their connection to high-status males, as well as through their abilities to fight and willingness to stand up to rivals. Ranking systems in Columbus gangs are very loose, and appear to have adopted the terminology of larger gang cities.

When it comes to gang activities, Columbus gangs have initiation rites similar to those described in other cities. Their everyday activities typically involve hanging out, getting high, listening to music, watching television, and

walking around the neighborhood looking for trouble. Gangs in Columbus tend to engage in a great deal more talk about rivalries than actual confrontations, and those confrontations that do occur typically do not involve serious assaultive behavior. They are involved in diverse criminal activities, most of which is non-serious and happened upon, rather than planned. Some members are also involved in drug sales, though it is typically an individual rather than specifically gang activity. Young women are typically excluded from involvement in serious planned criminal acts, such as the occasional drive-by shooting, and drug sales.

#### Gender Meanings within Gangs

One theme that emerges very clearly in the data is that young women place great importance on seeing themselves as equal partners in gangs with young men, rather than as auxiliaries or as exploitable sexual partners. That these groups are described as mixed-gender gangs rather than male gangs with female subgroups is significant on this point. A belief in their equality is one of the central meaning systems they bring to their gang involvement.

Yet, these young women very clearly are not equal partners in their gangs. Some attain a greater level of status, respect and "equality" than others, but the overarching structure of gangs in Columbus is male-dominated. Typically girls achieve status either as a result of their

relationship to a high-status male, by engaging in the types of violent and criminal behaviors usually reserved for males, and through participation in or acceptance of the mistreatment of other females.

Leadership is male, and ironically, the same young women who describe their place as one of equality also allude to an unwillingness on their part to accept leadership at the hands of another female. They report the sexual exploitation of females at the hands of male gang members, but attempt to define themselves as outside of this dynamic. To deal with these obvious incongruities, they frequently individualize their own or others' experiences with abuse, and blame other females for their victimization. By their own choice and as a result of their exclusion by young men, many often do not participate in some of the more serious forms of gang related crime, including serious assaults, drive-by's and drug sales. These patterns of gendered meanings and behavior coexist in tension with their desired perceptions of equality.

#### NEW CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD

##### Examination of Non-Underclass Emergent Gang City

A number of scholars have noted the recent proliferation of gangs into more and diverse communities (Klein, 1995; Maxson et al., 1995; Spergel and Curry, 1993), but there has been little in-depth analysis of gangs



in these communities. We have some evidence of the characteristics of gang members and their criminal activities in emergent cities (Bjerregaard and Smith, 1992; Esbensen et al., 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga, 1993; Thornberry et al., 1993), and also two in-depth portraits of gangs, gang structures and activities in new cities with serious socioeconomic problems, including Hagedorn's (1988) description of Milwaukee and Decker and Van Winkle's (1996) description of St. Louis. This project is unique because it provides a detailed picture of gangs in an emergent city that is experiencing overall economic and population growth.

Though the data in my project is limited to the descriptions of female members, only representing a portion of Columbus gangs, it nevertheless suggests that it is not just the newness of gangs in the community, but also the larger socioeconomic conditions, that shape the structure and activities of these groups in emergent gang cities. While studies of cities with 'underclass' conditions have made this claim, my project offers additional support from the other direction--because of Columbus' overall economic success, many gangs in this city have not thus far expanded beyond small adolescent groups that are not engaged in serious crime. Compared to those other emergent cities we have detailed information about, Columbus gangs are smaller, younger, with narrower age ranges, less violence, and less

planned economic crime. These gangs appear to be strongly influenced by the cultural diffusion of information about gangs, through youths with exposure to chronic gang cities, and through the media, and are mostly organized around adolescent pursuits of status and excitement rather than making money.

Although these groups are thus far not seriously criminally involved, they do have the potential to become so to the extent that they continue to grow, and develop their ideas of what it is to be a "gang" from sensationalized media sources. Like the "wannabe's" that Winfree et al. (1992) found to be more involved in gang-related crime than actual gang members, Columbus gang youths' attempts to prove their "gangness" may eventually lead to more serious problems.

#### New Information on Female Gang Involvement and Gang Structures

A significant new finding of this study is that female gang involvement in Columbus primarily involves girls' participation in integrated mixed gender groups rather than in auxiliary subgroups or in autonomous all-female gangs. As noted in chapter seven, this new finding may have multiple causes, including previous researchers' lack of attention to the structures of gangs in which females are members, a result of ethnic variations that have not been thoroughly explored among female gang members, or it may be that young

women in emerging gangs (rather than those with long histories) have greater leeway in carving their places within gangs. Studies in additional cities are needed in order to know what to make of this particular finding.

In addition, this study provides an additional layer with which to address the question of how ethnicity shapes gang involvement, and female gang involvement specifically. Taylor (1993) suggests that African American girls exhibit more independence than girls from other ethnic groups, and thus are less likely to accept unequal treatment by male gang members and more likely to form autonomous female gangs. He explains (1993: 23): "There are strong cultural variables in Hispanic culture that still plays [sic.] a major determinant in what is accepted and expected by both male and female members and the Hispanic community at large."

Evidence on this question has been largely lacking, because the majority of in-depth studies of female gang involvement to date have focused primarily on Chicana, Latina and Puerto Rican gangs (Campbell, 1984a; Harris, 1988; Moore, 1991; Quicker, 1983). This project provides in-depth evidence of the gender dynamics of primarily African American gangs. The stories young women in Columbus told draw from the same familiar themes described by researchers focusing on the gang involvement of girls in Hispanic communities. Almost uniformly, these young women uncritically describe

male-dominated gangs in which young men are the leaders, have higher status, and control participation in inter-gang rivalries and crime. They also participate in and accept a sexual double standard that sanctions young women's sexual activities without holding young men accountable for the same actions, nor for sexually abusive behaviors toward females. While they articulate the value of their equality, in practice it is not systematic, even if some young women are treated as equals. This evidence suggests that gendered ethnic differences across gangs are probably not as clear or strong as Taylor and others would suggest. There is simply an ideology of equality that is articulated but not upheld.

#### Theoretical Approach for Understanding Gendered Gang Meanings

The young women in this study articulated a firmly held ideal of their equality within the gang, while at the same time describing and often supporting unequal gender structures and the exploitation of females. While much previous research on the meanings of young women's gang involvement has presented them as victims of male domination who are duped through false consciousness into accepting their place (cf. Campbell, 1984a), victims who are struggling to resist these structures (cf. Joe and Chesney-Lind, 1995), and/or heroic street feminists openly challenging male domination (cf. Taylor, 1993), I suggest here that the contradictory gender meanings and attributes found in mixed-

gender gangs, and girls' participation in and acceptance of the mistreatment of females, can be understood by examining what they get out of the "bargain."

In exchange for accepting the "rightness" of male dominated gang structures, young women can define themselves as different from other females and therefore equals, gain a sense of empowerment from their gang involvement, and also are provided the semblance of protection from other predatory males. I have noted in the text that these young women are negotiating in social worlds outside the gang where gender inequality is entrenched, including urban street worlds (Bernard and Schlafler, 1989; Bourgois, 1989; Bourgois and Dunlap, 1993; Connell, 1987: 125-132) adolescent social worlds (Eder, 1995; Thorne, 1993), and often family contexts where violence against women and girls is present. The gang thus may represent for these young women a group in which they can strike a "patriarchal bargain" (Kandiyoti, 1988) whereby they see potential benefits in their own reinforcement of patriarchal constraints. These young women are not passive victims of male gang members' sexism; instead they participate in its perpetuation by their own misogynist treatment and attitudes towards other females for their own perceived gain. Examining this element of female gang members' activities in no way suggests that these young women are not victimized, nor that they do not resist their

own oppression; instead, it provides an additional filter through which to understand the contradictory nature of gender identity among female gang members.

#### DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Findings from this project are an important slice of a much larger picture, of the changing nature of gangs across the United States, and specifically of female involvement in these groups. To truly understand the nature of gangs in the lives of young women and across varied contexts, and to gain a fuller picture of girls' roles in gangs and the meanings of gender within these groups, research needs to move in several directions.

First, we need a great deal more comparative work. While this study provides new information on female gang involvement and new directions of interest, it is limited by the fact that data was gathered in only one city. Once the project is replicated in additional cities, these findings will take on more meaning. Likewise, to understand more generally how gang proliferation is creating new and diverse gangs, comparative work needs to be employed.

Second, researchers should take a more integrated approach to studying gang involvement, such as that taken in this project. Studies which focus exclusively on the correlates of gang membership miss the opportunity to

simultaneously gather information on gang structures and non-criminal activities. It is not necessary to engage in ethnographic work in order to learn about gang structures. Questions of these sort can easily be adapted in large-scale survey research (cf. Maxson and Klein, 1993).

Third, it is important to focus on the meanings of gangs, not just in the lives of gang members, but in the lives of young women (and young men) who are not in gangs, including gang affiliates and those with more peripheral or no connections with the gangs in their communities. Preliminary interviews conducted in the course of this study suggest that this type of research can shed light on youths' motivations for resisting gang membership, as well as providing evidence of gang structures and boundaries.

Finally, to fully understand the gender dynamics of gangs, it is necessary to talk with male members of gangs about their views of the nature of gender within gangs, to examine how their meanings both correspond with and challenge the meanings discussed by young women in these groups. Doing so will provide greater insight into the place of gender in gangs.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY

Several themes emerging from the study findings point to areas in which policy may make an impact on female gang

involvement and on young women's success in negotiating within their social worlds. Of course we know from other research (and this project provides additional evidence) that economic inequality and its racial distribution is at the heart of the contexts in which most gang members live (Campbell, 1984a; Hagedorn, 1988; Klein, 1995; Vigil, 1988). Broad based social and economic change is needed to help alleviate these structures of inequality, and is one of the most important means of addressing the problem of gangs in Columbus and elsewhere. More specifically, I would propose a focus on two arenas that are typically not part of gang intervention: comprehensive drug treatment programs that include strong family components, and gender studies programming beginning in elementary school.

Funding for drug rehabilitation programs has been decreased in the last decades as the War on Drugs and War on Crime have redoubled efforts to criminalize drug addicts. In addition to these approaches being unsuccessful for solving the problem of drug addiction and its correlation with crime, it has further isolated inner city community residents, who are disproportionately affected by the enactment of these wars (Tonry, 1995). This project provides additional evidence that drug addiction has a serious impact on the female children of addicts.

While organized drug sales by gang members is not a



theme that emerges in these interviews, the effects of drugs on young women's communities and families is a strongly emerging theme. A number of young women I spoke with reported that severe family problems, especially having a drug-addicted mother, provided motivating contexts for joining gangs. Drug treatment programs are needed that have a strong emphasis on assisting the family members of addicts (especially their children) to cope with the emotional, psychological and physical losses associated with having an addicted family member. There are currently few resources available for addicts, and even fewer targeted at their family members. Young women dealing with family problems need alternative support networks of people they can trust.

A second policy focus I would recommend does not deal with gangs, but rather with the negotiation of gender identity among adolescent females. Evidence points to adolescence as a particularly perilous time of life for girls (Orenstein, 1994; Pipher, 1994; Taylor et al., 1995), and this project documents a disturbing level of misogyny coming from young women themselves. Given the many issues raised in the interviews concerning gender and sexuality--childhood sexual abuse, rape, early sexual intercourse, affiliation with older males, a sexual double standard and sexual exploitation, lack of trust between girls and their devaluation of one another--I believe educational programming

about gender issues would be a valuable service for both young women and young men. A program such as this that began in elementary school and included an available counseling component, along with both mixed and single gender groups and activities, could help raise young women's and young men's consciousness, and help combat young women's victimization, their tendency to blame other victims, and their generally misogynistic attitudes towards one another.

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Appendix A



## YOUTH STUDY DESCRIPTION FOR PARTICIPANTS

My name is Jody Miller, I am a graduate student at the University of Southern California, and I'm doing a study of young women who live in Columbus and Cleveland. The purpose of the study is to find out more about why some young women do things that could get them into trouble with their parents, school authorities, or the police. I plan to talk with all kinds of young women, and want to find out how girls feel about their experiences, in order to find out about what kinds of services or programs might be useful for young women in your communities. I will be asking you lots of questions about yourself, your school, your friends, your family, and your neighborhood. If you want to know more about the questions, I'll be happy to tell you. The interview could take about an hour and a half, or maybe a little longer.

My job is only to gather this information. I'm not a cop or a social worker or a probation officer. I hope you'll want to talk with me, but you don't have to. Some of the questions might seem personal to you or hard to remember, but I hope you'll answer them as honestly as you can. You don't have to answer any questions that you don't want to, and you can stop talking to me at any time. If you answer most of the questions, when we finish the interview I'll give you ten dollars. You may not get anything else out of talking with me, although some people enjoy it, and I think the study will help young women in the future.

I will not discuss anything you tell me with anyone but my advisors at the University of Southern California. To keep your identity secret, you can just make up a name if you want. Even if I know your real name, no one else will, and your real name won't ever be connected to what you tell me in the interview.

I need to tell you that the law requires me to report to the authorities any statements you might make about planning to hurt someone in the future. I won't be asking you anything about that, and you shouldn't tell me anything.

If you have any questions now about what I've just told you, I'd be happy to explain it some more. You can ask me any questions you want during and after the interview also. I'm giving you a copy of this form to keep for yourself. My phone number is (614) 837-6071. If you have any further questions about the research later on, you can contact me, or you can contact the university professors whose names are listed on the other side of this paper.

Dr. Barry Glassner, Department of Sociology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089; (213) 740-3533

Dr. Malcolm Klein, Social Science Research Institute, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089; (213) 740-4255

Dr. Ronald Huff, School of Public Policy and Management, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210; (614) 292-4544

Also, an individual from the community has been located, her name is Jodi Rice, and her role in the research is to be an advocate for the young women that I interview, to make sure that I'm handling the research properly, that no one feels pressured to take part in the study, and to answer any questions you may have before or after your interview, should you decide to go through with it. Her phone number is 614-274-0095. If you aren't sure at this point, and you have questions about the research that you would rather discuss with the advocate before you make a decision, we can postpone our interview and you can contact her first. Then if you decide you want to continue with the interview, we can reschedule.

Appendix B

Interview number \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview                    /   /

Interview location \_\_\_\_\_

Source of respondent \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ok, I'd like to begin by having you show me on this map where you live. You don't have to give me the exact address.

**(SHOW MAP OF RESPONDENT'S NEIGHBORHOOD TO CONFIRM FOR CENSUS TRACT ANALYSIS)**

Time begin: \_\_\_\_\_

Time end: \_\_\_\_\_

The first part of the interview is some questions about yourself, about your family, and about school and other activities. Let me know if there are any words or questions you don't understand. Remember, all of your answers will be kept private and you don't have to answer any questions that you don't want to.

1. First of all, I'd like to know how long have you lived in the neighborhood where you live now?

\_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

1a). Of this time, how long have you lived in your present home? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

2. Which one of these groups best describes you?

- |                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Black/African American | 6. Native American |
| 2. Hispanic/Latina        | 7. Asian American  |
| 3. Chicana                | 8. Other _____     |
| 4. Puerto Rican           | 9. Mixed _____     |
| 5. Anglo/white            | 10. Don't Know     |

3. What year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

4. That makes you how old now? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Were you married at any time during the last year?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

6. Which adults, that is people over age 18, do you live with now? Let me read you some possibilities and then you tell me which fits. **(FOR MULTIPLE HOUSEHOLDS, FORCE CHOICE BUT NOTE OTHER ARRANGEMENTS)**

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Mother and Father     | 2. Mother only           |
| 3. Father only           | 4. Mother and stepfather |
| 5. Father and stepmother | 6. Mother and boyfriend  |
| 7. Father and girlfriend |                          |

8. Some other relative/s (aunt, grandparents, etc.)  
(SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

9. Some other adult  
(SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

10. Is there anyone else?  
(SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

7. How long has \_\_\_\_\_ lived in your home with you?

Adult 1	_____ years	Relationship	_____
Adult 2	_____ years	Relationship	_____
Adult 3	_____ years	Relationship	_____
Adult 4	_____ years	Relationship	_____
Adult 5	_____ years	Relationship	_____

8. Who would you say has been mainly responsible for raising you or bringing you up?

- 1) both your parents
  - 2) your mother
  - 3) your father
  - 4) another adult or adults (grandparents, grandmother, aunt, stepmother, etc.) SPECIFY:
- 

9. How many brothers and sisters, including step and half brothers and sisters, do you have? Can you tell me how old they are, and whether or not they live with you? Let's start with the oldest.

(FOR EACH, WRITE RELATIONSHIP, "L" IF THEY LIVE TOGETHER OR "N" IF THEY DON'T, AND AGE)

Relationship	Live Together?	Age
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

10. Let's talk now about anyone who's actually living in your house. How many people, including yourself, regularly live there?

\_\_\_\_\_ people

11. Now I'll ask you some questions about the adults you live with. (ASK ACCORDING TO THE ADULTS THEY SAID THEY LIVE WITH IN QUESTION 6, IN THE ORDER SPECIFIED IN QUESTION 7)

- |                                   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| 11a. Does (adult 1) usually work? | Y | N |
| 11b. Does (adult 2) usually work? | Y | N |
| 11c. Does (adult 3) usually work? | Y | N |
| 11d. Does (adult 4) usually work? | Y | N |
| 11e. Does (adult 5) usually work? | Y | N |

12a. Can you tell me how far (adult 1) went in school? Would you say:

- 1) 8th grade or less
- 2) 9th to 11th grade
- 3) graduated from high school/GED
- 4) some college or technical school
- 5) graduated from college or technical school
- 6) more than college
- 7) other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

12b. Can you tell me how far (adult 2) went in school?  
Would you say:

- 1) 8th grade or less
- 2) 9th to 11th grade
- 3) graduated from high school/GED
- 4) some college or technical school
- 5) graduated from college or technical school
- 6) more than college
- 7) other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

12c. Can you tell me how far (adult 3) went in school?  
Would you say:

- 1) 8th grade or less
- 2) 9th to 11th grade
- 3) graduated from high school/GED
- 4) some college or technical school
- 5) graduated from college or technical school
- 6) more than college
- 7) other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

12d. Can you tell me how far (adult 4) went in school?  
Would you say:

- 1) 8th grade or less
- 2) 9th to 11th grade
- 3) graduated from high school/GED
- 4) some college or technical school
- 5) graduated from college or technical school
- 6) more than college
- 7) other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

12e. Can you tell me how far (adult 5) went in school?  
Would you say:

- 1) 8th grade or less
- 2) 9th to 11th grade
- 3) graduated from high school/GED
- 4) some college or technical school
- 5) graduated from college or technical school
- 6) more than college
- 7) other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you go to school?  
1) Yes                      2) No

(IF NO)

13a. Why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13b. How long is it since you last went to school?  
\_\_\_\_\_

13c. What grade were you in? \_\_\_\_\_

13d. Which of the following best describes the grades you were getting?

- 1) mostly A's
- 2) mostly B's
- 3) mostly C's
- 4) mostly D's
- 5) mostly F's

**(IF YES)**

13e. Which school do you go to now?  
\_\_\_\_\_

13f. Do you go full time or part time?

- 1) full time
- 2) part time

13g. On average, how many days per month do you miss, if any? \_\_\_\_\_ days

13h. What grade are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

13i. Which of the following best describes the grades you are getting?

- 1) mostly A's
- 2) mostly B's
- 3) mostly C's
- 4) mostly D's
- 5) mostly F's



Now I want to ask you some questions about what you think about school. I want you to look at this card (**FOUR ITEM AGREE CARD**), it has a number of responses on it. I'll read you a statement and I'd like you to tell me whether you: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree. Use the card to help you remember the possible responses.

Are you clear on what we're going to do?  
Ok, here's the first one:

14. Homework is a waste of time. SA A D SD

Would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with that statement? (**REPEAT STEM AS NECESSARY**)

15. I try hard in school. SA A D SD

16. Education is so important that it's worth it to put up with things about school that I don't like. SA A D SD

17. I like school. SA A D SD

18. I don't care what my teachers think of me. SA A D SD

Would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?

19. Getting good grades is very important to me. SA A D SD

20. I usually finish my homework. SA A D SD

21. School is boring. SA A D SD

22. I feel close to at least one of my teachers. SA A D SD

23. I don't really belong at school. SA A D SD

24. I have alot of respect for my teachers SA A D SD

(**RETRIEVE FOUR ITEM AGREE CARD**)

25. If you could go as far as you wanted to in school, how far would you go? Would you:

1. not graduate from high school
2. graduate from high school or get a GED
3. go to college or a technical school
4. graduate from college or a technical school
5. do more than college
6. other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

26. How far do you think you will actually go in school?

1. not graduate from high school
2. graduate from high school or get a GED
3. go to college or a technical school
4. graduate from college or a technical school
5. do more than college
6. other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

27. How far do you think your parents would like you to go in school?

1. not graduate from high school
2. graduate from high school or get a GED
3. go to college or a technical school
4. graduate from college or a technical school
5. do more than college
6. other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

28. Of all the teachers you have known, how many have you liked?

- |                 |       |                  |
|-----------------|-------|------------------|
| 1. none of them | - - > | 2. a few of them |
| 3. half of them |       | 4. most of them  |
| 5. all of them  |       |                  |

The next set of questions ask how your teachers would describe you. I'll read a list of descriptions, and you tell me how much you think your teachers would agree or disagree with that description of you. Here's another card for you to look at (**FIVE ITEM AGREE CARD**), it has different responses on it than we used before: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.

Again, I will read you a phrase, and you tell me how much you think your teachers would agree or disagree that it describes you.

How much would your teachers agree that you are...

29. are well liked? SA A N D SD

Would you say they: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree? (**REPEAT STEM AS NECESSARY**)

30. need help? SA A N D SD

31. are a bad kid? SA A N D SD

32. are often upset? SA A N D SD

33. are a good citizen? SA A N D SD

How much would your teachers agree that you...

34. get along well with other people? SA A N D SD

35. are messed up? SA A N D SD

36. break rules? SA A N D SD

37. have alot of personal problems? SA A N D SD

38. get into trouble? SA A N D SD

39. are likely to succeed? SA A N D SD

40. do things that are against the law? SA A N D SD

**(RETRIEVE FIVE ITEM AGREE CARD)**

Now I'm going to ask you about different ways of handling a serious disagreement, and how often you have used each of them. Ok, look at this card (**FOUR ITEM OFTEN CARD**), and after each sentence I read you, I'd like for you to tell me how often, that is Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never, that this applies to you.

41. How often have you handled a serious disagreement by:  
Often Sometimes Rarely Never

- |                                  |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| a. talking it out                | O | S | R | N |
| b. threatening someone           | O | S | R | N |
| c. meeting each other<br>halfway | O | S | R | N |
| d. yelling                       | O | S | R | N |
| e. walking away                  | O | S | R | N |
| f. physically fighting           | O | S | R | N |

42. How often have you seen a family member handle a serious disagreement by:

- |                                  |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| a. talking it out                | O | S | R | N |
| b. threatening someone           | O | S | R | N |
| c. meeting each other<br>halfway | O | S | R | N |
| d. yelling                       | O | S | R | N |
| e. walking away                  | O | S | R | N |
| f. physically fighting           | O | S | R | N |

43. How often have you seen a friend handle a serious disagreement by:

- |                                  |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| a. talking it out                | O | S | R | N |
| b. threatening someone           | O | S | R | N |
| c. meeting each other<br>halfway | O | S | R | N |
| d. yelling                       | O | S | R | N |
| e. walking away                  | O | S | R | N |
| f. physically fighting           | O | S | R | N |

(RETRIEVE FOUR ITEM OFTEN CARD)

Ok, now I'd like to ask you some questions about the sorts of things you like to do and the kinds of groups you belong to.

44. What kinds of activities, games, sports, hobbies do you enjoy?

- 0. None
- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_

Thinking about your activities during this last year:

45. Do/did you take part in any school activities such as clubs, music groups, cheerleading, athletic or sports teams, or student government?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

**(IF YES)** What activities?

46. Are/were you in any other groups in the community such as groups at the Y, Boys and Girls clubs, sports teams, or hobby clubs?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

**(IF YES)** What activities?

47. On average, how often do you take part in religious activities such as church, Sunday School, choir, or youth groups?

- 1) never
- 2) only on important holidays
- 3) once a month
- 4) 2 to 3 times a month
- 5) about once a week
- 6) more than once a week

48. During the school year, did you ever have a job such as working at a store, cutting grass, baby sitting, or shoveling snow for pay?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No (IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 48)

**(IF YES)**

- a) What job(s) did you have? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) How many hours a week did you work? \_\_\_\_\_ hours
- c) How many weeks during the school year did you work at this job? \_\_\_\_\_ weeks
- d) How much money were you paid? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (CIRCLE ONE)  
1. an hour  
2. a day  
3. a week  
4. a month
- e) Why did you work? (SPECIFY)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

49. Did you have a job during last summer?  
1) Yes 2) No (IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 49)

**(IF YES)**

- a) What job(s) did you have? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) How many hours a week did you work? \_\_\_\_\_ hours
- c) How many weeks during the school year did you work at this job? \_\_\_\_\_ weeks
- d) How much money were you paid? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (CIRCLE ONE)  
1. an hour  
2. a day  
3. a week  
4. a month
- e) Why did you work? (SPECIFY)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

50. Do you get a regular allowance?

- 1) Yes 2) No

(CIRCLE ONE)

**(IF YES)**

- a) How much? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ 1. a day  
2. a week  
3. a month

51. Is there some other way that you earn money?  
1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)**

- a) What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) How often? \_\_\_\_\_ (CIRCLE ONE)
- c) How much money do you make?     \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- 1. an hour
  - 2. a day
  - 3. a week
  - 4. a month

52. (IF YES TO 48, 49, 50 or 51) What do you usually do with the money that you earn or get for allowance? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1. buy candy, gum, potato chips or other "junk" food
- 2. buy personal items like makeup, earrings, hair accessories
- 3. buy music, tapes, Nintendo-type games
- 4. spend it on movies, video games, eating out
- 5. buy clothes, shoes, etc.
- 6. buy presents
- 7. use it to party
- 8. save it until I can buy something expensive
- 9. save it
- 10. other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

**(IF YES TO "USE IT TO PARTY") :**

53. You said that one thing you use your money for is to party.

- a) does this involve buying alcohol?  
1) Yes                      2) No
- b) does this involve buying drugs?  
1) Yes                      2) No

Now I have a few questions about television, movies and music.

54. On an average weekday (Monday-Friday), how many hours do you watch TV? \_\_\_\_\_ hours

55. On an average weekend (Saturday-Sunday), how many hours do you watch TV? \_\_\_\_\_ hours

56. What are your favorite TV shows?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

57. On an average weekday (Monday-Friday), how many hours do you listen to music? \_\_\_\_\_ hours

58. On an average weekend (Saturday-Sunday), how many hours do you listen to music? \_\_\_\_\_ hours

59. Who are your favorite musical groups or artists?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

60. What are your favorite songs or albums?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

(CIRCLE ONE)

61. How often do you go to the movies? \_\_\_\_\_ times wk/mth

62. How often do you rent videos? \_\_\_\_\_ times wk/mth

63. What are your favorite movies?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your friends or the people you hang out with.

64. Is there a group of friends that you hang out with alot?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF NO)** 64a. Do you have any close friends?

- 1) Yes                      2) No **(IF NO, PROBE; THEN GOTO 68)**

65. How many people, counting yourself, are in this group?  
\_\_\_\_\_ people



66. How old are the other people in your group? (**READ CATEGORIES, CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY**)

- |                        |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. 10 years or younger | 5. 17-18 years |
| 2. 11-12 years         | 6. 19-20 years |
| 3. 13-14 years         | 7. 21 or over  |
| 4. 15-16 years         |                |

67. Are there females only, males only (other than you), or both males and females in your group?

1. Females Only
2. Males Only
3. Both Females and Males

68. Do you have a special boyfriend or girlfriend?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No (**IF NO TO THIS AND 64, GOTO 69B**)

**(IF YES)**

68a. How often do you spend time with your boyfriend/girlfriend?

- |                         |       |                        |
|-------------------------|-------|------------------------|
| 1. every day            | - - > | 2. a few times a week  |
| 3. once a week          |       | 4. a few times a month |
| 5. once a month or less |       |                        |

68b. Is your boyfriend/girlfriend a member of the group of friends you described before?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Going back to the group of friends you described:

69. Do you consider this group to be a street gang?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

**(IF YES)**

69a. So does that mean that you consider yourself to be a gang member?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No (**IF NO, GOTO 69B**)

**(IF NO)**

69b. Have you ever been a member of a youth gang? Which answer best describes you:

1. No, and I don't want to be.
2. No, but I'd like to be.
3. Yes, I was before but I'm not anymore.
4. Yes, I am now.

Now I want to ask you about how much you think your neighborhood is affected by gangs. For instance:

70. Is there alot of talk about gangs around your neighborhood?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

71. Is there alot of gang activity around your neighborhood?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

72. Are any of the people living on your street members of a gang?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

73. Are there gang rivalries close by?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

74. Is there pressure on neighborhood kids to join gangs around your neighborhood?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

75. Among the kids in the neighborhood, how important is it to be a member of a gang? Is it:

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important, or
3. Not Important At All

**THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE FOR GANG MEMBERS AND EX-GANG MEMBERS ONLY--ASK EX-GANG MEMBERS QUESTIONS IN THE PAST TENSE; NON-GANG MEMBERS GOTO QUESTION 101, PAGE 18)**

Now I would like to ask you some more questions about your gang.

76. How old were you when you first started "hanging out" with the members of your gang? \_\_\_\_\_ years

77. At what age did you become a full member? \_\_\_\_\_ years

78. How many members are there in your gang? \_\_\_\_\_

- a) How many are female? \_\_\_\_\_
- b) How many are male? \_\_\_\_\_

**(if they have a hard time answering this, ask, "of every ten gang members, how many would you say are girls? how many would you say are guys?)**

79. How old are the members of your gang? (READ CATEGORIES, CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

- |                        |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. 10 years or younger | 5. 17-18 years |
| 2. 11-12 years         | 6. 19-20 years |
| 3. 13-14 years         | 7. 21 or over  |
| 4. 15-16 years         |                |

80. Tell me if any of the following describe your gang?

(CIRCLE ONE)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| a) you can join before you are 13                    | Y | N |
| b) there are initiation rites or rituals             | Y | N |
| c) the gang has a territory it claims<br>as its own  | Y | N |
| d) the gang has established leaders                  | Y | N |
| e) the gang has regular meetings                     | Y | N |
| f) the gang has specific rules or codes              | Y | N |
| g) it has special colors, symbols,<br>signs, clothes | Y | N |
| h) gang members have specific roles                  | Y | N |
| i) there are roles for each age group                | Y | N |
| j) there are specific roles for males<br>and females | Y | N |
| k) the gang is involved in drug sales                | Y | N |

81. How would you describe your position in this group? Are you:

1. a leader
2. not a leader but one of the top people
3. a member
4. or some other role (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

82. What role would you like to have? Would you like to be:

1. a leader
2. not a leader but one of the top people
3. a member
4. not a member
5. or some other role (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

83. What role do you expect to have someday? Do you expect to be:

1. a leader
2. not a leader but one of the top people
3. a member
4. not a member
5. or some other role (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

84. Are any of your close friends also members of this gang?  
1) Yes 2) No

(IF YES)

- a) How many? Would you say:
1. All of them
  2. Most of them
  3. Half of them
  4. Less than half of them
  5. Hardly any of them

85. Are any of your close friends members of another gang?  
1) Yes 2) No

86. Are any of your close friends not gang members?  
1) Yes 2) No

(IF YES)

- a) How many? Would you say:
1. All of them
  2. Most of them
  3. Half of them
  4. Less than half of them
  5. Hardly any of them

87. In addition to your gang, is there another group you hang around with?  
1) Yes 2) No

(IF YES)

87a) Compared with the time you spend with the gang, how much time do you spend with the other group? Would you say you spend:

1. more time with the gang
2. about the same time with both, or
3. more time with the other group

88. How often do you and some of the members from your gang get together? Do you get together about:

1. every day
2. three or four times a week
3. twice a week
4. once a week
5. once every couple of weeks
6. once a month
7. less than once a month
8. never

Ok, think about the time when you joined your gang.

89. How did you find out about the gang?

---

---

90. What were your reasons for joining?

---

---

91. Did you have to do anything special to join the gang, such as doing something to prove you were good enough to be a member?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. what did you have to do?

---

---

92. Would anything have happened to you if you hadn't joined the gang? 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. what would have happened?

---

---

93. Does anyone in your family know that you are in a gang?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. Who knows? **(CIRCLE ALL MENTIONED)**

1. Mother                      2. Father  
3. Sister                      4. Brother

5. Other Relative(s) **(SPECIFY)**

---

---

94. Did anyone in your family try to stop you from becoming a member of a gang or try to get you to quit?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. Who? **(CIRCLE ALL MENTIONED)**

1. Mother                      2. Father  
3. Sister                      4. Brother

5. Other Relative(s) **(SPECIFY)**

---

---

95. Does anyone in your family think it's ok that you are a member of a gang? 1) Yes 2) No

**(IF YES)** a. Who? **(CIRCLE ALL MENTIONED)**

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| 1. Mother | 2. Father  |
| 3. Sister | 4. Brother |

5. Other Relative(s) **(SPECIFY)**

---

---

Now I want to ask you about the kinds of things that your gang does.

96. Does your gang get involved in community activities?  
1) Yes 2) No

**(IF YES)** a. what activities?

---

---

97. Does your gang provide help to neighborhood residents?  
1) Yes 2) No

**(IF YES)** a. what does it do?

---

---

98. Does your gang take care of or help other kids in the neighborhood?  
1) Yes 2) No

**(IF YES)** a. what does it do?

---

---

99. Does your gang get in fights with other gangs or groups?  
1) Yes 2) No

**(IF YES)** a. what other groups?

---

---

b. what are the fights about?

---

---

c. are weapons used?      1) Yes      1) No

(IF YES) what kinds?

---

---

(IF MEMBERS OF MIXED-GENDER GANGS)

d. who is involved in these fights?

1. always only males
2. a few females, but mostly males
3. both males and females
4. mostly females, but a few males
5. always only females

100. Does your gang provide protection for its members?

- 1) Yes      2) No

(IF YES) a. in what ways?

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GOTO QUESTION 102 FOR GANG MEMBERS; QUESTION 101 IS FOR NON-GANG MEMBERS ONLY

QUESTION 101 IS FOR NON-GANG MEMBERS ONLY--GANG MEMBERS GOTO QUESTION 102)

101. I'd like you to think about the group of kids that you are most involved with. Can you think of one?

(IF NO GROUP, PROMPT FOR ONE; IF NONE, GOTO QUESTION 110)

a. What group is it?

---

102. There are lots of reasons people join **GROUPS/GANGS**. Ok, considering (**group/gang mentioned**), what would you say are the *really* important reasons for you to be a member?

---

---

---

(RECORD RESPONSE/CHECK OFF FROM LIST BELOW)

Now I'm going to read you a list of other reasons why people join **GANGS/GROUPS** and I'd like you to tell me if any of them were important to you for joining your **GANG/GROUP**.

Listen to each statement then tell me if it was important for you.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ to make friends
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ to get a reputation
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ to fill up empty time
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ for support and loyalty
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ to feel important
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ to feel like you belong to something
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_ to prepare for the future
  - h. \_\_\_\_\_ to avoid home
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_ to keep out of trouble
  - j. \_\_\_\_\_ for protection
  - k. \_\_\_\_\_ members forced you to join
  - l. \_\_\_\_\_ for excitement
  - m. \_\_\_\_\_ to share secrets
  - n. \_\_\_\_\_ to get away with illegal activities
  - o. \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in group activities
  - p. \_\_\_\_\_ to learn new skills
  - q. \_\_\_\_\_ to have a territory of your own
  - r. \_\_\_\_\_ to get your parents' respect
  - s. \_\_\_\_\_ because someone in your family was a member
  - t. \_\_\_\_\_ to meet guys easily
  - u. \_\_\_\_\_ because the group is one you can feel proud of
  - v. \_\_\_\_\_ to get money or other things
  - w. \_\_\_\_\_ to get money or other things from selling drugs
  - x. \_\_\_\_\_ because a friend was a member
  - y. \_\_\_\_\_ to get what you don't get from your family
- (ADD THIS FOR GANG MEMBERS ONLY)
- z. \_\_\_\_\_ some groups just develop into gangs



**FOR BOTH GANG AND NON-GANG**

103. When you are with your **GANG/GROUP**, what kinds of activities do you do together? Do you:

- |                                |   |   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| a. hang out?                   | Y | N |
| b. watch TV or videos?         | Y | N |
| c. go to the movies?           | Y | N |
| d. listen to music?            | Y | N |
| e. go dancing?                 | Y | N |
| f. go to sports events?        | Y | N |
| g. try to meet guys?           | Y | N |
| h. go shopping?                | Y | N |
| i. drink beer, wine or liquor? | Y | N |
| j. do drugs?                   | Y | N |

104. Does your **GANG/GROUP** do things that are illegal, as a group?

- 1) Yes                      2) No  
(IF NO, PROBE, THEN GOTO QU. 107)

105. How much time do the members of your **GANG/GROUP** talk about the illegal things they have done or plan to do? Would you say:

- a. a lot  
b. some  
c. a little, or  
d. none

(IF NONE OR A LITTLE) what do they talk about most?

---

---

106. What sorts of illegal things do members of your **GANG/GROUP** do as a group? do they:

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| a. steal things worth less than \$50                       | Y | N |
| b. steal things worth more than \$50                       | Y | N |
| c. go joyriding in stolen vehicles                         | Y | N |
| d. damage or destroy things                                | Y | N |
| e. intimidate or threaten people                           | Y | N |
| f. rob/strongarm other people                              | Y | N |
| g. attack others with the intent to<br>seriously hurt them | Y | N |
| h. sell marijuana  | Y | N |
| i. sell other drugs  | Y | N |
| j. do anything else illegal                                | Y | N |
- (IF YES) what?
- 
- 
-

**(IF INTERVIEW SUBJECT HAS INDICATED THAT SHE IS A MEMBER OF A MIXED-GENDER GANG, THEN ASK THE FOLLOWING)**

106a. Of the illegal things you said members of your gang do, which ones do female members do? Do female members:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| a. steal things worth less than \$50                    | Y | N |
| b. steal things worth more than \$50                    | Y | N |
| c. go joyriding in stolen vehicles                      | Y | N |
| d. damage or destroy things                             | Y | N |
| e. intimidate or threaten people                        | Y | N |
| f. rob/strongarm other people                           | Y | N |
| g. attack others with the intent to seriously hurt them | Y | N |
| h. sell marijuana                                       | Y | N |
| i. sell other drugs                                     | Y | N |
| j. do anything else illegal                             | Y | N |
- (IF YES) what?**
- 
- 

107. Besides the things we've already talked about, do members of your **GANG/GROUP** do things together that are fun and exciting but not illegal?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES) a. what do they do?**

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**(FOR MIXED-GENDER GANGS ONLY)**

107a. Do female members of your gang do things together without male members?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES) a. what do they do?**

---

---

107b. Do male members of your gang do things together without female members?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES) a. what do they do?**

---

---

108. How important to you is your **GANG/GROUP** and their activities? Would you say:

- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. very important       | 2. pretty important  |
| 3. somewhat important   | 4. not too important |
| 5. not important at all |                      |

**FOR GANG MEMBERS ONLY**

**NON-GANG GO TO QUESTION 110, PAGE 22 (TOP)**

**EX-GANG GO TO QUESTION 114, PAGE 22 (BOTTOM)**

109. Using this card (**FIVE ITEM AGREE CARD**), tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	SA	A	neither	D	SD
a. Being in the gang makes me feel important	5	4	3	2	1
b. The gang members provide a good deal of support and loyalty for one another	5	4	3	2	1
c. Being a member of the gang makes me feel respected	5	4	3	2	1
d. Being a member of the gang makes me feel like a useful person to have around	5	4	3	2	1
e. Being a member of the gang makes me feel like I really belong somewhere	5	4	3	2	1
f. I really enjoy being a member of the gang	5	4	3	2	1

**FOR NON-GANG ONLY**

**GANG MEMBERS GOTO QUESTION 116, PAGE 23**

110. Since you have been living in your neighborhood, have you ever been approached to join a gang?  
1) Yes                      2) No

111. Have you ever thought about joining a gang?  
1) Yes                      2) No

a. why or why not?

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---

112. Are you ever afraid that someone will hurt you if you don't join a gang? Would you say you're:  
1. often afraid  
2. sometimes afraid, or  
3. never afraid

113. Are any of your close friends members of a gang?  
1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)**

a. How many? Would you say:  
1. All of them  
2. Most of them  
3. Half of them  
4. Less than half of them  
5. Hardly any of them

**FOR EX-GANG MEMBERS ONLY**

**NON-GANG GO TO QUESTION 116, PAGE 23**

114. When did you quit being a gang member? \_\_\_\_\_

115. Why did you leave?

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**ASK ALL RESPONDENTS:**

116. Has anyone in your family ever been a member of a gang?  
1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)**

a. Who was it?	Are they still a member?		Did they encourage you to join?	
	Y	N	Y	N
_____	Y	N	Y	N
_____	Y	N	Y	N
_____	Y	N	Y	N
_____	Y	N	Y	N

117. Now I'm going to ask you questions about things that happen to many people in their lives, and I want you to tell me if any of them have happened to you during the last year.

During the past year...

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| a. Did you change schools?                             | Y | N |
| b. Did your mother begin work for the first time?      | Y | N |
| c. Did you have your first date?                       | Y | N |
| d. Did you get a new boyfriend/girlfriend?             | Y | N |
| e. Did you break up with your boyfriend or girlfriend? | Y | N |
| f. Did you get a new group of friends?                 | Y | N |
| g. Did you get a special honor or award at school?     | Y | N |
| h. Did your parents have physical fights?              | Y | N |
| i. Did you become a mother?                            | Y | N |
| j. Did you have a serious accident?                    | Y | N |
| k. Were you hospitalized?                              | Y | N |
| l. Did a good friend move away?                        | Y | N |
| m. Did either of your parents lose a job?              | Y | N |
| n. Did you fail a class at school                      | Y | N |
| o. Did you get suspended or expelled from school?      | Y | N |
| p. Did someone you were close to die?                  | Y | N |

With the next set of questions, I am going to read you a statement and I'd like for you to tell me after each one, using this card again (**FOUR ITEM AGREE CARD**) whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement.

118. I have at least as many friends as other people my age. SA A D SD

Would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?

119. I am not as popular as other people my age. SA A D SD

120. In the kinds of things that people my age like to do, I am at least as good as most other people. SA A D SD

Would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?

121. People my age often pick on me. SA A D SD

122. Other people think I am alot of fun to be with. SA A D SD

123. I usually keep to myself because I am not like other people my age. SA A D SD

124. Other people wish they were like me. SA A D SD

125. I wish I were a different kind of person because I would have more friends. SA A D SD

Would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?

126. If my group of friends decided to vote for leaders of their group, I'd be elected to a high position. SA A D SD

127. When things get tough, I am not a person other people my age would turn to for help. SA A D SD

128. My parents are proud of the type of person I am. SA A D SD

129. No one pays much attention to me at home.	SA	A	D	SD
130. My parents feel that I can be depended on.	SA	A	D	SD
131. I often feel that if they could, my parents would trade me for another child.	SA	A	D	SD
132. My parents try to understand me.	SA	A	D	SD
133. My parents expect too much from me.	SA	A	D	SD
134. I am an important person to my family.	SA	A	D	SD
135. I often feel unwanted at home.	SA	A	D	SD
136. My parents believe that I will be a success in the future.	SA	A	D	SD
137. I often wish that I was born into another family.	SA	A	D	SD
138. My teachers expect too much from me.	SA	A	D	SD
139. In the kinds of things we do at school, I am at least as good as other people in my class.	SA	A	D	SD
Would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?				
140. I often feel worthless at school.	SA	A	D	SD
141. I am usually proud of my report card.	SA	A	D	SD
142. School is harder for me than most people.	SA	A	D	SD
143. My teachers are usually happy with the kind of work I do.	SA	A	D	SD
144. Most of my teachers do not understand me.	SA	A	D	SD
145. I am an important person in my classes.	SA	A	D	SD

146. No matter how hard I try, I never  
get the grades I deserve. SA A D SD

147. I feel that I've been very fortunate  
to have had the kinds of teachers  
I've had since I started school. SA A D SD

Would you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly  
disagree?

**(RETRIEVE CARD FROM RESPONDENT)**

Ok, now I'm going to ask you a list of things that may  
describe people your age. Using this card as a guide (**FOUR  
ITEM WELL CARD**), tell me for each statement I read whether  
you think it describes you: very well, pretty well, a little,  
or not at all. Ok?

I'm the kind of person who...

148. Is sort of mixed up VW PW L N

Does this describe you: very well, pretty well, a little, or  
not at all?

I'm the kind of person who...

149. Is well liked VW PW L N

150. Is a good citizen VW PW L N

151. Is an unhappy person VW PW L N

152. Gets into alot of fights VW PW L N

I'm the kind of person who...

153. Is often upset VW PW L N

Does this describe you: very well, pretty well, a little, or  
not at all?

I'm the kind of person who...

154. Is a bad kid VW PW L N

155. Is messed up VW PW L N

156. Gets along well with  
other people VW PW L N



157. Gets into trouble	VW	PW	L	N
158. Needs help	VW	PW	L	N
159. Is liked by teachers	VW	PW	L	N
160. Does things that are against the law	VW	PW	L	N
161. Has alot of personal problems	VW	PW	L	N
162. Is respectable	VW	PW	L	N
163. Breaks rules	VW	PW	L	N

I'm the kind of person who...

164. Is liked by neighbors	VW	PW	L	N
----------------------------	----	----	---	---

Does this describe you: very well, pretty well, a little, or not at all?

I'm the kind of person who...

165. Is emotionally disturbed	VW	PW	L	N
166. Will spend time in jail	VW	PW	L	N
167. Will do OK in things like school, jobs, having a family, etc.	VW	PW	L	N
168. Will need help for personal problems	VW	PW	L	N
169. Will get into trouble for things she does	VW	PW	L	N

Does this describe you: very well, pretty well, a little, or not at all?

**(RETRIEVE CARD FROM RESPONDENT)**

The next set of questions ask about how you feel about your opportunities to get ahead. After each question, I'd like you to tell me, using this card (**FIVE ITEM AGREE CARD**), whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

170. The world is usually good to people like me. SA A N D SD

Do you: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

171. I probably won't be able to do the kind of work I want to because I won't have enough education. SA A N D SD

172. I'll never have as much opportunity to succeed as kids from other neighborhoods. SA A N D SD

173. There is a good chance that some of my friends will have lots of money. SA A N D SD

174. My family can't give me the opportunities that most kids have. SA A N D SD

175. If a kid like me works hard, she can get ahead. SA A N D SD

Do you: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

176. All I see ahead are bad things, not good things. SA A N D SD

177. I probably won't be able to do the kind of work I want to because I'm female. SA A N D SD

178. I'll never have as much opportunity to succeed as a male will. SA A N D SD

179. If a woman works hard, she can get ahead. SA A N D SD

**(RETRIEVE CARD FROM RESPONDENT)**

Most kids get into trouble when they are young. I'm going to read you a list of some things that kids do and I'd like you to tell me whether you have ever done them. Remember, everything that you tell me will be kept secret.

Have you ever:

180. Run away from home?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

- (IF YES)** a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone                  2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

181. Have you ever skipped classes without an excuse?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

- (IF YES)** a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone                  2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

182. Have you ever lied about your age to get into some place or to buy something (like to get into a movie or buy alcohol)?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

- (IF YES)** a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone                  2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

183. Have you ever hitchhiked a ride with a stranger?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

- (IF YES)** a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone                  2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

184. Have you ever carried a hidden weapon?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six  
    months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

185. Have you ever been loud or rowdy in a public place  
    where somebody complained and got you in trouble?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six  
    months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

186. Have you ever begged for money or things from  
    strangers?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six  
    months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

187. Have you ever made obscene telephone calls?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six  
    months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

188. Have you ever been drunk in a public place?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six  
    months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

189. Have you ever damaged, destroyed or marked up someone  
    else's property on purpose?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

190. Have you ever set fire on purpose or tried to set fire to a house, building or car, knowing someone was inside?  
1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times  
d. how many of these were related to buying or selling drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

191. Have you ever avoided paying for things, like a movie, taking bus rides, or anything else?  
1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

192. Have you ever gone into or tried to go into a building to steal or damage something?  
1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

193. Have you ever tried to steal or actually stolen money or things worth \$5 or less?  
1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

194. How about between \$5 and \$50?  
1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

195. How about between \$50 and \$100?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

196. How about over \$100?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

197. Have you ever shoplifted or taken something from a store on purpose (including anything you have already told me about)?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

198. Have you ever stolen someone's purse or wallet or picked someone's pocket?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

199. Have you ever stolen something that did not belong to you?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
1) alone 2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

200. Have you ever tried to buy or sell things that were stolen?  
1) Yes 2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
1) alone 2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

201. Have you ever taken a car or motorcycle for a ride without the owner's permission?  
1) Yes 2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
1) alone 2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

202. Have you ever stolen or tried to steal a car or other  
1) Yes 2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
1) alone 2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

203. Have you ever forged a check or used fake money to pay for something?  
1) Yes 2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
1) alone 2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

204. Have you ever used or tried to use a credit card, bank card, or automatic teller card without permission?  
1) Yes 2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

205. Have you ever tried to cheat someone by selling them something that was not what you said it was or that was worthless?  
    1) Yes                   2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

206. Have you ever attacked someone with a weapon or with the idea of seriously hurting or killing them?  
    1) Yes                   2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times  
d. how many of these were related to buying or selling drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

207. Have you ever thrown objects such as bottles or rocks at people?  
    1) Yes                   2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

208. Have you ever been involved in a gang fight?  
    1) Yes                   2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times  
d. how many of these were related to buying or selling drugs? \_\_\_\_\_



209. Have you ever hit someone with the idea of hurting them (other than what you have already mentioned)?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone                  2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times  
d. how many of these were related to buying or selling drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

210. Have you ever used a weapon or force to make someone give you money or things?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone                  2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times  
d. how many of these were related to buying or selling drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

211. Have you ever been paid for having sexual relations with someone?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone                  2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

212. Have you ever physically hurt or threatened to hurt someone to get them to have sex with you?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone                  2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

213. Have you ever had or tried to have sexual relations with someone against their will (other than what you have already mentioned)?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone      2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

214. Have you ever helped another person have sexual relations with someone against their will?  
    1) Yes      2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone      2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

215. Have you ever sold marijuana?  
    1) Yes      2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone      2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

216. Have you ever sold crack or rock?  
    1) Yes      2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone      2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

217. Have you ever sold hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, LSD or acid?  
    1) Yes      2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone      2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

218. Have you ever drunk beer or wine without your parent's permission?  
    1) Yes      2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
1) alone 2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

219. Have you ever drunk hard liquor without your parent's permission?  
1) Yes 2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
1) alone 2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

220. Have you ever used marijuana?  
1) Yes 2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
1) alone 2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

221. Have you ever used acid, LSD, psychedelics or hallucinogens?  
1) Yes 2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
1) alone 2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

222. Have you ever used cocaine or coke, other than crack?  
1) Yes 2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
1) alone 2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

223. Have you ever used crack or rock?  
1) Yes 2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

224. Have you ever used heroin?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

225. Have you ever used angel dust or PCP?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

226. Have you ever used tranquilizers?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

227. Have you ever used downers or barbiturates?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone           2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

228. Have you ever used uppers, speed or amphetamines?  
    1) Yes           2) No

- (IF YES) a. at about what age did you first do it? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. do you usually do it alone or with others?  
    1) alone                      2) with others  
c. how many times have you done it in the last six months? \_\_\_\_\_ times

Now I'd like to go back to your answers about selling drugs.

**(CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS, CORRESPONDING WITH THE DRUGS THEY INDICATE THEY'VE SOLD)**

- 229a. You indicated that you have sold marijuana. How frequently does this occur?  
    1) daily  
    2) several days a week  
    3) once a week  
    4) less than once a week  
    5) less than once a month
- 229b. You indicated that you have sold crack or rock. How frequently does this occur?  
    1) daily  
    2) several days a week  
    3) once a week  
    4) less than once a week  
    5) less than once a month
- 229c. You indicated that you have sold hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, LSD or acid. How frequently does this occur?  
    1) daily  
    2) several days a week  
    3) once a week  
    4) less than once a week  
    5) less than once a month

**THE FOLLOWING ARE FOR THOSE GANG MEMBERS WHO INDICATE THEY HAVE SOLD DRUGS**

**(NON-GANG MEMBERS WHO HAVE SOLD DRUGS, GO TO QUESTION 232)**

- 230a. Do other members of your gang sell marijuana?  
    1) Yes                      2) No
- 230b. Do other members of your gang also sell crack or rock?  
    1) Yes                      2) No

230c. Do other members of your gang also sell hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, LSD or acid?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

231. Is your gang as a group involved in drug distribution or sales?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**ASK BOTH GANG AND NON-GANG RESPONDENTS THE FOLLOWING:**

232. Which of the following most accurately describes your status as a drug seller:

- 1) you work alone
- 2) you hire others
- 3) you act as a middleman
- 4) you are hired by others

233. Are the individuals you **HIRE/WORK FOR/ACT AS A MIDDLEMAN FOR** also members of **A GANG/YOUR GANG?**

- 1) Yes                      2) No

234. How much money do you make selling drugs? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (CIRCLE ONE)  
hour  
day  
week  
month

The next few questions ask about any contacts you've had with the police or other justice system agencies.

235. Have you been arrested in the last year?

- 1) Yes                      2) No    **(IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 237)**

**(IF YES)** a. How many times did this occur? \_\_\_\_\_ times

b. What offense did the police charge you with the (first, second, third, etc.) time you were arrested?

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

236a. When you were arrested for \_\_\_\_\_, did any of the following happen?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| a. Were you warned and released?                        | Y | N |
| b. Were your parents notified?                          | Y | N |
| c. Were school officials told?                          | Y | N |
| d. Were you referred for counseling?                    | Y | N |
| e. Were you diverted or sent to a treatment program?    | Y | N |
| f. Did you have to go to court?                         | Y | N |
| g. Were you put on probation?                           | Y | N |
| h. Did you have to pay a fine?                          | Y | N |
| i. Did you have to make restitution?                    | Y | N |
| j. Did you have to do community service?                | Y | N |
| k. Were you sent to a detention or correctional center? | Y | N |
| l. Did anything else happen?                            | Y | N |

**(IF YES)** What happened?

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236b. When you were arrested for \_\_\_\_\_, did any of the following happen?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| a. Were you warned and released?                        | Y | N |
| b. Were your parents notified?                          | Y | N |
| c. Were school officials told?                          | Y | N |
| d. Were you referred for counseling?                    | Y | N |
| e. Were you diverted or sent to a treatment program?    | Y | N |
| f. Did you have to go to court?                         | Y | N |
| g. Were you put on probation?                           | Y | N |
| h. Did you have to pay a fine?                          | Y | N |
| i. Did you have to make restitution?                    | Y | N |
| j. Did you have to do community service?                | Y | N |
| k. Were you sent to a detention or correctional center? | Y | N |
| l. Did anything else happen?                            | Y | N |

**(IF YES)** What happened?

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236c. When you were arrested for \_\_\_\_\_, did any of the following happen?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| a. Were you warned and released?                        | Y | N |
| b. Were your parents notified?                          | Y | N |
| c. Were school officials told?                          | Y | N |
| d. Were you referred for counseling?                    | Y | N |
| e. Were you diverted or sent to a treatment program?    | Y | N |
| f. Did you have to go to court?                         | Y | N |
| g. Were you put on probation?                           | Y | N |
| h. Did you have to pay a fine?                          | Y | N |
| i. Did you have to make restitution?                    | Y | N |
| j. Did you have to do community service?                | Y | N |
| k. Were you sent to a detention or correctional center? | Y | N |
| l. Did anything else happen?                            | Y | N |

**(IF YES)** What happened?

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236d. When you were arrested for \_\_\_\_\_, did any of the following happen?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| a. Were you warned and released?                        | Y | N |
| b. Were your parents notified?                          | Y | N |
| c. Were school officials told?                          | Y | N |
| d. Were you referred for counseling?                    | Y | N |
| e. Were you diverted or sent to a treatment program?    | Y | N |
| f. Did you have to go to court?                         | Y | N |
| g. Were you put on probation?                           | Y | N |
| h. Did you have to pay a fine?                          | Y | N |
| i. Did you have to make restitution?                    | Y | N |
| j. Did you have to do community service?                | Y | N |
| k. Were you sent to a detention or correctional center? | Y | N |
| l. Did anything else happen?                            | Y | N |

**(IF YES)** What happened?

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236e. When you were arrested for \_\_\_\_\_, did any of the following happen?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| a. Were you warned and released?                        | Y | N |
| b. Were your parents notified?                          | Y | N |
| c. Were school officials told?                          | Y | N |
| d. Were you referred for counseling?                    | Y | N |
| e. Were you diverted or sent to a treatment program?    | Y | N |
| f. Did you have to go to court?                         | Y | N |
| g. Were you put on probation?                           | Y | N |
| h. Did you have to pay a fine?                          | Y | N |
| i. Did you have to make restitution?                    | Y | N |
| j. Did you have to do community service?                | Y | N |
| k. Were you sent to a detention or correctional center? | Y | N |
| l. Did anything else happen?                            | Y | N |

**(IF YES)** What happened?

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236f. When you were arrested for \_\_\_\_\_, did any of the following happen?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| a. Were you warned and released?                        | Y | N |
| b. Were your parents notified?                          | Y | N |
| c. Were school officials told?                          | Y | N |
| d. Were you referred for counseling?                    | Y | N |
| e. Were you diverted or sent to a treatment program?    | Y | N |
| f. Did you have to go to court?                         | Y | N |
| g. Were you put on probation?                           | Y | N |
| h. Did you have to pay a fine?                          | Y | N |
| i. Did you have to make restitution?                    | Y | N |
| j. Did you have to do community service?                | Y | N |
| k. Were you sent to a detention or correctional center? | Y | N |
| l. Did anything else happen?                            | Y | N |

**(IF YES)** What happened?

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This next set of questions is about your sexual experience.

237. Have you ever had sexual intercourse with a person of the opposite sex?

- 1) Yes                      2) No (IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 243)

238. How old were you when you first had sexual intercourse with someone of the opposite sex?

age \_\_\_\_\_

239. Was this experience forced or voluntary?

- 1) forced                  2) voluntary

240. How many times in the last year have you had sexual intercourse with someone of the opposite sex?

\_\_\_\_\_ times

241. During the past year, how many people of the opposite sex have you had as sexual partners?

\_\_\_\_\_ (number)

242. When having sex with males, have you used any contraception or protection?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

(IF YES) a. what protection have you used?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. how often did you use protection?

1. almost never
2. sometimes
3. most of the time
4. always

243. Have you ever had sex with a person of the same sex?

- 1) Yes                      2) No (IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 249)

244. How old were you when you first had sex with someone of the same sex?

age \_\_\_\_\_

245. Was this experience forced or voluntary?

- 1) forced                  2) voluntary

246. How many times in the last year have you had sex with someone of the same sex?

\_\_\_\_\_ times

247. During the past year, how many people of the same sex have you had as sexual partners? \_\_\_\_\_ (number)

248. When having sex with females, have you used any contraception or protection?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. what protection have you used?  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. how often did you use protection?

1. almost never  
2. sometimes  
3. most of the time  
4. always

249. How old were you when you had your first period? \_\_\_\_\_

250. Have you ever been pregnant?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. how many times have you been pregnant? \_\_\_\_\_

For each pregnancy, ask:

year of pregnancy?

outcome?

First	_____	_____
Second	_____	_____
Third	_____	_____

Now I'd like to ask you some more questions about your family and life at home.

251. How much fun would you say you and your family have together? Would you say:

1. a great deal              3. a little  
2. pretty much              4. none at all

252. How much time do you spend talking, playing or doing things with your family? Would you say:

1. a great deal              3. a little  
2. pretty much              4. none at all

253. Compared to most families, would you say yours was:

1. very close  
2. somewhat close  
3. a little close, or  
4. not close at all

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about how you think you get along with the adults in your family. Think about the adult in your family you get along best with. Can you tell me who that is?

**(IF THEY CAN'T DECIDE, USE MOTHER OR FEMALE GUARDIAN FIRST)**

**RECORD WHICH ADULT:** \_\_\_\_\_

Ok, look at this card (**FOUR ITEM OFTEN CARD**), and after each sentence I read you, I'd like you to tell me how often, that is: Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never, that this applies to you.

254. I get along well with (adult) O S R N

Would you say this applies to you: Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

255. I feel that you can really trust (adult) O S R N

256. My(adult) does not understand me O S R N

257. My (adult) is too demanding O S R N

Would you say this applies to you: Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

258. I really enjoy my (adult) O S R N

259. I have alot of respect for my (adult) O S R N

260. I think my (adult) is terrific O S R N

261. I feel very angry towards my (adult) O S R N

262. I feel violent towards my (adult) O S R N

263. I feel proud of my (adult) O S R N

Would you say this applies to you: Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

REPEAT THIS SERIES OF QUESTIONS, USING AN ADULT IN THE FAMILY OF THE OPPOSITE SEX OF THE FIRST ONE THE RESPONDENT NAMED, IF AVAILABLE. FOR EXAMPLE, IF THEY NAMED THEIR GRANDMOTHER, ASK WHICH ADULT MALE THEY FEEL CLOSEST TO; IF THEY NAMED THEIR FATHER, ASK WHICH ADULT FEMALE THEY FEEL CLOSEST TO.

RECORD WHICH ADULT: \_\_\_\_\_

Ok, using the same card again (FOUR ITEM OFTEN CARD), after each sentence I read you, I'd like you to tell me how often, that is: Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never, this statement applies to you.

264. I get along well with (adult) O S R N

Would you say this applies to you: Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

265. I feel that you can really trust  
(adult) O S R N

266. My(adult) does not understand me O S R N

267. My (adult) is too demanding O S R N

Would you say this applies to you: Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

268. I really enjoy my (adult) O S R N

269. I have alot of respect for my  
(adult) O S R N

270. I think my (adult) is terrific O S R N

271. I feel very angry towards my  
(adult) O S R N

272. I feel violent towards my  
(adult) O S R N

273. I feel proud of my (adult) O S R N

Would you say this applies to you: Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

(RETRIEVE CARD FROM RESPONDENT)

**FOR THOSE RESPONDENTS WHO ARE NOT LIVING WITH THEIR MOTHER AND/OR FATHER, AND DO NOT NAME THEM AS THE ADULTS THEY FEEL CLOSEST TO, ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTION(S):**

274. Do you see your mother or keep in touch with her on a regular basis?

1. Yes
2. No

275. How close do you feel to your mother? Would you say:

1. Very Close
2. Somewhat Close, or
3. Not Close At All

276. Do you see your father or keep in touch with him on a regular basis?

1. Yes
2. No

277. How close do you feel to your father? Would you say:

1. Very Close
2. Somewhat Close, or
3. Not Close At All

**FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, USE APPROPRIATE TITLE FOR ADULT GUARDIAN--USE THEIR RESPONSE FROM QUESTION 8 AS A GUIDE**

278. How many of your friends do/does your **parent(s)/guardian(s)** know?

1. all of them
2. most of them
3. some of them
4. none of them

Using this card (**THREE ITEM OFTEN CARD**) as a guide, I'd like you to answer the next questions by telling me how often: Often, Sometimes, or Almost Never, the following things occur:

279. How often do your **parent(s)/guardian(s)** talk with you about what you did during the day?

1. often
2. sometimes
3. almost never

280. How often do your **parent(s)/guardian(s)** talk with you about how things are going in school?

1. often
2. sometimes
3. almost never

281. How often do you leave a note for your **parent(s)/guardian(s)** or call them about where you are going if they are not at home?

1. often
2. sometimes
3. almost never

282. How often do you **parent(s)/guardian(s)** know who you are with then you are away from home?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

283. How often do you know how to get in touch with your **parent(s)/guardian(s)** if they are not at home?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

284. How often do your **parent(s)/guardian(s)** find time to listen to you when you want to talk to them?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

285. How often do your **parent(s)/guardian(s)** know where you are when you're not at home or at school?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

286. When your friends have ideas to do something all of a sudden, how often would you say you go along with them?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

287. How often have you done things in this group that have ended up getting you in trouble?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

288. Family members sometimes get into real arguments with each other. Tell me whether any of these next things happen: Often, Sometimes, or Almost Never. How often have you:

a. shouted at your **mother/female guardian**?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

b. cursed at your **mother/female guardian**?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

c. struck your **mother/female guardian**?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

d. shouted at your **father/male guardian**?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

e. cursed at your **father/male guardian**?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

f. struck your **father/male guardian**?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never

289. If your **parent(s)/guardian(s)** had planned some punishment for you, how often can you talk them out of it?  
1. often            2. sometimes            3. almost never



290. How often do your **parent(s)/guardian(s)** punish you for something and at other times not punish you for the same thing?

1. often                      2. sometimes                      3. almost never

**(RETRIEVE CARD FROM RESPONDENT)**

291. Do your **parent(s)/guardian(s)** give you a different kind of punishment depending on whether they are in a good mood or bad mood? Would you say there is:

1. no difference  
2. some difference, or  
3. a big difference

292. Have you ever been afraid that someone will hurt you at home?

1. I'm often afraid  
2. I'm sometimes afraid  
3. I'm never afraid

293. Have you ever been beaten or physically abused by an adult in your family?

1. Yes                      2. No

**(IF YES)** a. How often has it happened?

1. often  
2. sometimes  
3. almost never

b. How old were you when it first happened? \_\_\_\_\_

294. Has anyone that you've ever regularly lived with used alcohol alot?

1. Yes                      2. No

295. Has anyone that you've ever regularly lived with used illegal drugs alot?

1. Yes                      2. No

296. Has anyone in your family spent time in prison or jail or somewhere like that?

1. Yes                      2. No

**(IF YES)** a. who was it?  
b. have they ever lived with you?

_____	Y	N
_____	Y	N
_____	Y	N
_____	Y	N
_____	Y	N

Now I am going to ask you some questions about various kinds of violence and things related to violence that you may have seen or experienced.

During the last few years...

297. Has anyone robbed you or tried to rob you by using force or threat of force?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. how often/how many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. who did it? \_\_\_\_\_  
c. where did it happen?  
1. home                      2. school  
3. neighborhood            4. other  
(SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

298. Have you seen someone else get robbed?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. how often/how many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. who did it happen to? \_\_\_\_\_  
c. who did it? \_\_\_\_\_  
d. where did it happen?  
1. home                      2. school  
3. neighborhood            4. other  
(SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

299. Has anyone slapped, punched, hit or kicked you?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. how often/how many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. who did it? \_\_\_\_\_  
c. where did it happen?  
1. home                      2. school  
3. neighborhood            4. other  
(SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

300. Have you seen someone else get slapped, punched, hit or kicked?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. how often/how many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. who did it happen to? \_\_\_\_\_  
c. who did it? \_\_\_\_\_  
d. where did it happen?  
1. home                      2. school  
3. neighborhood            4. other  
(SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

During the last few years...

301. Have you seen adults in your home hit each other?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. how often/how many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. who did it? \_\_\_\_\_

302. Has anyone physically threatened you or threatened to beat you up?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. how often/how many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. who did it? \_\_\_\_\_  
c. where did it happen?  
    1. home                      2. school  
    3. neighborhood            4. other  
                                    (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

303. Have you been beaten up?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. how often/how many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. who did it? \_\_\_\_\_  
c. where did it happen?  
    1. home                      2. school  
    3. neighborhood            4. other  
                                    (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

304. Have you seen someone else get beaten up?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. how often/how many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. who did it happen to? \_\_\_\_\_  
c. who did it? \_\_\_\_\_  
d. where did it happen?  
    1. home                      2. school  
    3. neighborhood            4. other  
                                    (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

305. Have you been sexually assaulted, molested or raped?

- 1) Yes                      2) No

**(IF YES)** a. how often/how many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
b. who did it? \_\_\_\_\_  
c. where did it happen?  
    1. home                      2. school  
    3. neighborhood            4. other  
                                    (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_







Ok, we're almost to the end of the interview. The last questions are about things you value in life. Using this card (**FIVE ITEM IMPORTANCE CARD**), I'd like for you to tell me how important the following things are to you: Very Important, Pretty Important, Somewhat Important, Not Too Important, Not Important At All.

How important is it to...	very	pretty	somewhat	not too	not at all
316. have a college education	1	2	3	4	5
317. own your own home	1	2	3	4	5
318. have a great deal of money	1	2	3	4	5
319. have a good paying job	1	2	3	4	5
320. have a good reputation in the community	1	2	3	4	5
321. have a happy family life	1	2	3	4	5
322. study hard for good grades	1	2	3	4	5
323. work hard to get ahead	1	2	3	4	5
324. save money for the future	1	2	3	4	5
325. plan ahead	1	2	3	4	5
326. have self control	1	2	3	4	5
327. be careful what you spend	1	2	3	4	5
328. be in love	1	2	3	4	5
329. get married	1	2	3	4	5
330. be a mother	1	2	3	4	5

**(RETRIEVE CARD FROM RESPONDENT)**

Now I have a few final questions to ask you about the interview.

a. Would you like to explain any of your answers further?

b. Is there anything important I've forgotten to ask you about?

c. Were there any specific questions that made you feel particularly uncomfortable?

d. I know it is difficult to remember all the things I've asked about, but have you deliberately misled me with any of your answers? (answering yes if you have *will not* affect your payment for participating in my study)

1) Yes

2) No

(IF YES) Would you mind telling me the kind of things you misled me about (SPECIFY SECTION OR QUESTION TYPES)

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---

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Ok, that concludes the interview. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. Remember that everything you've told me is confidential. Now that we're finished, are there any questions that you would like to ask me?

Ok, thanks again. I really appreciate it.



Appendix C

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Now I would like to continue our interview but in a different way than what we have been doing. Rather than asking you questions where I want you to choose an answer, now I'd like for us to be able to just talk openly about some things. I still have a set of questions that I want to ask you about, but this time it's less structured than before, and I hope it can be more like a conversation. So is it ok that we keep going with the interview?

Just to remind you again, everything you tell me will be kept confidential, and no one will know what we've talked about. After this interview I will have no record of your real name, so your identity will be a secret and no one can link you to what you've said.

Remember that the law might require me to report to the authorities any statements you might make about planning to hurt someone in the future. I won't be asking you questions about that sort of thing now either.

Also, I wanted to remind you again that you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to, or talk about anything you don't feel comfortable talking about, and you can end this portion of interview at any time. If we get through most of the questions in this part of the interview, I'll give you an additional ten dollars.

I would prefer to record our interview so that I will remember the information you tell me as accurately as possible. Once I write down what's on the tape, I will erase it. OK?

### **ENTREE INTO THE GANG**

Now I want to talk to you about your gang. You said before that you are a member of \_\_\_\_\_ .

How did you start hanging out with \_\_\_\_\_ ?

When did you decide to become a member?

What happened when you joined \_\_\_\_\_ ? How did you get in?

Did you have an initiation? What was it like?

How did you choose \_\_\_\_\_ instead of some other gang?

What were you feeling when you were initiated?

(for example, were you excited or scared or happy or nervous or angry?)

What else was going on in your life at the time that you started hanging out with the gang and decided to join, can you remember?

(family? school? friends? - PROBE)

-was it winter or summer? what grade were you in?

Do your family members know you are in the gang? How do/would they react?

### **GANG STRUCTURE**

Now I want to ask you some questions about \_\_\_\_\_, and what it's like.

What makes \_\_\_\_\_ a gang?

How long has \_\_\_\_\_ been around? Do you know its history or how it got started?

How many members are there?

Is there someone you consider the leader?

How is it organized? Like when do you get together?

Are there different kinds of members, like do different members do different things?

Are most members of your gang from the same neighborhood, or is it school based, or what?

Does it have different sets (for example, by age, location, etc.)

Does your gang claim any turf or territory?

**(IF YES)** What does the gang do if someone from a rival gang comes on your turf?

How can you tell if somebody is a gang member?

How would you describe your own place in \_\_\_\_\_ ?

What do you look for in someone when you let them join \_\_\_\_\_ ? What do you expect out of them?

What makes someone a good member of \_\_\_\_\_ ?

**GENDER**

Before, you said that **state gender organization of gang.**

How many other girls are in your gang? How many guys?

Can you tell me more about that?

(why do you think there aren't more girls?)

(how do girls usually get involved with the gang? ex. dating member, family member involved)

Do girls and guys do the same things in the gang, or are there things that only girls do and only guys do?

What kind of guy has the most influence in the gang?

What kind of girl has the most influence in the gang?

Describe a girl you look up to in the gang, and tell me what makes you look up to her.

What are the girls like who don't make good members?

Are there girls that you wouldn't hang out with? Why?

Do you think girls contribute anything to the gang that would be missing if it was just guys?

(like get the group to do things or not do things, make it more fun, things like that?)

What about guys, do they contribute anything that would be missing if it was just girls?

(like get the group to do things or not do things, make it more fun, things like that?)

**GANG INVOLVEMENT (keep gender in mind as a probe)**

What does being in \_\_\_\_\_ mean to you?

-what do you get from it that you wouldn't get otherwise? (like respect, or fear)

How many of your friends are in your gang?

What kinds of things do you do together?

What do you do to have fun?

Do you do anything to make money?

Describe for me how you spend a typical day; like, for example, how did you spend yesterday?

Can you tell me about the most recent time you've \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Do girls usually go out with guys in the gang?

**probe further for details, examples**

What happens if a girl in your gang goes out with someone from another gang? Does that ever happen?

Do guys ever go out with girls from other gangs? What happens then?

When a girl gets pregnant, do you treat her any differently? Does she spend as much time with the gang?

What about when she has the baby?

Are there ever any fights between girls in \_\_\_\_\_ ? Can you tell me about one you remember?

Are there ever any fights between girls and guys in \_\_\_\_\_ ? Can you tell me about one you remember?

Is your gang involved in selling drugs at all?

**(IF YES)** In what ways?

Do members of your gang use drugs?

**(IF YES)** Tell me about that.

Does drug involvement or drug selling differ for girls and guys in the gang?

How safe or dangerous do you think it is being in a gang?

Do you worry about violence?

Do girls face any particular dangers?

What kinds of precautions do you take?

### **MORE GENDER ISSUES**

Now I want to go back to what it's like being a *girl* gang member.

What are the benefits of being a girl in the gang?

What are some of the problems girls face being in the gang?

Do you think other people who aren't in gangs (like other youths, teachers, parents) look down on gangs?

Do people outside the gang react differently to girls in gangs than they do to guys?

### **FINAL QUESTIONS**

Why do you think people your age join gangs?

Do you think girls join for the same reasons as guys?

What things do you like about being in your gang?

What do you dislike about it?

Do you think there will be a time in the future when you'll quit the gang?

What things have you learned from the gang that are useful to you today?

When you think about the future, what do you think you'll be doing?

What do you think you'll be like?

What do you like best about yourself?

How would your best friend describe you?

How would your **parent(s)/guardian(s)** describe you?

### **PROBES**

Tell me about that.

What was that like?

How come?

What do you mean by that?

What happened?

Could you tell me more?

Why/why not?

In what way?

What was the situation?

Who was there?

What's the meaning of ---?

Appendix D

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Now I would like to continue our interview but in a different way than what we have been doing. Rather than asking you questions where I want you to choose an answer, now I'd like for us to be able to just talk openly about some things. I still have a set of questions that I want to ask you about, but this time it's less structured than before, and I hope it can be more like a conversation. So is it ok that we keep going with the interview?

Just to remind you again, everything you tell me will be kept confidential, and no one will know what we've talked about. After this interview I will have no record of your real name, so your identity will be a secret and no one can link you to what you've said.

Remember that the law might require me to report to the authorities any statements you might make about planning to hurt someone in the future. I won't be asking you questions about that sort of thing now either.

Also, I wanted to remind you again that you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to, or talk about anything you don't feel comfortable talking about, and you can end this portion of interview at any time. If we get through most of the questions in this part of the interview, I'll give you an additional ten dollars.

I would prefer to record our interview so that I will remember the information you tell me as accurately as possible. Once I write down what's on the tape, I will erase it. OK?

## **INTRO**

I want to start by talking some more about the time you spend with your friends. You said before that you are not a member of a gang, but you have a lot of friends who are in gangs.

How did you start hanging out with these friends?

And you decided you didn't want to become a member?  
When did you decide this? Why?

What are the benefits of not becoming a member?

Did you tell your friends? How did they react?

Are your friends members of the same gang or different gangs (or different sets of the same gang)?



Do you have friends in rival gangs?

Why do your friends let you hang out with them but not join?

Are they ever concerned that you know too much about them?

What else was going on in your life at the time that you started hanging out with friends who were in gangs, can you remember?

(family? school? friends? - PROBE)

Do your family members know you spend alot of time with friends who are in gangs? How do/would they react?

### **GANG STRUCTURE**

Now I want to ask you some questions about \_\_\_\_\_ , and what it's like.

What makes the group(s) you spend time with a gang(s)?

Do you know their/its history or how they/it got started?

How many members are there?

Is there someone they consider the leader?

How is it organized? Like when do they get together? Are you allowed to go to gang meetings or anything like that?

Are there things you're not allowed to do since you're not a member?

Are there different kinds of members, like do different members do different things?

Are most members from the same neighborhood, or is it school based, or what?

Are there very many kids like you, who hang out with gang members but don't become members?

Is it different for girls and guys? Like, do they let guys who haven't been initiated spend time with them the way they let you?

How can you tell if somebody is a gang member?

## **GENDER**

The gangs that you spend time with, are they mostly males, or females, or both? How many?

Can you tell me more about that?

(why do you think there aren't more girls?)

(how do girls usually get involved with the gang? ex. dating member, family member involved)

How did you get involved? a female friend or a boyfriend?

Do girls and guys do the same things in the gang, or are there things that only girls do and only guys do?

What kind of guy has the most influence in gangs?

What kind of girl has the most influence in gangs?

Are there girls that you wouldn't hang out with? Why?

Do you think girls contribute anything to the gang that would be missing if it was just guys?

(like get the group to do things or not do things, make it more fun, things like that?)

What about guys, do they contribute anything that would be missing if it was just girls?

(like get the group to do things or not do things, make it more fun, things like that?)

## **GANG INVOLVEMENT (keep gender in mind as a probe)**

What do you like about spending time with your friends who are in gangs?

-what do you get from it that you wouldn't get otherwise? (like respect, or fear)

What kinds of things do you do together?

For instance, describe for me how you spend a typical day; like, for example, how did you spend yesterday?

What do you do to have fun?

Do you do anything to make money?

Can you tell me about the most recent time you've \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Do you usually go out with guys in the gang? do girl gang members usually go out with guys in their gangs?

**probe further for details, examples**

Are there ever any fights between girls in the same gang?  
Can you tell me about one you remember?

Are there ever any fights between girls and guys in the same gang? Can you tell me about one you remember?

Is/are the gang(s) you spend time with involved in selling drugs at all?

Do members use drugs?

Tell me about that.

Does drug involvement or drug selling differ for girls and guys?

How safe or dangerous do you think it is being in a gang?

Is it different for you because you're not a member? How so?

Do you worry about violence?

Do girls face any particular dangers?

What kinds of precautions do you take?

**FINAL QUESTIONS**

Why do you think people your age join gangs?

Do you think girls join for the same reasons as guys?

Do you think there will be a time in the future when you'll join the/a gang?

Do you think there will be a time in the future when you'll quit spending time with the gang(s)?

When you think about the future, what do you think you'll be doing?

What do you think you'll be like?

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