

An Examination of the Relationship between Gang  
Membership and Hopelessness

by

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## ABSTRACT

The literature on hopelessness suggests youth living amid impoverished conditions, social disorganization, and limited resources are more likely to experience increased feelings of hopelessness. Similarly, many of the aforementioned aspects are considered, in some capacity, in the research on gangs. Though a considerable amount of gang literature alludes to the fact that loss of hope may be present, it neither directly addresses it nor references it. This study attempts to converge the present literature on hopelessness among minority youth to minority youth in street gangs. This is done using data obtained from an earlier evaluation of the Mesa Gang Intervention Project, using self-report data from 197 youth, asking questions about socio-demographic information, gang activity, education, employment, crime and delinquency, family and individual crisis, and self-reported detention. Findings implicate a connection exists between gang membership and increased levels of hopelessness. Moreover, results suggest education and self-esteem help to reduce loss of hopelessness.

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## INTRODUCTION

Numerous theories have been developed to explain the origin and rise in adolescent street gangs. The spectrum is wide ranging, with some centered on individual and group factors (Klein and Maxson, 2006), delinquent peer influence (Vigil, 2002), and multiple marginality, (Esbensen and Deschenes, 1998; Vigil and Yun, 1998; Vigil, 2007). Still, amid gang literature, a large portion is devoted to the dynamic of the surroundings, community, and the neighborhood one resides in (Klein and Maxson, 2006). More specifically, the influence and impact environmental deprivations such as poverty, lack of resources, limited employment prospects, and high incarceration rates have on the psyche of an adolescent (Bolland et al., 2001). In large part, researchers contend street gangs are formed in response to community disorganization significantly affecting the cultivation of gangs (Curry and Spengel, 1998; Katz and Schnebly, 2008; Klein and Maxson, 2006).

As gangs form, expand, and gain notoriety they often operate under their own rules. Essentially, the gang way of life is heavily influenced by those at the “top,” whom have garnered the most respect and, as a result, disputes are handled internally. Thus, a subculture is created (Cohen, 1983), one that reinforces violence as a means to solving conflict (Anderson, 1994). Within this subculture, dominated by expressions of violent behavior and outbursts of aggression, youth are often demoralized, leaving some to contend that the adolescent street gang derives in direct response to overwhelming feelings of hopelessness (Anderson,

1994; Carlie, 2002; Yablonsky, 2007). In this way, the conduct, demeanor, and attitude of its members are one that reflects detachment from the ideals and aspirations of mainstream society. Instead, this is abandoned, modified, and adjusted in favor of *their* conventionalism. That is, ideals and aspirations are altered to meet the demands of *their* environment and *their* way of life (Bolland et al., 2001).

Research on gangs is extensive and far-reaching; still the consensus among gang scholars suggests much is left unexplored. Specifically, gang literature has snowballed to incorporate most aspects of gang life and yet the research is considered sparse. In this way, little academic literature has examined feelings of hopelessness on gang involved youth. While both quantitative and qualitative research are noticeably lacking, the allusion to hopelessness is present, albeit indirectly. It is not implausible to consider a youth will knowingly join a gang, associate with one, or partake in its activity, despite the general understanding that prison or death could be an outcome. This provides some basis for the contention that hopelessness may be a critical factor in understanding why a youth remains in or desires to join a gang. That is to say, does the future seem bleak, or all together nonexistent, that youth feel gang life and all it encompasses is appealing? Previous research shows adolescents in a gang are more likely to engage in violence, end up in prison, and abuse drugs and alcohol, all basic rudiments within the study of hopelessness. Arguably, each of which contributes to a shortened life or at the very least a life with limited prospects and

opportunities. More directly, once the hope in a “promising” future is eliminated are adolescents more likely to associate with known gang members and eventually join them?

While the notion of hopelessness in academic literature on gangs neither directly addresses it nor references it, most, in some way, allude to its presence. Typically, the link between hopelessness and gangs is recognized by researchers exclusively studying hopelessness and its effects on inner city adolescent minorities, where gang involvement is cited as a likely byproduct to feeling hopeless. Moreover, hopelessness is referenced as an underlying cause to youth involvement and participation in delinquent thinking and behavior (Bolland, 2003; DuRant et al., 1994; Gibbs and Bankhead, 2000). These studies indicate some connection between youth gangs and hopelessness, although a more direct correlation is unobserved in the literature on gangs. This dearth of literature is somewhat surprising given that gangs are perceived to harbor many of the factors thought to evoke feelings of hopelessness. Including but not limited to over exposure to violence (DuRant et al., 1994; DuRant et al., 1995), social disorganization, poverty (Bolland, 2003), insufficient efforts to secure employment (Doucette-Gates, 1999; Gibbs and Bankhead, 2000; Weigner, 1998), racial and cultural disparity (Tomren, 1999), and an overall lack of resources (Bolland, 2003). The majority of these concepts arise, in some fashion, within gang literature. However, the term hopelessness is not utilized. The research presented here focuses on the idea of hopelessness as it pertains to street gangs.



Specifically, it attempts to converge the present literature on hopelessness among minority youth to minority youth in street gangs.

The present study examines the relationship between hopelessness and gang membership, in order to provide some understanding. It will examine the role, if any, hopelessness plays amongst adolescent street gang members as opposed to their counterparts. I attempt to connect the research on hopelessness to similar underpinnings found within the literature on street gangs, as to demonstrate a correlation between the two. In the next section I review the prior research on hopelessness, crime and delinquency amongst youth thought to be associated with loss of hope, and lastly theories on gang membership in relation to hopelessness. The literature review is followed by the methodology used for the thesis.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### *Origins of Hopelessness*

In previous studies, hopelessness has been defined as “the product of a negative belief about future orientation” (Bolland, 2003, 146) and “in terms of a system of negative expectations concerning self and future life” (Bolland et al., 2005, 294). Both definitions pit ones outlook toward the future against views of actually realizing one. The key element appears to be perceived loss of life during adolescence. Under this notion, youth are believed to abandon any consideration for the future, particularly if they believe they will not live to see it (Bolland et al., 2005). The literature on hopelessness, fatalism, and “futurelessness” uncovers

critical aspects thought to trigger these emotions in youth. In particular, poverty, exposure to violence, and the anticipation of a premature death surface as influential reasons why loss of hope remains an issue throughout inner city neighborhoods (Anderson, 1994; Bolland, 2001; Bolland et al., 2005; Brezina et al., 2009; DuRant et al., 1994; Wilson and Daly, 1997).

### *Poverty*

Bolland et al. (2005) argues poverty may be the foremost cause of hopelessness in youth. Perhaps because it is believed poverty is coupled with hardships in the form of drug use, over exposure to violence, prostitution, and dilapidated conditions. Bolland (2003) suggests, once set in motion the effects of poverty and its correlates are difficult to overcome. Those in poverty reside to the fact they are helpless to change their situation. This internal submission allows one to disconnect from their vulnerable position and live capriciously, even if this results in death. In addition, the stigma of poverty immediately places one in a position of inferiority to the wealthy, where hopelessness may be a common side effect. Bolland et al. (2005) investigate the link between economic duress and loss of hope in studying thirteen severely disadvantaged neighborhoods in Mobile, Alabama.

Over the span of six years, 5,895 youth were surveyed on a range of factors associated with poverty. Topics included risk behaviors, circumstance, and attitude. This was done to assess the link between “social and psychosocial indicators of disruption and connectedness and feelings of hopelessness” (p. 294).

Most of those surveyed were African-American (83.3%) with slightly less than half (44.1%) living in poverty. Though poverty is hypothesized to perpetuate feelings of hopelessness the results of this study indicate otherwise. Bolland et al. (2005) suggest their study is consistent with previous research, concluding that despite destitute living, youth retain some resonance of hope (Bolland et al., 2001; DuRant et al., 1994; Weinger, 1998). This demonstrates that while impoverished conditions may be a critical pathway to crime and hopelessness for some youth, others are likely to be optimistic about the future, possibly refraining from crime as a result.

Financial lacking can engender feelings of hopelessness in youth, who believe they are confined to their current situation. Financial deprivation is difficult to mask given its affect on other issues, most noticeably, education. Weinger (1998) suggests the effects of poverty are witnessed in educational shortcomings. It is assumed without proper education children are at a disadvantage to overcome the effects of poverty. Youth in poverty are likely to experience feelings of embarrassment and frustration, thus producing a sense of shame, ultimately progressing to hopelessness. The shame of poverty is exacerbated for adolescents once outside the confines of their neighborhood. The awareness of their circumstance encourages youth to impede hope and desire in favor of complacency. Stable employment could possibly rectify this injustice yet is few and far between in the “ghetto.” Anderson (1994) attests to this notion by affirming “endemic joblessness” is a staple in correlating hope, poverty, and

crime. According to Anderson (1994), when opportunities for success become bleak, adolescents are set up for a life of failure, more specifically crime.

Gibbs and Bankhead (2000) explore the influence of joblessness on African-American youth in South Central Los Angeles. The authors maintain, “Pervasive feelings of hopelessness, anger, and alienation were associated with high rates of unemployment and lack of economic development in the community” (p. 1). Youth are bombarded with the notion that an education will inevitably lead to success in the job market, however a response from one adolescent suggests otherwise, “The reality is that there are no opportunities for after school work, so it causes hopelessness and despair...people without hope are lost without a dream or a vision” (p. 10). Similarly, DuRant et al. (1994) found that adolescents living with an employed head of household maintained a higher meaning in life, diminished feelings of hopelessness, and confidence in living to age twenty-five, as opposed to their counterparts. This attests to the fact, the struggle for youth to obtain employment is reminiscent of futile efforts made by their parents to maintain financial security. Weinger (1998) suggests children in poverty are aware of their disadvantage and deduce future job prospects as unlikely. Amid impoverished conditions, limited employment, and resource opportunity inner city youth are left feeling hopeless. Research suggests outward expressions of hopelessness are seen through irrational behavior and decision making (Bolland, 2003). Occasionally this behavior progresses to violence or worse fatality.

## *Violence*

Anderson (1994) maintains that for adolescents living in the underclass a subculture emerges based on a street culture ideology. This culture is unique to others in terms of values, beliefs, and overall way of life. He suggests street culture abides by a code “which amounts to a set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior, including violence” (p. 81). It postulates that individuals are likely to respond to certain or perceived transgressions with violent behavior. This approach to solving disputes is believed to be a conventional method for urban youth.

DuRant et al. (1994; 1995) found reaction to confrontation with automatic violence can intensify feelings of hopelessness by exposing youth to incessant demonstrations of aggressive behavior. Correlating violence amongst youth in the inner city and thoughts of hopelessness is explored by only a handful of studies (Bolland et al., 2001; DuRant et al., 1994; DuRant et al., 1995). Understanding this relationship is critical as Bolland et al. (2001) argues, violence in inner city communities may be the main risk to health and a caveat of hopelessness. In support of this idea, DuRant et al. (1994) found eighty-four percent of the youth sampled admitted to at least one violent act. Admitted violence was significantly associated with “exposure to violence and victimization; levels of hopelessness, depression” as well as other factors (p. 615).

When hope is abandoned, it is believed, youth are more likely to risk immediate satisfaction with little regard for the risk or cost involved. Violence

may be a means of realizing this instant gratification for urban adolescents (Bolland et al., 2001). To reaffirm the effect of hopelessness on violent activity Bolland (2003) surveyed inner city youth from low income areas with the majority stemming from public housing in both Mobile and Prichard, Alabama. It was concluded that although feelings of hopelessness did not prevail it did affect a significant portion of youth. Specifically, 50% of males and 25% of females expressed higher levels of hopelessness, violent tendencies and behaviors were more prevalent amongst these respondents. It is argued, for males in the inner-city, whom acts of violence are more likely to originate, adequacy and worth are measured by power and control. The primary objective then becomes to dominate those around them as to convey this control. Frequently, violent conflict materializes as a means of achieving this goal.

Again, an affinity toward violence is viewed in the “code of the street”. Anderson (1994) argues youth in the inner city are loyal to a “code” which glorifies the use of violence. They are expected to emphasize the ability to overpower an opponent through aggressive acts, words, and expressions. This intense display can diminish hope for change in their situation and the end result soon becomes hopelessness. Although violence is entrenched across inner city neighborhoods, not all youth abide by the *code*. Several researchers note adolescents are capable of abstaining from violence, particularly when levels of hope and trust in the future are evident, in spite of possessing many of the predictors thought to increase hopelessness (Anderson, 1994; Bolland et al., 2001;

Bolland, 2003; Bolland et al., 2005; DuRant et al., 1994). Support for this argument is seen in a longitudinal study conducted by Stoddard, Zimmerman, and Bauermeister (2010). The primary objective was to determine the association between future orientation and violence among African-American adolescents. Two questions, both centered on employment, were used to measure future orientation. It was concluded that “higher levels of future orientation were associated with greater decreases in violent behavior over time” (p. 1). The findings provide evidence that healthy expectations toward ones future can impact the present in terms of attitude, demeanor, and conduct. Without which youth are left feeling confined and restrained; ultimately succumbing to circumstances they are unable to change. Consequently, youth are left susceptible to victimization as well as being the initiator to violence, which may sometimes result in death.

#### *Anticipated Early Death*

Poverty and violence are critical in the discussion of hopelessness among adolescents, though life expectancy may be the most telling. The sense of “futurelessness,” as it has been termed, is the notion that one believes early death is imminent (Brezina et al., 2009). Among youth, a fatalistic mentality gives rise to feelings of hopelessness toward the future. Wilson and Daly (1997) support this argument in proclaiming, “by discounting the future and lowering their thresholds for risk and violence, the behavioral consequences are likely to worsen the very problems that provoke them, as well as contributing to fear, distrust, and perhaps even economic inequality itself” (p. 5). That is to say, ignoring the future can

further cripple the inner city where aspects such as crime, financial duress, and lack of collective efficacy dominate.

To study the impact of perceived levels of anticipated early death associated with youth crime Brezina et al. (2009) enact a multimethods approach using both qualitative and quantitative data. Specifically, the authors use national survey data combined with extensive interviews to analyze and understand the association between expectations for premature death and the penchant for crime. It was concluded, hopelessness thrives in environments where youth are uncertain about their future and thus, as a derivative, emotionless. According to Brezina et al. (2009) youth in peril are taught early on to be indifferent. That is, to disregard the value of life, even their own. Perhaps this disconnect permits adolescents to better cope with their life's circumstance. In their perception, an early death is viewed as foreseeable and commonplace. In this way, youth accept their reality, affecting outward actions and behaviors (Bolland, 2003).

Within their explorations Brezina et al (2009) observed youth as shifting from hopelessness to futurelessness to eventual nihilism, "an extreme form of skepticism" (Dictionary.com). Once the value of life fails to take meaning concern for self and others remains insignificant. For youth in the inner city early death is simply an expected part of life. Adolescents are desensitized by their environmental conditions, an over exposure to violence, and, as a result, view death as "routine." This conception is indicative to the cultural perspective of those living by the code of the street. Anderson (1994) argues since fatality is



considered typical in the life of urban youth they are, in turn, numb and unafraid to die. Amid this subculture death is no longer viewed in a negative context but rather in a "matter of fact," "part of life" manner. Thus, adolescents discount the repercussions that follow unlawful acts, including crime and delinquency, and even homicide. In addition, feelings of hopelessness, coupled with the loom of an expected early death can have insurmountable affects on the psyche of youth, causing excess involvement in crime and delinquency (Wilson and Daly, 1997).

*Crime, Delinquency, and Risky Behavior associated with Hopelessness*

Investing in a future that is perceived to be uncertain and undefined is difficult to request of an adolescent. It becomes particularly arduous when their main desire is to live in the moment and focus on the present. For youth in the inner city their present situation may be one of constant struggle in the form of poverty, exposure to violence, and the anticipation of an early death (Anderson, 1994; Bolland, 2003; DuRant et al., 1994; 1995). Taken together these attributes may cause increased feelings of hopelessness (Bolland, 2003; Bolland et al., 2001; 2005; 2007). That said, youth are more likely to engage in delinquent activity and risky behavior when feelings of hopelessness are at their highest (Stoddard et al., 2010). Bolland (2003) supports this assertion in claiming, "feelings of hopelessness are associated with virtually every risk behavior, including violence, substance use, sexuality, and even accidental injury" (p. 153). Similar findings are observed by Bolland et al. (2001; 2007) and DuRant et al. (1994). In particular, these findings implicate feelings of hopelessness as a

motivating factor for youth participation in risky and often dangerous activity. Lorion and Saltzman (1993) reaffirm this contention in suggesting that conventional values and beliefs, held by the larger society, are denounced in favor of questionable exploits. This is done once the conclusion is made that “they have neither the resources nor the likelihood of achieving lasting or socially approved outcomes” (p. 56).

When feelings of hopelessness prevail some youth are expected to develop a fearless mentality. From this perspective delinquency and criminality are performed with impunity. Brezina et al. (2009) found that respondents expressing more than a 50 percent doubt in living to age 21 were more likely to engage in the following criminal activities: burglary, graffiti, assault, property damage, theft, robbery, pulling a knife or gun, and shooting or stabbing someone. Similar results were found for respondents believing they had less than a 50 percent chance of living to age 35. Of the more than 20,745 youth sampled many expressed deep pessimism for the future. This, in effect, compelled them to concentrate on the present with little concern for the future. In addition, those surveyed claimed to feel an indifference and sense of liberation at their detachment from the future. This includes potential consequences that could arise for engaging in illegal conduct. In this way, youth are likely to conduct themselves in a capricious manner. Concern for the safety of others as well as themselves is abandoned, not to mention negligence of the law. This study indicates that for adolescents the decision making process becomes distorted, once existing and future life chances

are reduced and seemingly unattainable. More specifically, “If youth do not have positive expectations for the future and do not see current behaviors as linked to future goals they may not be concerned about consequence of risk taking behaviors such as criminal involvement and violent behaviors” (Stoddard et al., 2010, p. 2). Brezina et al. (2009) argue this sense of “futureless,” fatalistic, and inevitable hopeless state of mind is widespread among inner city communities. Furthermore, it is believed hopelessness is difficult to overcome. Consequently, this mentality gives little reason for delinquents to abstain from further criminal pursuits.

Hopelessness can be overwhelming, particularly for adolescents whose emotional and mental capacity has yet to be reached. Therefore, hopelessness as a coping mechanism is implemented to counteract the realities of their own peril. As a result youth will be more likely to seek immediate satisfaction and gratification while halting confidence in their ability to achieve conventional success (Bolland, 2003). To exemplify this notion Bolland (2003) examined the influence of hopelessness on youth crime. Males and females were viewed separately though results for both revealed significantly high odds ratios for the proclivity to engage in criminal activity. Still, unsurprisingly, males expressed higher levels of hopelessness. Violent behavior, demonstrated through gun carrying, cutting or shooting someone, and current gang membership, were closely linked to higher levels of hopelessness. This insinuates that youth are

susceptible to participating in criminal and risky behavior if hopelessness is evident

DuRant et al. (1994) found hopelessness to be a risk factor for engaging in violent activity amongst urban Black adolescents. The authors claim youth in lower socioeconomic urban areas are inundated with depictions of violence. Overt representations of violent behavior are not only viewed in the home and community but through media portrayals as well. In this way, violence is inescapable and thought to be routine. In essence, adolescents are instilled with the idea that violence is the means to solving conflict. Similarly, DuRant et al. (1995) exclaim violence observed within the family fosters deep seated emotional grief which can lead to feelings of hopelessness and diminished self-worth. Although economically disadvantaged communities are thought to create opportune conditions that bring about feelings of hopelessness, Bolland (2003) and DuRant et al. (1994) claim otherwise. Youth are likely to abstain from violent behavior despite living amid conditions that foster it if protective factors are made available such as religious service, parental employment, and family structure.

Griffin, Botvin, Nichols, and Scheier (2004) argue that hopelessness is associated with higher instances of binge drinking and diminished life success among urban minority adolescents. The majority of participants consisted of African-American and Hispanic youth emanating from inner city communities, defect by economic inequality. It is hypothesized youth from these areas are prone to feelings of hopelessness therefore abuse drugs and alcohol to ease the rigors of

reality and cope with them (Bolland, 2003; Griffin et al., 2004; Mainous and Martin, 1996). High levels of alcohol use may be considered by youth as an acceptable response to their chaotic lifestyle. In other words, binge drinking might be viewed as conventional, even becoming desirable within environments overrun by dilapidated conditions, limited opportunity, and the stigma of race. It was concluded, loss of hope can significantly influence the onset and desire to binge drink though, ultimately, the relationship between the two becomes a mutual one in later adolescence.

It is important to note, the notion of youth, hopelessness, and risky behavior is not limited to urban areas and can be found in rural environments, most notably American Indian reservations. Hopelessness amongst inner city youth may be most apparent given their inability to prosper despite living within arms reach of economic wealth, development, and unbounded opportunity. For Native youth hopelessness is perhaps more gripping given its concealment from the larger society. Indian reservations are predominately home to desolate communities on the exterior of city limits. This factor alone may ingrain feelings of worthlessness, powerlessness, and eventual hopelessness. Johnson and Tomren (1999) give credit to this argument in stating,

“Indian youth begin to feel powerless over their environment: events seem insurmountable, and the individual feels isolated and alone. Deepening feelings of alienation lead to a sense of helplessness, defined as a desire to

escape from what one considers to be an insurmountable problem and a lack of hope that relief is possible” (p. 288).

The authors continue in proclaiming feeling helpless is in effect feeling hopeless. For youth, this overwhelming reality, with minimal avenues to alleviate the burden, often lead to self-destructive behavior. Johnson and Tomren (1999) argue Native American youth use alcohol as a tool to relieve the pressures associated with hopelessness. Though, in more severe cases where a hopeless perspective is dominant, suicide is considered to be a viable option (Kashani, Reid, and Rosenberg, 1989; Rubinstein, Heeren, Houseman, Rubin, and Stechler, 1989). Comparable to Brezina et al. (2009), Johnson and Tomren (1999) postulate thoughts of “futurelessness” and hopelessness progressively develop into complete nihilism. This places a capricious attitude toward life and death making them one in the same. Concern for life, both for self and others, is viewed indifferently. Bolland (2003) offers similar thought in finding accidental injury to be most apparent for urban juveniles expressing higher levels of hopelessness. Accidental injuries include being burned, cut, or suffering from a broken bone. However, Bolland (2003) questions the authenticity of exclaiming “accidental” injury when odds ratios surpass 3.0 for males and 2.0 for females. This finding offers reliability to the notion that hopelessness serves as a causal medium to delinquent and injurious activity.

Beauvais, Jumper-Thurman, Helm, Plested, and Burnside (2004) claim that between 1975 and 2000 reservation Indian youth had higher rates of illicit

drug use compared to non-Indian youth. Though, ultimately, the fluctuation in drug use between reservation Indian youth and non-Indian youth was reflective overtime. Additionally, Beauvais et al. (2004) maintain that although conclusive documentation for the prevalence of drug use among reservation Indian youth is not made explicit it may be attributed to “prejudice, poverty, isolation, lack of recreational resources, and lack of opportunity” (p. 498). These adversities are identical to that of inner city youth trapped on the confines of their own city “reservations.” Drug use and abuse are rampant throughout urban communities where indulgence by juveniles may be due to the belief life choices are virtually nonexistent. Bolland et al. (2005) claim substance use is neither veiled nor kept secret for both residents and outsiders living in and around impoverished communities. For juveniles hopeless about their future the convenience of acquiring drugs and alcohol may serve to exacerbate their usage (Bolland, 2007). In addition, Bolland (2003) found odds ratios to be significantly high for both males and females for smoking cigarettes and using cocaine when perceived hopelessness is elevated.

Califano (1996) exclaims, “An individual who does not smoke, use drugs, or abuse alcohol by age 21 is virtually certain never to do so” (p. 204). This statement is alarming given the incidence of drug use among urbanized youth beginning at an early age. It is perhaps this population comprising the bulk of the following statistics, “Three million adolescents smoke an average of a half a pack a day: a \$1 billion-a-year market. Twelve million underage Americans drink: a

\$10 billion-a-year market” (p. 204). Bolland (2007) asserts the link between hopelessness and risky behavior can, in large part, be attributed to the drug market. Drugs are a common industry within underclass neighborhoods and a prosperous commodity. The business of selling and distributing drugs to underprivileged communities assures that at some point they make contact with underage youth. The illicit nature of drugs and the competition amongst distributors to gain profit justifies the use of violence to maintain the business and protect the investment. Readily available drugs within an environment overrun by poverty, inadequate resources, and violence work to influence the onset of hopelessness.

Similarly, sexual promiscuity is thought to be a risky behavior linked to feelings of hopelessness. Assuming life chances are limited and the notion it will cease to improve may cause youth to over indulge in sexual activity. This indulgence may take place with several partners consequently increasing the odds of contracting a sexually transmitted disease. Few studies have linked the connection from overt sexual behaviors to heightened feelings of hopelessness. Bolland (2003) tested specifically for sexuality amongst male and females in three domains: had sexual intercourse during the previous week, currently trying to get pregnant, and has a child. The results indicate adolescents experiencing higher levels of hopelessness are more likely to engage in sexual misconduct. Similarly, DuRant et al. (1995) found a connection between low purpose in life and risky sexual behavior. They concluded, youth who had a lower perceived purpose in



life were prone to engage in sexual risk-taking. However, DuRant et al. (1995) posit emotional lacking may be the root cause for such conduct.

Although the reasons for involvement in risky, delinquent, and criminal activity may vary it is with certainty, as demonstrated throughout the presented literature, hopelessness as a factor is significant. Additionally, taken together, these factors may overwhelm and engulf the life of a youth struggling to deal with his/her circumstance and environment. Bearing the shame and burden of their parent's failure to escape a drab existence, their inability to do the same, and struggling with the realization "this is how life is" can, in many ways, induce the onset of delinquency and criminality. Particularly, for adolescents believing premature death is imminent, chances for success are hindered, a life of poverty is guaranteed, and the perception their life's struggle will continue and persist to death, the engagement in delinquency seems more predetermined than optional. To reaffirm the damaging effects hopelessness can cause in the life of an adolescent coping with a trajectory of adversities, Gibbs and Bankhead (2000) offer, "their feelings of hopelessness and despair place them at risk for involvement in school failure, teen pregnancy, drugs, anti-social behavior, gangs, and, ultimately, suicide" (p. 18).

#### *Theories on Adolescent Street Gangs*

Anderson's (1994) *Code of the Street* centers on those in "ghetto" inner city neighborhoods, a prime location for urban street gangs and their most invested "hardcore" members. His theory posits a subculture is created in areas

run by poverty, racism, minimal employment opportunities, an overflow of drugs, “the resulting alienation, and lack of hope for the future” (p. 81). Thus, arisen from these afflictions is a subculture bred to despise the larger society who, by comparison, is defect of these attributes. With little in common those in the inner city feel a sense of disconnect from the larger society. As a result, this estrangement causes the individual to “experience, feel, and internalize racist rejection and contempt from mainstream society” perhaps prompting “them to express contempt for the more conventional society” (p. 93). More often, their contempt is illustrated through violent expression. Anderson (1994) argues the “code” promotes the use of violence to solve confrontation as it symbolizes a yearning for respect. This notion is applicable to the subculture of gangs in that advances to gain deference are pit against fellow and rival gang members.

Decker (1996) contends retaliatory behavior, particularly toward rival gangs, is the leading form of gang violence. With respect to the “code,” any act that calls into question the gang’s status, superiority, or power are to be penalized. As rival gangs compete for respect within the community, violence is likely to ensue. Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) reaffirm this notion in proclaiming, to urban street gangs violence and status coincide. This is expressed in “aggressive sanctions against those who show disrespect” (p. 158). Furthermore, according to Jankowski (1991) violence is not reserved solely for rival gangs but can be directed at the community as well as members of the same gang, the underlying theme being competition for deference. With little to their advantage, for those in

the inner city, particularly gang members, respect is revered and thus competed for (Anderson, 1994; Jankowski, 1991). This persistence to acquire admiration represents something the gang is, to a certain degree, in control of. Perhaps this idea finds its roots in the causal effects of oppression found in the underclass.

Tobin's (2000) book, *Gangs an Individual and Group Perspective* analyzes Wilson's (1987) underclass theory. Wilson's (1987) *The Truly Disadvantaged* presents a general theory of the underclass, yet the foundation of his belief can be applied to a "newer breed of gang-specific theory" (Tobin, 2000, p. 36). Though focused on African-Americans his theory is applicable to all minorities. According to Wilson, the underclass is created from drastic environmental changes in urban areas. In result, inhabitants are resolved to a sort of "social dislocation" which includes many of the unfavorable characteristics accustomed to inner city life such as single parent homes, most of which are typically female, joblessness, and high crime rates. Wilson argues these injustices can be linked to early historical accounts of discrimination.

A key point in Wilson's (1987) theory contends, habitual maltreatment toward those in the underclass will continue to persist so long as economic distribution remains unequal. Economic inequality continues to be a fundamental explanation of why the underclass is in fact deemed the "under" class. Since this fact alone signifies inferiority for those it classifies, it places them in a position of lesser standing to the larger society. The end result is a cycle of individuals left feeling hopeless about their situation. Gangs serve as a response to this perpetual

state of despair and mediocrity. In most areas gangs even serve as a “legitimate” means of gaining income and economic status. Furthermore, the fallout of oppression that forms the underclass makes gang life appear enticing. Once access to conventional society is cut off and feelings of hopelessness prevail, it is conceivable to think gang life becomes attractive and eventually logical (Tobin, 2000). In essence, “rather than placing blame on disorganized communities, the underclass theories see ineffectiveness in society at large...the gangs become a replacement for what society is unable to offer” (Tobin, 2000, p. 40).

A key point touched on in both theories thus far is marginality, a notion discussed by Vigil (1988). According to Tobin (2000), to fully understand the scope and nature of gangs’ researchers must focus on pivotal macro-level aspects: family and psychological concepts, to which Vigil elaborates. Focusing on Chicano gang members Vigil (1988) developed the *Multiple Marginality* theory, one widely used in the study of gangs. Although his original theory centered on Chicanos it can be applied to other ethnic groups (Vigil and Yun, 1998). His theory asserts youth experience conflicted feelings both toward their environment and family life, otherwise known as culture conflict.

In the underclass, amid extensive social disorder, youth are in a constant personal battle to assimilate with the American way of life while maintaining their upbringing (Vigil and Yun, 1998). Ultimately, youth are incapable of fully achieving this. As a result conflict ensues and another “layer of marginality” is created (Tobin, 2000, p. 40). This confliction stems from a heightened awareness

of overt discrimination. Particularly, “youth growing up in the barrio are constantly reminded that they are on the periphery of American society, that they do not fit in economically, culturally, socially, and racially” (Tobin, 2000, p. 40).

This internal battle instinctually drives youth to gravitate toward others in the same situation. Elevated tension between both worlds can result in feeling misplaced and rejected. As a result marginalized youth seek solace in the gang whose members not only resemble them in appearance but mirror them in perspective on their circumstance. This allows youth to refrain from assimilation while at the same time being accepted. They are able to “find a place to fit in and acquire identity” (Tobin, 2000, p. 41). A key component to Vigil’s (1988) theory is identity. In the gang youth are able to formulate their self-image, an image that has been broken and misshapen by mainstream society. Where conventional society has left them feeling ashamed and different the gang affords them an opportunity to rebel, allowing them to live by their own standards (Peralta, 2009; Tobin, 2000; Vigil and Yun, 1998).

### *Hopelessness and Adolescent Street Gangs*

The aforementioned theories present life among the street gang in a grim light. Forced to confront social obstacles such as living in impoverished conditions, cut off from surrounding flourishing communities, scarce resources, limited employment opportunities, the continual flow of drugs and alcohol, and impending incarceration can fuel the drive to join a gang (Anderson, 1994; Doucette-Gates, 1999; Peralta, 2009; Vigil, 1988; Wilson, 1987; Zatz and

Portillos, 2000). Though, collectively, these aspects are thought to be catalysts in producing feelings of hopelessness (Bolland, 2003; Carlie, 2002; Yablonsky, 1997). Much of what is believed to cause gang involvement is mirrored in the literature on hopelessness. As youth in the inner city, given their position in society, see alternative opportunities dwindle and the desire for a better existence wane, the gang serves as a place of solace. The street gang presents an avenue to escape, providing alleviation and refuge from the constant reminder of their hopeless situation (Doucette-Gates, 1999).

Weisner (2007) suggests the street gang exists and thrives as an “institution of last resort” (as cited in Vigil, 2007, p. xi). That is, gangs offer “protection, resources, and a sense of power to youth” (p. xi). The careless inattention by the larger society to provide these necessities may entice some youth to look favorably at gang life. In essence, gang life seems desirable in that it demands authority and dominance from the host community, something youth are unable to obtain without the assistance of gang members. Yablonsky (1997) posits gang members are quick to realize their inability to attain success according to mainstream society. This creates internal frustration at both their situation and society, consequently engendering feelings of hopelessness and little self-worth.

Venkatesh (2008) provides similar findings in his account of gang life. In *Gang Leader for a Day* Venkatesh (2008) hints at the hopelessness and fatalism that plague the underclass, particularly gang youth. Derived from observational methods, Venkatesh’s (2008) field work led him to converse with minority

residents in the projects located just outside the University of Chicago known as Robert Taylor Holmes. Attempting to view life from their perspective, Venkatesh (2008) recounts his own awareness of “what it was like to be black in Chicago” (p. 8) and the understanding that life is starkly different for them. This is exemplified in a statement made by a resident, “We live in a city within a city...they have theirs and we have ours” (p. 7). This attests to the clear separation, literally and figuratively, between the underclass and the rest of society. Alert to this imbalance, though powerless to advocate for change, youth are likely to submit to feelings of despair. Thus, it appears youth are likely to join a gang to rectify this injustice, where assistance is at least attainable.

Youth are further distanced from the possibility of succeeding when, within the community, educational goals are unmet (Doucette-Gates, 1999; Hayden, 2004), and as a result credible employment is unattainable (Doucette-Gates, 1999). According to Doucette-Gates (1999) both factors are needed if the *hope* of succeeding is plausible. Similarly, if an adolescent wishes to leave their debilitating situation, a succession of events must take place, first a solid education and second a stable job, reflective of the first. Doucette-Gates (1999) offers, “while we promote education as the link to a *good job*, the conviction diminishes among inner-city youth” (p. 61) since both are scant resources and seemingly worthless to pursue, particularly for gang youth. Furthermore, “youth growing up in neighborhoods with little opportunity for meaningful and engaging work have no *conventional* referent point for organizing and scheduling their lives

and limited means of achieving self-supported adulthood” (p. 82). Essentially, school is the gateway to envisioning a future. For mainstream society the ideology is that school leads to work and work to success and respect. With minimal interest in academia youth are incapable of fashioning an image of what they hope their future to be. Lacking this cognitive development initiates the cycle of uneducated unemployed youth, leaving them vulnerable to feelings of hopelessness. In the same thought, Hayden (2004) suggests the prospect of getting a job is undercut since drop-out rates are high for gang members. Although a small portion attends school and finish, a greater portion does not. This is perhaps the portion left feeling hopeless and helpless.

Virtually all scholarly work on gangs isolates the idea of respect as having an important role in the lives of gang youth (Anderson, 1994; Jankowski, 1991; Peralta, 2009). The notion of respect is perhaps most apparent in Anderson’s (1994) *Code of the Streets*. For adolescents living in poor “ghetto” communities, deference is something to strive for. This is more apparent given that an ingrained sense of inadequacy to mainstream society is felt. Though little is offered to them outside the gang, through the gang respect can be achieved. Once it is attained youth will attempt to sustain the status accompanied by their new found respect. Conversely, the inability to achieve or even hope to achieve the successes of mainstream society propels youth to a perverse state of mind. As a result, youth will go to great lengths to defend their earned respect, even risking death.



Exacerbated by their environment, when strides toward respect are in jeopardy, gang members are likely to react with anger, frustration, and aggressions, illustrated through acts of crime and violence. This revolving cycle may no doubt lead to eventual hopelessness. Bolland (2003) asserts males are at a significantly higher risk of susceptibility to hopelessness. Given that over 90 percent of youth in gangs are male (Curry, Ball, and Fox, 2004), the connection between males and hopelessness can be seen. Since, “traditionally, the typical gang member is male, lives in the inner-city, and is a member of a racial or ethnic minority” (Esbensen, 2000, p. 3). In other words, these multiple layers of marginality (Vigil, 2007) damage their confidence and sense of worth. Adolescents soon realize living among the underclass offers few avenues for success. Provided that self-worth is shaped by success and the level of respect one has, youth are left feeling hopeless in attempting to refashion their distorted identity (Jankowski, 1991).

Furthermore, Anderson (1999) argues, youth are uncertain of their fate and as a result live capriciously. More specifically, “they accept this fate; they live on the edge” (p. 92). Living on the edge often discounts the severity of crime and delinquency, particularly violence. It is clear violence is rampant across inner cities, the majority attributed to street gangs. Morales (1990) contends, urban gangs are a constant source of destruction as their contribution to violence, drugs, and homicide expands. Similarly, Thornberry et al. (1993) maintain the relationship between the street gang and criminality is evident, meaning, “gang

members are much more heavily involved in delinquency and drug use than nongang members” (p. 56). Though, the specific type of crime varies across gangs. That is to say gangs engage in more of a cafeteria style pattern of committing crime, with no one specific area of focus. This method is applicable and relevant to all street gangs regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender (Klein and Maxson, 2006). Though, it is certain that gangs are disproportionately involved in crime and delinquency, and as a result engage in many of the risk factors associated with hopelessness, though the connection between partaking in this activity and hopelessness is narrowly explored in the literature on gangs.

In the same way, the connection between gangs and drugs is made explicit. In particular, the drug market engenders violent turf-battles, rivalry over new territories, drug trafficking, and increased homicide rates (Block and Block, 1993). Conversely, Klein and Maxson (2006) contend the association between drugs, specifically crack cocaine, and gangs are more a result of law enforcement exaggeration than a true depiction. They argue, although many have come to view street gangs as highly involved in and organized around the drug market, this relationship is a distorted one. Still, regardless of the extent to which gangs are connected to the drug market, as Bolland (2007) contends, the availability of drugs within the underclass, where gangs are often located, gives merit in associating drugs, crime, and street gangs; all of which may contribute to heightened feelings of hopelessness (Bolland, 2003).

Gang members, though disproportionately involved in crime and delinquency, perhaps desire to live a conventional life, yet are afforded minimal opportunity to do so. As a result, intense feelings of hopelessness may transpire. Their environment and circumstance make it significantly harder for them to integrate into conventional society. In turn, gang life and all it encompasses, including excessive criminality and drug selling, seem more like a given reality than a choice. A reality distressed by hardship, pending incarceration, and the competition for deference in areas where little exists. Taken together, it is then reasonable to consider this continuous distress may stimulate a sense of hopelessness. For delinquent youth it cements the realization, life for them will always be as it is. In this way, there is nothing to strive for.

## METHODOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

### *The Setting*

The current thesis relies on data derived from an earlier evaluation of The Mesa Gang Intervention Project, which was conducted in Mesa, Arizona. Mesa was home to approximately 405,000 residents at the time of the project, making it the third largest city in Arizona. Though Mesa appeared to be thriving financially (2.2% unemployment level and a median household income of \$33,676) the city

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<sup>1</sup> The methodology for this study was taken from previous work done by Katz, Saunders, and Webb (2009). Their use of the data was to evaluate the "Spergel Model" in Mesa, Arizona. Katz et al. (2009) sought to evaluate a previous study done by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), titled the OJJDP Comprehensive Community-wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Program, otherwise known as the "Spergel Model." The model was named after Irving Spergel for his initial work on the Mesa Gang Intervention Project (MGIP) (Spergel et al. 2002).

retained an unemployment level of 10%. The cities growth through the 1990's (288,000 in 1990 as compared to 405,000 in 2000) may have contributed to the availability of jobs. Ethnically diverse, Mesa was predominately made up of Caucasians (78.9%), Hispanics (15.5%), African-Americans (2.3%), Asians (1.6%), and American-Indians (1.2%).

In 1996, when the project was established, the crime rate in Mesa was noticeably higher than some cities. More specifically, while the crime rate was lower than Albuquerque and Phoenix it was still higher than that of Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and San Diego. In addition to the difference in crime rates between Mesa and these Southwestern cities, Mesa began to reveal some telling signs of an increasing gang problem. The influx of gang activity emerged despite the City of Mesa experiencing a drop in the level of crime, nearly 14%, within the 10 years prior to the onset of the "Spergel" model.

#### *Data Origin, Sampling, and Recruitment*

The data for the present study was derived from an earlier evaluation of the Mesa Gang Intervention Project, conducted by Arizona State University and sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Mesa, Arizona was selected to be a demonstration test site for the Comprehensive Community-wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Program. Once chosen, the Mesa Gang Intervention Project operated from January 1, 1996 to December 31, 2000. The project was implemented in the Powell Community, selected for its high crime rate and large

number of documented gang members. Gang activity mainly consisted of drug related issues as opposed to gang-related violence. “Additionally, the analyses showed that the Powell neighborhood had undergone a rapid shift in demographics in the last ten years (i.e., in terms of increased immigrant residents, increase in single parents homes, decrease in median income), which they believed left the neighborhood with a weakened capacity to deal with its gang problem” (Katz, Saunders, and Webb, 2009, p. 16). While the Powell Community served as the target area Irving Spergel (the national evaluator) selected nearby neighborhoods, (i.e., Kino, Carson, and Mesa), to be the comparison sites.

The present study relies on data obtained from youth who participated in the MGIP (i.e., target group) as well as a group of youth who served as the comparison group. In total data was obtained from 206 youth, (108 from the treatment group and 98 from the comparison group); however, the present study only uses data obtained from 197 of them due to substantial missing data. Participation in the treatment group was determined by probation officers who made participation compulsory as well as recommendations made by street workers. Twenty dollars was given to each participant. Comparison youth were recruited for participation through a snowball sampling strategy. “Specifically, a number of intermediaries who were influential gang members in the comparison area were provided with a \$20 incentive for every individual who was referred and was determined to live in the comparison area and was affiliated with a gang. Those individuals who completed the interview in the comparison area were in

turn asked to serve as an intermediary, and provide the names of other gang members who might be eligible to participate in the study (i.e., live in the comparison area and were involved in a gang)” (Katz, Saunders, and Webb, 2009, p. 20). All participants were required to sign a consent form and for underage youth, written parental consent was required.

For each of the participants, three sources of data were collected: self-report, official, and program service working tracking data. The current study focuses solely on the self-report data (collected from both the target and comparison sites). While participants in the target group were interviewed three times over three years participants in the comparison site were interviewed two times over two years. However, this thesis exclusively concentrates on Time I self-report data, when participants were first interviewed after agreeing to partake in the project. Interview instruments called for data on a range of topics including: socio-demographic information, gang activity, education, employment, crime and delinquency, family and individual crisis, and self-reported detention. Additional topics included, “leisure time and friends; crime and fear in the neighborhood; the youth’s neighborhood relationships; gang status; gang structure, size, and activities; family composition and relationships” (Spergel et al., 2002, p. 188).

A description of the sample is presented in Table 1. Males comprise a greater portion of the sample, 81.7% in comparison to females 18.3%. With regard to age, 14 and under (11.2%), 15- (11.2%), 16 - (14.2%), and 17-year-olds (12.7%) makeup half the sample while the other half is 18 or older (50.7%).

Where ethnicity is concerned, Hispanics (71.1%) consist of a greater portion of the sample; Caucasian is next (17.8%), American-Indian and Other follow (4.1%), and African-Americans comprise just 3% of the sample. Education includes those having dropped out 35% and those either currently in school or graduated 65%. With regard to employment, those unemployed consists of 58.9%, currently employed is 25.4%, and part-time employment is 15.7%. Lastly, where gang membership is concerned, 72.3% self-reported non-gang membership and 27.7% reported currently active gang membership.

Table 1. Sample Description (N = 197)	
	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	18.3
Male	81.7
<b>Age</b>	
≤ 14	11.2
15	11.2
16	14.2
17	12.7
≥ 18	50.7
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Black	3.0
American Indian	4.1
Other	4.1
White	17.8
Hispanic	71.1
<b>Education</b>	
Dropped Out	35.0
Currently in school or Graduated	65.0
<b>Employment</b>	
Employed Part-time	15.7
Currently Employed	25.4
Unemployed	58.9
<b>Gang Membership</b>	
Gang Member	27.7
Non-Gang Member	72.3

*Dependent Variable*

For the present study hopelessness was measured through an additive scale of several survey questions that used a likert scale. The survey questions were to be used in the original Mesa Gang Intervention Project and although data was



gathered from participants, these questions were subsequently omitted from the original MGIP analysis; they are used here to comprise the Hopelessness scale. Specifically, eight questions pertaining to hopelessness targeted the adolescent's perspective about the future in terms of future success, education, health, and crime.

1. How optimistic are you about the future?
2. Do you think you will graduate high school?
3. Do you believe you will ever go to college?
4. Do you think you will live a long life?
5. What is the likelihood that you will ever have a really good job?
6. Do you think about committing a serious crime at some time?
7. Do you believe you will ever end up in prison?
8. Do you think you will ever be a success in life?

Two questions from the scale were removed due to collinearity, resulting in eight questions total. A “positive” response was recoded as a zero and a “negative” response was recoded as a one so that higher scores were indicative of being more hopeless. The Hopelessness scale was combined into an additive scale using the eight questions, a higher score is equal to greater feelings of hopelessness and a lower score is equal to less feelings of hopelessness. In this case, a score of “8” signifies extreme feelings of hopelessness while “0” indicates feelings of hope towards the future. The Hopelessness scale revealed an internal consistency of .64.

### *Independent Variables*

Demographic information was gathered from each participant. This included: gender, age, ethnicity, education, and employment. The age variable is

broken down into five categories: those fourteen and under, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and those eighteen and over. Similarly, ethnicity is divided amongst five categories: Caucasian, Hispanic, African American, American Indian, and Other. We also measure the respondent's education and employment status. Those currently in school or who graduated were coded as one; those who dropped out were coded as zero. Employment was recoded into three binary variables: full-time, part-time, and unemployed.

Independent variables of interest included gang membership and delinquency. Gang membership was measured through the question, "Are you currently an active gang member?" Non-gang members were coded as 0; current gang members were coded as 1.

Delinquency was measured using five variables and focused on: property crime, violent crime, drug use, alcohol use, and detention. Property crime was converted to a dichotomous variable, comprised of questions that focused on whether the respondent engaged in the following in the past six months:

*Destroyed property < \$300, Destroyed property ≥ \$300, Stolen motor vehicle, Shoplifted, Entered house, store, or building to commit theft, and Broke into house, store, or building to commit theft.*

Violent crime was also made into a dichotomous variable comprised of questions that focused on whether the respondent engaged in the following in the past six months: *Threatened to attack a person without a weapon, Threatened to*

*attack a person with a weapon, Beaten up or battered someone without a weapon, and Beaten up or battered someone with a weapon.*

Additionally, three other variables are included in the analysis: drug use, alcohol use, and detention. Specifically, interviewers asked respondents: In the past six months have you used or tried any drugs?, In the past six months have you used any kind of alcohol?, and In the past six months have you been in juvenile detention?

For the present study, self-esteem was also measured. Respondents were asked to answer a series of twenty-five questions checking “like me” if the respondent felt the statement pertained to them or “unlike me” if they believed it did not pertain to them. The twenty-five original questions were combined into an additive scale, where a higher score is equal to greater self-esteem and a lower score is equal to less self-esteem. A response of “Like me” was recoded as a “0” and a response of “Unlike me” was recoded as a “1.” In this case, a score of “0” indicates extremely low self-esteem whereas a score of “25” indicates high self-esteem. The internal reliability of the scale revealed an alpha of .56. The twenty-five questions measuring self-esteem were as follows:

1. Things usually don't bother me.
2. I find it very hard to talk in front of a group.
3. There are lots of things I'd change about myself if I could.
4. I can make up my mind without too much trouble.
5. I'm a lot of fun to be with.
6. I get upset easily at home.
7. It takes me a long time to get used to anything new.
8. I'm popular with persons my own age.
9. My family usually considers my feelings.
10. I give in very easily.

11. My family expects too much of me.
12. It's pretty tough to be me.
13. Things are all mixed up in my life.
14. People usually follow my ideas.
15. I have a low opinion of myself.
16. There are many times when I would like to leave home.
17. I often feel upset with my work.
18. I'm not as nice looking as most people.
19. If I have something to say, I usually say it.
20. My family understands me.
21. Most people are better liked than I am.
22. I usually feel as if my family is pushing me.
23. I often get discouraged with what I am doing.
24. I often wish I were someone else.
25. I can't be depended on

The present study also measured "life crises." Life crises were measured to assess possible feelings of depression, which has been found to be associated with feelings of hopelessness (DuRant et al. 1994). Two types of "Crises" were measured, asking respondents: "In the past year, have any of the following major problems happened to your close relatives?" and "In the past year, have any of the following, major problems happened to you?" The twelve questions comprising family crises were combined to form an additive scale. Similarly, the ten questions comprising individual crises were combined to form an additive scale. A higher score indicates a greater number of crises whereas a lower score indicates fewer crises. A score of "12" on the family crises scale and a score of "10" on the individual crises scale denote extreme crises; inversely a score of "0" denotes a minimal occurrence of crises. Cronbach's alpha for the family crises

scale was .73 and .67 for the individual crises scale. The “Crises” questions measuring depression were as follows:

- Family Crises
  1. A Death
  2. A Serious Illness
  3. Drug Abuse
  4. Child Abuse
  5. Domestic Violence
  6. Victim of Gang Crime
  7. Victim of Nongang Crime
  8. Arrest in the Household
  9. Family Relationship Problem
  10. Job-Related Problems
  11. Income-Related Problems
  12. Other
- Individual Crises
  1. A Serious Illness
  2. Drug Abuse
  3. Domestic Violence
  4. Victim of Gang Crime
  5. Victim of Nongang Crime
  6. Family Relationship Problem
  7. Job-Related Problems
  8. Income-Related Problems
  9. School-Related Problems
  10. Other

## RESULTS

Table 2 presents the bivariate relationship between gang membership and the individual characteristics of the sample. The analysis revealed gang status was significantly associated with age, Hispanic, Caucasian, full-time employment, unemployed, education, self-esteem, hopelessness, and all delinquency variables. The average age for non-gang members was 17.88 years, significantly higher than

that of gang members, which was 17.08 years. Gang members were significantly more likely to be Hispanic (79.3%) and less likely to be Caucasian (9.4%) than non-gang members (66.7% and 21.7%, respectively).

Table 2. Bivariate Analysis of the Individual Characteristics of the Sample by Gang Membership

	Sig	Non-Gang Member Percentage	Gang Member Percentage
Age (m/sd)	*	17.88 (2.91)	17.08 (2.23)
Male		80.4	84.9
Ethnicity			
Black		3.6	1.9
American Indian		3.6	5.7
Other		4.4	3.8
Caucasian	*	21.7	9.4
Hispanic	*	66.7	79.3
Education	*	71	52.8
Employment			
Full Time	*	26.1	18.9
Part Time		15.9	15.1
Unemployed	*	58	66
Delinquency (past 6 months)			
Property Crime	*	35.5	68
Violent Crime	*	41.3	70
Drug Use	*	52	75
Alcohol Use	*	68.3	87
Detention	*	17	40.1
Self-Esteem (m/sd)	*	13.14 (3.34)	11.79 (2.74)
Family Crisis (m/sd)		3.55 (2.6)	3.93 (2.56)
Individual Crisis (m/sd)		2.19 (2.05)	2.75 (1.8)
Hopelessness (m/sd)	*	1.45 (1.21)	2.69 (1.86)
		72.3	27.7

N = 191

\*p<.05

With regard to employment, 26.1% of non-gang members were employed full-time in contrast to 18.9% of gang members. Similarly, 58% of non-gang members were unemployed whereas 66% of gang members reported unemployment. Education differed considerably by gang status. More than 70% of non-gang members and about 53% of gang members reported currently being in school or having graduated. Concerning hopelessness and self-esteem, gang members reported higher levels of hopelessness (mean=2.69) compared to non-gang members (mean= 1.45). Conversely, gang members reported significantly lower levels of self-esteem (mean= 11.79) than non-gang members (mean= 13.14).

Additionally, the analysis showed that all delinquency variables were significantly associated with gang membership. With regard to property crime, 35.5% of non-gang members compared to 68% of gang members self-reported property crime in the past 6 months. Self-reported violent crime in the past six months was 41.3% for non-gang members and 70% for gang members. Fifty-two percent of non-gang members self-reported drug use compared to 75% of gang members. About 68% of non-gang members, in contrast to 87% of gang members, self-reported alcohol use. Seventeen percent of non-gang members reported having been detained in a county jail in the past six months; considerably lower than the more than 40% of gang members who self-reported being detained in a county jail in the past 6 months. Last, gender, black, American Indian, other

ethnicity, part-time employment, and the individual and family crises scales were not found to be significantly related to gang status.

Results of the multivariate regression between the independent variables and hopelessness are presented in Table 3. Illustrated in the table are coefficients (*b*), standard errors, and Betas. The overall model was significant, adjusted  $R^2 = .34$ ,  $F(18, 172) = 4.97$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Specifically, gang membership, male, education, self-esteem, alcohol use, and detention were found to be significant predictors of hopelessness.

Table 3. Regression Estimates for Hopelessness (N = 191)

	Sig	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>
Age		0.04	0.04	0.08
Male	*	0.57	0.27	0.15
Ethnicity				
Caucasian		-0.34	0.27	-0.09
Black		0.02	0.57	0.003
American Indian		0.63	0.50	0.08
Other		-0.57	0.49	-0.08
Education	*	-0.80	0.22	-0.25
Employment				
Full Time		0.05	0.26	0.01
Part Time		0.09	0.29	0.02
Gang Membership	*	0.90	0.24	0.27
Delinquency (past 6 months)				
Property Crime		0.35	0.25	0.12
Violent Crime		0.19	0.24	0.06
Drug Use		0.34	0.23	0.11
Alcohol Use	*	-0.51	0.25	-0.15
Detention	*	-0.65	0.26	-0.18
Self-Esteem	*	-0.08	0.03	-0.16
Family Crisis		-0.04	0.05	-0.07
Individual Crisis		0.11	0.07	0.14

$R^2 = .34$

$F = 4.97$ ;  $df = 18, 172$ ;  $*p < .05$



Gang membership was significantly associated with hopelessness ( $b = .90$ ). Also, an increase in hopelessness of .57 was reported for males. For those in school or having graduated a lower score on the hopelessness scale ( $b = -.80$ ) was reported. Similarly, a one unit increase in self-esteem decreased feelings of hopelessness by .08. Alcohol use was significant as well. For those having reported alcohol use in the past six months hopelessness decreased ( $b = -.51$ ). Similarly, hopelessness decreased for youth having reported juvenile detention in the past six months ( $b = -.65$ ). Lastly, the analysis revealed that age, ethnicity, employment, property and violent crime, drug use, and the individual and family crises scales were not significantly associated with hopelessness.

## DISCUSSION

This research examined the association between feelings of hopelessness and gang membership. To observe this relationship data was used from a prior study evaluating the Mesa Gang Intervention Project using self-report data from 197 youth in Mesa, Arizona. In totality, this thesis attempted to converge, with the intention of highlighting, connections between the literature on gangs and the literature on hopelessness. The use of the term hopeless in reference to adolescent gang youth is noticeably missing within the research on gangs despite much of the literature alluding to its presence. Thus, the importance of linking gang membership and hopelessness may serve to understand and possibly curtail the effects of a hopeless perspective among adolescent gang youth. To test the relationship between gang membership and hopelessness several variables were

controlled for, including: age, gender, ethnicity, education, employment, gang membership, delinquency, self-esteem, and family and individual crises. Of these predictors, six were found to be significantly associated with hopelessness: gang membership, male, education, self-esteem, alcohol use, and detention.

The primary finding of this research was the observed relationship between predicted hopelessness and gang membership. The analyses revealed that youth in a gang were significantly more likely to experience elevated levels of hopelessness. This finding is consistent with what was expected considering that the literature on hopelessness and gangs implicate similar predictors for hopelessness. The causal link between gang membership and loss of hope is perhaps seen in the gang subculture itself and the lifestyle it represents; as it seemingly fosters many of the factors thought to invoke feelings of hopelessness. This includes: a tendency to engage in and over exposure to violence (Anderson, 1994; Decker, 1996; Thornberry et al., 1993), living amid social disorganization and poverty (Vigil, 2007), racial and cultural disparity (Vigil, 2007), a lack of opportunities for employment (Doucette-Gates, 1999; Zatz and Portillos, 2000), and scarce resources.

A considerable amount of gang literature is devoted to violence and its role within the gang. This study specifically controlled for violent crimes and while it failed to be significantly associated with hopelessness its role may be more pertinent than the findings suggest. In fact, it is argued gang membership may trump engagement in violent crime. That is, being in a gang or claiming gang

membership can influence the type of behavior and actions youth partake in. Essentially, the gang is the cause of involvement in delinquency, including, and perhaps especially, violent proclivities (Thornberry et al., 1993). In particular, Thornberry et al. (1993) suggest being in a gang emphasizes violent criminogenic tendencies, where violence is used as a means to establishing some authority. In this way, it is believed youth are likely to react with violence if they are faced with threats or competition for deference, status, or power (Anderson, 1994; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). Also, researchers presume violence, often retaliatory in nature, is inherent to the gang's collective process, implying gangs are likely to resort to violence when confronted with it (Decker, 1996).

Conversely, although researchers maintain violence is primarily reserved for rival gang members it may be directed at members of the same gang as well as the community at large (Jankowski, 1991). Furthermore, it is suggested violence is the root cause in developing a sense of "futurelessness" among inner-city youth (Brezina et al., 2009). The inability to escape the damaging effects of violence may significantly distort their perception of the future, thus, facilitating their involvement in crime and other harm inducing behaviors. The connection, therefore, to gang youth is explicit. It seems sensible to find youth in a gang as having heightened feelings of hopelessness when the very nature, expressed through acts and behaviors, of gang life seem to induce a loss of hope perspective. Thus, the constant hyper vigilance to defend ones self and the gang against violence, coupled with engaging in and witnessing overt violent behavior, may

work to produce a hopeless perspective in youth, believing they may be harmed or seriously injured through the course of being in the gang (Dukes et al., 1997). In fact, this may be more likely for males.

This study found that males are at a greater risk for increased hopelessness, a finding noted in other studies as well (Bolland, 2003; Bolland et al., 2001). Perhaps, males are more likely to be hopeless since they make-up the majority of gang members, are more deeply entrenched in the gang subculture, and are disproportionately involved in all delinquent aspects of gang life. In fact, researchers contend males' feared victimization from rival gang members more than females, possibly due to their own behaviors. That is, the actions male gang members choose to participate in, especially toward other gangs, places them in a situation to be seriously harmed therefore causing worry and anxiety about retaliation (Miller and Brunson, 2000), which may progress to hopelessness.

Additionally, gang members may be more hopeless due to environmental conditions, such as neighborhood and community factors given that researchers argue it heavily influences the psyche of adolescents (Bolland, 2003; Bolland et al., 2005; Bolland et al., 2007). It is argued, young people growing up amid dilapidated housing, eroded neighborhoods, and an absence of social cohesion are believed to develop a hopeless outlook. Gang researchers highlight the impact impoverished communities, ailing from social and economic disadvantage, have on gang youth (Vigil, 2007) and its function in the facilitation of gangs (Anderson, 1994; Curry and Spergel, 1998; Katz and Schnebly, 2008; Klein and

Maxson, 2006; Wilson, 1987; Zatz and Portillos, 2000). Therefore, it is plausible gang youth are alert to growing up destitute and as a result are prone to elevated feelings of hopelessness.

Additionally, nearly all empirical research on gangs finds minorities to be the majority in gang composition, a fact found in this study as well. This notion and the hardships associated with being a minority may also engender hopelessness in gang members. A well known concept within gang research argues, youth living in the underclass are forced to endure layers of marginality through discrimination based on race and culture, otherwise known as “multiple marginality” (Vigil, 1988). The inability to preserve cultural upbringings while simultaneously assimilating to the American way of life, minority gang youth are likely to experience an internal battle. This confliction may transpire to hopelessness as these youth are left feeling misplaced and conflicted.

Last, stifled opportunities for legitimate employment may engender loss of hope in gang members. Researchers contend youth in gangs are aware of the challenges that accompany their way of life and that future prospects for employment are undercut (Zatz and Portillos, 2000). In this way, the likelihood of achieving mainstream success and escaping poverty is minimal. This is unsettling given that it is presumed poverty may be the leading cause of hopelessness amongst youth (Bolland et al., 2005). However, education is perhaps a means of interrupting this cycle.

This analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between education and hopelessness. Specifically, hopelessness decreased for youth reporting currently being in school or who graduated. This is consistent with prior research, as some researchers argue education and employment are heavily linked to future success and minimized feelings of hopelessness (Doucette-Gates, 1999; Gibbs and Bankhead, 2000; Weigner, 1998). It is argued, education affords youth the opportunity to invest in a *promising* future where the possibilities for conventional success seem more attainable (Doucette-Gates, 1999). Similarly, gang researchers stress the importance of education and its connection to employment arguing drop-out rates are higher for adolescent gang youth, and, as a result, the desire for employment may be lessened (Hayden, 2004).

Furthermore, it is understood gang membership negatively influences the life-course development, as researchers argue current life events manipulate future circumstances. For adolescent gang members, given their disconnect from prosocial influences, are unprepared for adulthood and the responsibilities that accompany it. As a result future prospects such as educational attainment become less likely in addition to securing employment, finding a partner, and parenthood, where, “the loss of these sources of social capital can have deleterious effects on later life chances” (Thornberry et al., 2003, p. 13).

Also, the findings presented here suggest the higher one’s self-esteem the less likely they are to have a hopeless perspective about life. This result is consistent with previous studies suggesting that self-esteem and susceptibility to

hopelessness are strongly correlated (DuRant et al., 1995; Yablonsky, 2007). Moreover, greater instances of self-worth can build confidence and positively affect other facets in life such as school performance and peer pressure; therefore, it may be that youth experiencing greater self-worth have little reason to be hopeless (Zimmerman et al., 1997). In regard to gang members' researchers suggest, where chances for success have been undercut the gang affords a means of gaining status and power (Jankowski, 1991). For males in particular worth is directly related to status and power; something they believe the gang may help to produce (Anderson, 1994). In this way, adolescents believing they have seniority may give them a sense of purpose which builds self-esteem and as a result reduces hopelessness.

Though the abovementioned findings are consistent with prior research, detention and alcohol use are inconsistent. Detention revealed, for those having reported a stay in juvenile detention in the past six months feelings of hopelessness were likely to decrease. A possible explanation for this may be youth contact with the juvenile justice system. When in custody, youth are forced to participate in treatment programs that emphasize rehabilitation, thus, engaging in counseling and intervention services that otherwise would not have been made available (Duxbery, 1993). This may encourage positive thinking, prompting the desire and motivation to change, as a result affording youth a more hopeful perspective about their future. Additionally, secure care facilities may give adolescents the opportunity of temporarily escaping any troubles and afflictions

they might be experiencing such as dysfunctional home life, failing school, and neighborhood disorder. For youth, jail might offer a chance to initiate change for the better. Ultimately, a stay in the county jail permits structure and uniformity which may provide stability in their otherwise unstable lives.

With regard to alcohol use, the finding is inconsistent with previous research. It suggests, of those having reported alcohol use in the past six months hopelessness is projected to decrease. This is interesting in that substance use was hypothesized to engender hopelessness in youth. This finding may be attributed to the recreational use of alcohol in social settings amongst young people.

Adolescents are likely to use alcohol while “hanging around” and/or partying. For gang members in particular, researchers suggest drinking may be used to unify the gang, essentially creating stronger bonds between members (Hunt and Laidler, 2001; Vigil and Long, 1990). In addition, the group cohesion alcohol promotes is also used to “affirm masculinity and male togetherness” (Hunt and Laidler, 2001, p. 66; Dunning et al., 1998). As a result, drinking for social purposes may create a sense of belonging and feeling accepted for adolescents, which may work to reduce hopelessness.

### *Limitations*

Though this study found an association between gang membership and hopelessness, in addition to the significance of six variables, this thesis is subject to some limitation. First, the dependent variable used only eight questions to measure hopelessness. The use of additional questions to assess loss of hope may



help to better understand a youth's perception about the future. For instance, researchers often utilize the Brief Hopelessness Scale for Children to measure hopelessness (Bolland et al., 2001). Questions include, *I see only bad things ahead of me, not good things* and *I might as well give up, because I cannot make things better for myself*. Second, the study is based on the use of self-report data which might be subject to misleading or false reporting from respondents. That is, since the data is obtained from youth they may exaggerate on some questions, such as those involving delinquency, and understate on others, such as questions that target their feelings. Third, this is a cross-sectional study which limits the ability to study effects over time. Fourth, this study did not test for interaction effects between variables which, if tested, may have offered additional insight. Introducing interaction terms in the model would have given a better understanding of how the control variables affect hopelessness. Fifth, the results may not be generalizable to youth outside of this sample, as the data was collected from youth participating in a program designed specifically for the original study. Lastly, the original study, from which the data was taken, was conducted more than 10 years ago using one city and a distinct group of respondents. Given this lapse in time the economic and racial composition of the community and respondents, may have changed making the results inapplicable to the same group.

### *Conclusion and Implications for Future Research*

In conclusion, this thesis attempted to link the literature on gangs to the literature on hopelessness since arguments made in both fields appear to overlap. This was done to highlight the fact that causes of hopelessness are found in the literature on gangs although the use of the term is overlooked. The most important finding revealed a direct correlation between youth gangs and loss of hope, giving credit to the fact more research on this subject is warranted. Ultimately, in extending and applying the research on hopelessness to the study of youth gangs, one can gain a better understanding of how one affects the other.

Future gang researchers should explore the extent to which hopelessness plays in the lives of adolescent gang members. Specifically, researchers should probe whether or not being hopeless acts as a motivator for youth to remain in the gang and/or perform gang related activities? Additionally, future research may inquire whether or not the gang acts as a facilitator in initiating a hopeless perspective. Also, how long is a youth in, connected with, or tied to the gang before the onset of hopelessness initiates? Perhaps, through the exploration of these and other questions an awareness about hopelessness among gang members can be made explicit and strides to deflect loss of hope can be made.

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APPENDIX 1  
SCALE DESCRIPTION



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Appendix 1: Scale Description

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	Mean	St. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Hopelessness:	1.79	1.5	0	7
Self-Esteem:	12.81	3.23	5	19
Crisis (Family):	3.64	2.57	0	11
Crisis (Individual):	2.31	2	0	8

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N = 197

APPENDIX 2

ORIGINAL MESA GANG INTERVENTION PROJECT CODING

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 Appendix 1
 

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Dependent Variable		N	%
Hopelessness			
How optimistic are you about the future?	1 = Very Optimistic	51	25.9
	2 = Optimistic	38	19.3
	3 = Somewhat Optimistic	65	33
	4 = Hardly Optimistic	17	8.63
	5 = Not At All Optimistic	16	8.12
	8 = Don't Know	9	4.57
	9 = No Response	1	0.51
Do you think you will graduate high school?	1 = Yes	100	50.7
	2 = No	53	26.9
	7 = Not Applicable/ Has Graduated High School	30	15.2
	8 = Don't Know	11	5.58
	9 = No Response	3	1.52
Do you believe you will ever go to college?	1 = Yes	83	42.1
	2 = No	78	39.6
	7 = Not Applicable/ Has Graduated High School	10	5.1
	8 = Don't Know	25	12.7
	9 = No Response	1	0.51
Do you believe you will ever go to college?	1 = Yes	83	42.13
	2 = No	78	39.59
	7 = Not Applicable/ Has Graduated High School	10	5.08
	8 = Don't Know	25	12.69
	9 = No Response	1	0.51
Do you think you will live a long life?	1 = Yes	133	67.5
	2 = No	27	13.7
	8 = Don't Know	36	18.3
	9 = No Response	1	0.6

What is the likelihood that you will ever have a really good job? Is it 1) very high, 2) high, 3) moderate, 4) low, or 5) not at all?	1 = Very High	45	22.9
	2 = High	68	34.7
	3 = Moderate	66	33.7
	4 = Low	8	4.1
	5 = Not At All	1	0.5
	8 = Don't Know	8	4.1
	9 = No Response		
Do you think about committing a serious crime at sometime?	1 = Yes	49	25
	2 = No	138	70.4
	8 = Don't Know	5	2.6
	9 = No Response	4	2.0
Do you believe you will ever end up in prison?	1 = Yes	39	19.9
	2 = No	129	65.8
	7 = Not Applicable/ Already in Prison	26	13.3
	8 = Don't Know	2	1.0
	9 = No Response		
Do you think your current buddies in the gang would help you out if you ever went to jail?	1 = Yes	51	26.2
	2 = No	111	56.9
	8 = Don't Know	17	8.7
	9 = No Response	16	8.2
Do you expect to ever be hurt seriously in a gang fight?	1 = Yes	72	36.7
	2 = No	95	48.5
	8 = Don't Know	14	7.1
	9 = No Response	15	7.7
Do you think you will ever be a success in life?	1 = Yes	163	83.2
	2 = No	12	6.1
	8 = Don't Know	21	10.7
	9 = No Response	0	
	. = Missing	1	

## Independent Variables

### Self-Esteem

1. Things usually don't bother me.	0 = Like Me	120	60.9
	1 = Unlike Me	77	39.1
2. I find it very hard to talk in front of a group.	0 = Like Me	86	43.7
	1 = Unlike Me	111	56.4
3. There are lots of things I'd change about myself if I could.	0 = Like Me	131	66.8
	1 = Unlike Me	65	33.2
	. = Missing	1	
4. I can make up my mind without too much trouble.	0 = Like Me	142	72.1
	1 = Unlike Me	55	27.9
5. I'm a lot of fun to be with.	0 = Like Me	183	93.9
	1 = Unlike Me	12	6.2
	. = Missing	2	
6. I get upset easily at home.	0 = Like Me	97	49.2
	1 = Unlike Me	100	50.8
7. It takes me a long time to get used to anything new.	0 = Like Me	66	33.7
	1 = Unlike Me	130	66.3
	. = Missing	1	
8. I'm popular with persons my own age.	0 = Like Me	159	81.5
	1 = Unlike Me	36	18.5
	. = Missing	2	
9. My family usually considers my feelings.	0 = Like Me	142	72.5
	1 = Unlike Me	54	27.6
	. = Missing	1	
10. I give in very easily.	0 = Like Me	41	20.9
	1 = Unlike Me	155	79.1
	. = Missing	1	

11. My family expects too much of me.	0 = Like Me	70	35.5
	1 = Unlike Me	127	64.5
12. It's pretty tough to be me.	0 = Like Me	100	50.8
	1 = Unlike Me	97	49.2
13. Things are all mixed up in my life.	0 = Like Me	99	50.5
	1 = Unlike Me	97	49.5
	. = Missing	1	
14. People usually follow my ideas.	0 = Like Me	136	69.7
	1 = Unlike Me	59	30.3
	. = Missing	2	
15. I have a low opinion of myself.	0 = Like Me	26	13.3
	1 = Unlike Me	170	86.7 3
	. = Missing	1	
16. There are many times when I would like to leave home.	0 = Like Me	113	57.4
	1 = Unlike Me	84	42.6
17. I often feel upset with my work.	0 = Like Me	51	25.9
	1 = Unlike Me	146	74.1
18. I'm not as nice looking as most people.	0 = Like Me	49	24.9
	1 = Unlike Me	148	75.1
19. If I have something to say, I usually say it.	0 = Like Me	180	92.3
	1 = Unlike Me	15	7.7
	. = Missing	2	
20. My family understands me.	0 = Like Me	138	70.1
	1 = Unlike Me	59	29.9
21. Most people are better liked than I am.	0 = Like Me	49	25
	1 = Unlike Me	147	75
	. = Missing	1	

22. I usually feel as if my family is pushing me.	0 = Like Me	71	36.2
	1 = Unlike Me	125	63.8
	. = Missing	1	
23. I often get discouraged with what I am doing.	0 = Like Me	66	33.5
	1 = Unlike Me	131	66.5
24. I often wish I were someone else.	0 = Like Me	41	20.8
	1 = Unlike Me	156	79.2
25. I can't be depended on	0 = Like Me	36	18.4
	1 = Unlike Me	160	81.6
	. = Missing	1	
Gender	1 = Male	161	81.7
	2 = Female	36	18.3
Age			
Give your birth Month, Day, and Year			
Ethnicity			
Racial Group	1 = White	62	31.5
	2 = African American or Black	6	3.1
	3 = American Indian	11	5.6
	4 = Asian or Pacific Islander	4	2.0
	5 = Other	114	57.9
	98 = Don't Know	0	0
	99 = No response	0	0
Ethnicity	1 = No, not of Spanish/hispanic Origin	54	27.4
	2 = Yes, Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano	134	68.0
	3 = Puerto Rican	1	0.5
	4 = Cuban	5	2.5
	5 = Yes, Other Spanish/Hispanic	0	0
	. = Missing	3	
Education			

Are you currently in school?	1 = Yes	113	57.4
	2 = No	84	42.6
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	0	0

What is the highest grade you have completed?

#### Employment

Are you currently employed?	1 = Yes	77	39.1
	2 = No	119	60.4
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	1	0.5

(IF YES) Do you have a FT job, a PT job, or only work occasionally?

1 = Full Time	50	25.4
2 = Part Time	27	13.7
3 = Occasional Work	4	2.0
7 = N/A	115	58.4
8 = DK	0	0
9 = NR	1	0.5

#### Gang Membership

In the last six months, have you been an active gang member?

1 = Yes	57	28.9
2 = No	121	61.4
7 = N/A	13	6.6
8 = Don't Know	1	0.5
9 = No Response	5	2.5

Have you ever been in a gang or associated with a gang?

1 = Yes	134	68.0
2 = No	39	19.8
7 = N/A	22	11.2
8 = Don't Know	0	0
9 = No Response	2	1.0

#### Delinquency

Property Crime (last 6 months)

Destroyed property worth less than \$300?	1 = Yes	34	17.3
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	2 = No	157	79.7
	8 = Don't Know	1	0.5
	9 = No Response	5	2.5
Destroyed property worth \$300 or more?	1 = Yes	24	12.2
	2 = No	168	85.3
	8 = Don't Know	1	0.5
	9 = No Response	4	2
Stolen a motor vehicle?	1 = Yes	35	18.3
	2 = No	155	78.7
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	6	3.0
	. = Missing	1	
Shoplifted?	1 = Yes	36	18.3
	2 = No	157	79.7
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	4	2.03
Entered a house, store, or building to commit a theft?	1 = Yes	28	14.2
	2 = No	161	81.7
	8 = Don't Know	2	1.0
	9 = No Response	6	3.1
Broke into a house, store, or building to commit a theft?	1 = Yes	21	10.7
	2 = No	170	86.3
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	6	3.1
Violent Crime (last 6 months) Threatened to attack a person <i>without</i> using a gun, knife, or other dangerous weapon	1 = Yes	61	31.8
	2 = No	131	68.2
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	0	0
	. = Missing	5	

Threatened to attack a person using a gun, knife, or other dangerous weapon	1 = Yes	24	12.2
	2 = No	164	83.3
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	9	4.6
Beaten up or battered someone <i>without</i> using a gun, knife, or other dangerous weapon	1 = Yes	59	29.9
	2 = No	132	67.0
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	6	3.1
Beaten up or battered someone using a gun, knife, or other dangerous weapon	1 = Yes	23	11.7
	2 = No	168	85.3
	8 = Don't Know	1	0.5
	9 = No Response	5	2.5
Alcohol In the past six months, have you used any kind of alcohol?	1 = Yes	140	72.2
	2 = No	50	25.8
	8 = Don't Know	2	1.0
	9 = No Response	2	1.0
	. = Missing	3	
Drugs In the past six months, have you used or tried any drugs?	1 = Yes	113	57.4
	2 = No	81	41.1
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
Detention In the past six months, have you been in juvenile detention?	1 = Yes	47	23.9
	2 = No	145	73.6
	8 = Don't Know	1	0.5
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
	. = Missing	1	
Life Crises (Family)			

In the past year, have any of the following major problems happened to your close relatives?

1. A Death	1 = Yes	109	55.3
	2 = No	82	41.6
	8 = Don't Know	3	1.5
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
2. A Serious Illness	1 = Yes	83	42.1
	2 = No	107	54.3
	8 = Don't Know	4	2.0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
3. Drug Abuse	1 = Yes	61	30.9
	2 = No	131	66.5
	8 = Don't Know	2	1.0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
4. Child Abuse	1 = Yes	14	7.1
	2 = No	179	90.9
	8 = Don't Know	1	0.5
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
5. Domestic Violence	1 = Yes	67	34.0
	2 = No	125	63.5
	8 = Don't Know	2	1.0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
6. Victim of Gang Crime	1 = Yes	44	22.3
	2 = No	148	75.1
	8 = Don't Know	1	0.5
	9 = No Response	4	2.0
7. Victim of Nongang Crime	1 = Yes	47	23.9
	2 = No	145	73.6
	8 = Don't Know	2	1.0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
8. Arrest in the Household	1 = Yes	79	40.1
	2 = No	115	58.4

	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
9. Family Relationship Problem	1 = Yes	86	43.7
	2 = No	106	53.8
	8 = Don't Know	2	1.0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
10. Job-Related Problems	1 = Yes	57	28.9
	2 = No	136	69.0
	8 = Don't Know	1	0.5
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
11. Income-Related Problems	1 = Yes	48	24.4
	2 = No	140	71.1
	8 = Don't Know	5	2.5
	9 = No Response	4	2.0
12. Other	1 = Yes	1	0.5
	2 = No	99	50.3
	7 = N/A	6	3.1
	8 = Don't Know	2	1.0
	9 = No Response	89	45.2
Life Crises (Individual)			
In the past year, have any of the following major problems happened to you?			
1. A Serious Illness	1 = Yes	19	9.6
	2 = No	173	87.8
	7 = N/A	0	0
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	5	2.5
2. Drug Abuse	1 = Yes	40	20.3
	2 = No	154	78.2
	7 = N/A	0	0
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
3. Domestic Violence	1 = Yes	30	15.5

	2 = No	125	64.8
	7 = N/A	7	3.6
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	31	16.1
	. = Missing	4	
4. Victim of Gang Crime	1 = Yes	46	23.4
	2 = No	148	75.1
	7 = N/A	0	0
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
5. Victim of Nongang Crime	1 = Yes	27	13.7
	2 = No	167	84.8
	7 = N/A	0	0
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
6. Family Relationship Problem	1 = Yes	76	38.6
	2 = No	118	59.9
	7 = N/A	0	0
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
7. Job-Related Problems	1 = Yes	55	27.9
	2 = No	137	69.5
	7 = N/A	2	1
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
8. Income-Related Problems	1 = Yes	42	21.3
	2 = No	149	75.6
	7 = N/A	2	1.0
	8 = Don't Know	1	0.5
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
9. School-Related Problems	1 = Yes	69	35
	2 = No	119	60.4

	7 = N/A	6	3.1
	8 = Don't Know	0	0
	9 = No Response	3	1.5
10.Other	1 = Yes	18	9.1
	2 = No	87	44.2
	7 = N/A	5	2.5
	8 = Don't Know	1	0.5
	9 = No Response	86	43.7

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