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A DOSE OF DRUGS, A TOUCH OF VIOLENCE, A CASE OF AIDS: CONCEPTUALIZING THE SAVA SYNDEMIC

Merrill Singer, Hispanic Health Council

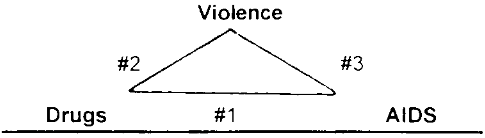
ABSTRACT

Gang violence, substance abuse and AIDS have been described as parallel epidemics in the U.S. inner city. This paper draws upon findings from a set of ethnographic and survey research projects in the Puerto Rican community of Hartford, CT to develop a conceptualization of the close interconnections between these three health and social problems. Rather than separate conditions, substance abuse, violence, and AIDS, referred to here as SAVA to stress the relationships among these three phenomena, are best thought of forming a single syndemic (a closely interrelated complex of health and social crises) that continues to take a significant toll on the lives and well-being of the urban poor.

INTRODUCTION

Gang-related and other violence, substance abuse, and AIDS have been described as concurrent epidemics among U.S. inner-city populations. The term epidemic, however, does not adequately describe the contemporary inner city health crisis, which is characterized by a set of closely interrelated, endemic and epidemic conditions (e.g., HIV, TB, STDs, hepatitis, cirrhosis, infant mortality, drug abuse, suicide, homocide, etc.), all of which are strongly influenced and sustained by a broader set of political-economic and social factors, including high rates of unemployment, poverty, homelessness and residential overcrowding, substandard nutrition, infrastructural deterioration and loss of quality housing stock, forced geographic mobility, family breakup and disruption of social support networks, health care inequality, and youth gang activities (Bourgois 1995; Wallace 1990; Waterston 1993). Elsewhere (Singer 1994, 1995) I proposed the term "syndemic" to refer to the interrelated complex of health and social crises facing the urban poor. Like the terms epidemic and pandemic (spreading health problems of local or extra-local distribution), the suffix of syndemic is derived from the Greek word *demos* (the people), while the prefix is taken from the Greek term for "working together." In other words, a syndemic is a set of closely intertwined and mutual enhancing health problems that significantly affect the overall health status of a population within the context of a perpetuating configuration of noxious social conditions. Substance abuse, violence, and AIDS, in this sense, are not merely concurrent, in that they are not wholly separable phenomena. Rather, these three closely linked and interdependent threats to health and well being, referred to here by the single term SAVA (substance abuse, violence, and AIDS) to emphasize their interrelatedness, constitute a major syndemic that already has taken a devastating toll on the lives of the urban poor and threatens to wreck further pain and havoc in the future.

FIGURE 1: SAVA Interconnections



While some dimensions of the relationship among the three conditions under examination in this paper have been studied, at least preliminarily, and are beginning to be understood (e.g., the roles of direct and indirect sharing of drug injection equipment in the spread of AIDS; the role of crack-cocaine in sex for drugs/money transactions in AIDS transmission; the role of drug dealing in turf-war violence; the role of an AIDS diagnosis in enhancing levels of drug use), other suspected connections are unclear (e.g., the frequency of violence against women among condom-resistent men; the role of victimization in the initiation and continuation of drug use as a form of self-medication; the impact of structural violence on AIDS risk behavior; differences in level of withdrawal agitation and subsequent violence associated with alternative routes of cocaine consumption). Thus, in Figure 1, although there are significant knowledge gaps in all of the relationships displayed, relationship #1 is better understood than relationship #2, which, in turn, is better understood than relationship #3; while a holistic understanding of all three conditions in tandem is significantly underdeveloped.

On the basis of ongoing research and intervention targetting drug use, AIDS risk, and violence in the Puerto Rican community of Hartford, CT (Singer, Jia, Schensul, Weeks, Page 1992; Singer, Jia 1993; Weeks, Singer, Grier, Schensul 1996) and a review of relevant literature on the relationships between these increasing dominant features of inner city life, the purpose of this paper is to contribute to the conceptualization of SAVA as a growing inner city syndemic.

SAVA: THE INTWINEMENT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE, VIOLENCE AND AIDS

Since 1988 our applied anthropological and epidemiological research team[1] has been studying street drug use and AIDS risk among adolescent and adult injection and non-injection drug users in Hartford, CT (Singer 1993). While violence was not a core variable in our initial research design, the frequency of violence and its painful impact on the lives of our study participants has become increasingly apparent. In life history interviews, study participants describe jarring tales of violence and suffering. For example, Maria, a young Puerto Rican woman, reported that when she was 12 years old her father brutally beat her with a pool stick because she refused his frequent demands for sexual services. Carmen, a homeless mother of two small children, reported being tightly tied to a sofa for several weeks by a man who had offered her a place to live. Another of our participants reported that he had his cheek bone smashed by a drug dealer who claimed he had not fully paid his drug bill. In Project COPE, a NIDA-funded study of AIDS risk and prevention among out-of-treatment street drug users (Weeks et al 1996), we found that 4 percent of our participants died between intake and 6-month follow-up primarily as a result of violence (2 were murdered), car accidents, or disease. In light of its significant toll on the lives of the participants in our studies, we have come to see that violence, in its many forms, must be a central focus of prevention research on drug use and AIDS.

Indeed, violence has become a common feature of contemporary urban experience, and our society often is said to be caught in a cycle of intergenerational transmission of violence that produces ever more violent generations over time. Thus, in 1951, New York City had 244 murders; in 1990, the city recorded 2,245 murders (although the rate fell to 1,561 in 1994). The problem of violence is not limited to the country's largest cities however. In 1960, New Haven, CT, a moderate-sized city comparable to Hartford, had six murders, four rapes, and sixteen robberies. Thirty years later, despite a 14 percent drop in the size of its population, the city reported thirty-one murders, 168 rapes, and 1,784 robberies (Walinsky 1995). Currently, the US homicide rate is between 4 and 70 times that of other countries and for every homicide there are about 100 nonfatal intentional injuries (Sullivan 1991; US Department of Justice 1988). Further, it is estimated that 22 million women are victims of rape or sexual assault during their lifetime. The Department of Justice estimates that eighty-three percent of Americans will be victims of violent crime at least once in their lives, while 2.2 million people are intentionally injured by another person each year (US Public Health Service 1990). In the inner city, and among active street drug users, the frequency of violent victimization is far higher and street gangs contribute significantly to this pattern.

Relatively few studies focus directly on the drugs/violence relationship. Goldstein (1985) has suggested three possible connections. First, the chemical effects of some drugs may lead to violent behavior. Second, drug addiction may lead to "fund-raising" crimes that include violence. Finally, drug dealing may promote the use of violence to secure or defend markets or exact payment from drug customers.

Existing research indicates that in each of these cases the relationship between drug/alcohol use and violence is complex and conditioned by various additional factors including the substance(s) that is/are consumed and the method of consumption. Several drugs (or drug combinations) have been linked to increased aggression and resulting violence, including marijuana, alcohol, heroin, cocaine, PCP, and amphetamines (Simonds, Kashani 1980). Although marijuana is commonly thought of as a suppressor of hostility, it has been linked by several studies to heightened irritability and violence (Spunt, Goldstein, Bellucci, Miller 1990a, 1990b) under certain conditions. Spunt, Goldstein, Brownstein, and Fendrich (1994) examined marijuana use among 268 individuals incarcerated for homicide and found that one third of their respondents used the drug on the day of the homicide and a quarter of these individuals reported that marijuana was a factor in their crime. Most of these individuals (80%) were also under the influence of alcohol at the time of the homicide.

Alcohol has been linked to various forms of violence, including homicide, assault, spouse abuse, rape, and child abuse. Indeed, alcohol has been associated with the most violent expressions of aggression (Gayford 1975; Gerson, Preston 1979; Kelleher, Chaffin, Hollenberg, Fischer 1994; Valdez, Kaplan, Curtis, Yin 1995). Statistically, alcohol is associated with violent crime at a significantly higher level than it is with non-violent crime (Murdoch, Pihl, Ross 1990). Consistently, reviews of the laboratory and retrospective behavioral literatures have concluded that alcohol facilitates or increases aggression, perhaps through disinhibition (Hull, Bond 1986; Taylor, Leonard 1983), although the disinhibition theory has been disputed (Collins 1988). Various studies also note that inmates report high levels of alcohol consumption prior to arrest. While some studies emphasize the issue of psychological expectation, especially prior learning (MacAndrew, Edgerton 1969) or the combined effects of situational factors, Bushman and Cooper (1990) argue that the pharmacological effects of alcohol, in and of themselves, may be an important determinant of aggression. While the link between drinking and aggression/violence has been found in numerous studies, as Collins and Schlenger (1988) argue, in the absence of an understanding of the exact nature of this association this often replicated finding is uninteresting and of little use theoretically or from policy or prevention perspectives. Existing research findings prohibit establishment of a causal connection; often studies are done retrospectively with imprisoned populations.

Several studies have found an association between cocaine use and violence, although method of consumption among respondents varies across research projects. Siegal (1982) linked violence and anti-social behavior to free-base cocaine. A larger study by Miller, Gold, and Mahler (1990) of men who called a cocaine hotline found that 32 percent had a history of violence not associated with crime and 46 percent had a history of violent crime. The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, a telephone study by NIDA (1985), found that 83 percent of cocaine users reported paranoia as a side effect and 9 percent reported attempted suicide. Giannini et al (1993) found higher levels of violence among those who free base and inject cocaine than those who use nasal insufflation. Crack-cocaine, in particular, has been found to be associated with the perpetration of violent crime, especially felonious assault and homicide (Goldstein, Paul, Bellucci, Patricia, Spunt, Miller 1991). Johnson, Boster, and Holbert (1989), in a detailed review of violence and hard-drug sales in the inner city, explain the rise of violence associated with crack in terms of the social organization, rivalry, and citizen-intimidation strategies of crack-selling gangs. Inciardi and co-workers (1993) also found a correlation between level of violence and level of involvement in crack-cocaine sales & use.

Although there were early attempts to suggest that heroin users tended to avoid violence because the drug inhibited aggression, opiates have been linked to violence in more recent studies, especially for some subgroups (Inciardi 1972). Crime, however, rather than violence per se, has been the focus of much of the research on the social consequences of heroin addiction. An examination of the types of crimes committed by heroin addicts suggests that acts of violence are not uncommon. In his study of 573 Miami heroin users, Inciardi (1986) found that during a one year period, participants collectively committed 5,300 robberies (mostly at gun point) and 639 assaults, as well as an assortment of other crimes including arson, vandalism, and extortion. Goldstein (1979) linked violence among heroin-using prostitutes to the impatience and irritability associated with withdrawal. In their ethnographic study of heroin injectors in a number of Eastern cities, Hanson, Beschner, Walters, and Bovelle (1985) found that only 10 percent regularly engaged in violent crime, primarily to raise money to support their habit. However, patterns have been changing. Stephens and Ellis (1975) noted that beginning in the 1970s crimes among heroin users were becoming increasingly more violent, a trend also found by McBride (1981) in Miami. In his re-study of an East Harlem sample of heroin users, Preble (1980) found that 40 percent had been murdered since his original study 15 years earlier. Hammersley, Forsyth, Morrison, and Davies (1989) found that heavy opiate users committed crimes significantly more frequently than did moderate users, marijuana users, or alcohol users. They concluded that the need for opiates does not lead directly to crime, but rather that crime and opiate use tend to influence each other.

Other drugs, alone and in combination, also have been implicated in violent behavior. However, none of these other drugs (e.g., PCP, amphetamines) currently is consumed in any significant quantities by street drug users in the Hartford area. Rather, street drug users in Hartford appear to fall primarily into

Table 1: Sociodemographic Comparison in a Mixed Hartford Neighborhood

	Hispanic (n=117)	African American (n=100)	White (n=73)	F	X Squared	p<
Average age	30.5	30.3	33.6	4.31		.01
Average monthly household income	$999	$1233	$1812	49.9		.0001
Average number of people in household	2.9	2.4	2.2	5.47		.005
Average per capita monthly income	$426	$712	$1096	40.7		.0001
Average years of education	10.6	12.6	14.3	8.2		.0001
Percent of high school graduates	41%	84%	86%		61.3	.00001
Percent college graduates	3%	13%	53%		79.2	.00001

one of three groups: polydrug injectors (primarily speedball or heroin), free-base cocaine smokers, and rock-cocaine smokers (crack). All of these groups also use alcohol and marijuana. Overall, numerous studies provide support for arguing that the relationship between drug use and violence is strong (Brownstein, Spunt, Langley 1995). However, much of the existing literature is handicapped by the fact that it relies on data derived from official sources, including medical examiner reports and arrest records; the former only provide information on victims and the latter only include violence or drug use during the commission of a crime (Spunt et al 1990a).

The full role of violence in AIDS transmission also is not well understood nor has it been well studied. Several types of violence have been linked to AIDS however. Violence has been directed at people with AIDS, both as an expression of fear/prejudice and as an extension of violent homophobic attitudes. Moreover, it is widely recognized that rape and sexual abuse are potential routes of viral transmission. There are approximately 100,000 reported cases of rape of women and an estimated 200,000-500,000 cases of sexual assault against female children each year (Richardson 1988). In 1991, 45 percent of the women who were raped in the U.S. believed their assailants were under the influence of drugs or alcohol (Collins, Rosenbaum 1994). There also are reports in the literature of women drug users who have been beaten and/or raped (sometimes multiple times) by drug dealers (Inciardi 1986; Maher, Curtis 1993) & of women drug sellers who frequently are subject to violence victimization leading to compensatory drug use & HIV risk (Fagan 1994). Rape of men (primarily in prison) and sexual abuse of boys are additional expressions of the potential link between violence and AIDS. In a study of adolescents, both male and female, comparing victims of sexual abuse with those who did not report abuse, Harrison, Hoffman and Edward (1989) found that victims used a wider variety of drugs and were more likely to use drugs to medicate distress than nonvictims. Thus, both male & female victims were significantly more likely than nonvictims to report being both nervous & having trouble sleeping as well as using drugs to reduce their tension and sleeplessness, while significantly more female victims than nonvictims reported using drugs to escape family problems. As this study suggests, self-medication with illicit drugs & alcohol as a means of coping with the emotional costs of violence victimization (e.g. common reports of emotional numbing) may be an important factor that puts people at risk for AIDS. This association may be facilitated by the fact that individuals who are subjected to repeated violence victimization exhibit heightened levels of self-derogation (Dembo, Washburn, Berry, Dertke, Wish, Williams, Schemeidler 1988; Dembo, Williams, La Voie, Berry 1989) and "inadequate mechanisms for self-protection" (Harrison et al 1989). Thus, drug use has been found to be associated with higher rates of unsafe behavior (Kingery, Pruitt, Hurley 1992).

The association between violence and AIDS may have other expressions as well. Various researchers have noted that encouraging women to use condoms as part of AIDS prevention may subject them to threats and violence from resistant partners (Singer, Flores, Davison, Burke, Castillo, Scalon, Rivera 1990). A woman who promotes condom use in a relationship may be seen as accusing her male partner of having other sexual partners or implying that she has had other partners; this has been found to be a factor in condom avoidance among Latina women in California for example (Amaro 1995; Gomez, Marin 1993). As we have found in several of our prevention projects in Hartford, some Hispanic men voice threats even with regard to their partners participation in AIDS education (Singer, Gonzalez, Vega, Centeno, Davison 1994). Goldstein (reported in Inciardi 1986) notes that fear of AIDS has led to violence in cases where a drug injector discovered that another injector has used his/her "works" in a shooting gallery or when buyers discover that someone is selling used syringes on the street. However, the literature on violence and AIDS, while suggestive, remains fairly slim, although recent grant announcements by NIDA encouraging research on this topic will change this pattern.

As this review of the literature, which provides the context for a discussion of findings from the Puerto Rican community of Hartford below, suggests, SAVA is a complex of synergistically related conditions, not merely an assortment of independent threats to health & well being. A full understanding of the problems of inner-city life, therefore, demands that violence, drug use, & AIDS be studied together as pieces of a larger, more complex pattern.

THE PUERTO RICAN COMMUNITY OF HARTFORD, CT: A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS

Crisis is a term that well describes daily experience for a large percentage of 40,000 Puerto Ricans who have migrated to Hartford over the last 35 years. As contrasted with its popular images as a New England Yankee settlement or a bastion of insurance industry wealth, Hartford is the 4th poorest moderate-sized city in the country. Hartford also has the 4th highest per capita crime rate in the nation, with drug-related activity accounting for 80 percent of all city crimes (Backstrand, Schensul 1982). The city has an ethnic composition that is roughly 45 percent African American, 30 percent Hispanic (over 75% of whom are Puerto Rican), and 25 percent White (Hartford Public Schools 1990). Over 25 percent of households in the city have incomes below the poverty level and over 30 percent are on welfare. Fifty percent of high school students live in single-parent households. These conditions are especially evident in the Puerto Rican community, as seen in several of our community studies. In 1988, a door-to-door survey of all households on randomly selected blocks in an ethnically mixed neighborhood of Hartford found that only 42 percent of the Puerto Ricans in the sample had completed a high school education, and 17 percent had six or fewer years of schooling (AIDS Community Research Group 1988). Less than 70 percent of these individuals had full- or part-time employment. Forty-two percent reported household income from some form of public assistance. The average monthly income was $999. A comparison of key socioeconomic findings from this study is shown in Table 1. These data reveal clear differences in the household size, household income, per capita income, and educational level across the three ethnic subsamples. Taken together with data on employment status and receipt of public assistance from this study, we concluded that Whites in the sample on average have a higher socioeconomic level than the African Americans and Puerto Ricans, and the Puerto Rican subsample is consistently ranked lowest in socioeconomic status, despite residence in the same neighborhood.

This conclusion is supported by findings from our study of drinking patterns of Puerto Rican men (Singer, Baer 1995). This study examined socio-demographic characteristics and alcohol consumption behavior in 398 men, age 18-48, randomly selected from inner city rental apartments, housing projects, and rented single family homes. Among these men, 59 percent had less than a high school education, 36 percent were unemployed, and 88 percent reported a household income of under $15,000 per year. Analysis of the data from this study showed that 40 percent of these men had consumed alcohol during the last week, 53 percent of the drinkers averaged 3 or more drinks per drinking occasion, and 23 percent have had 8 or more drinks 1-3 times a month in the last year. Also, 18 percent reported having difficulty controling their alcohol consumption, 33 percent reported having experienced a problem drinking symptom, and 26 percent reported that their partner has threatened to leave them because of their drinking. In sum, a random sample of Puerto Rican men in Hartford showed high levels of unemployment and high rates of alcohol-related problems, and, as expressed in partners' threats to leave, significant family effects of problem drinking.

These findings indicate the difficult circumstances and considerable disruption experienced by Puerto Rican families in Hartford. Other studies by members of our research team show that many Hispanic families are headed by women (48%), 97 percent of whom are on public assistance and have, on average, three children to support (De La

Cancela 1988). Data from a study on reproductive health among Puerto Rican women in Hartford indicate these women suffer high rates of physical and psychological abuse by husbands/partners, childhood physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, substance abuse related family problems, housing problems, depression, and low self-esteem (Singer et al 1990). Women with the most difficulties, highest rates of depression, and lowest self-esteem are married; those with least difficulties are either single or have live-in *marinovios.* The systematic marginalization of Puerto Rican men through chronic poverty, unemployment, and discrimination has contributed to the abysmal condition of Puerto Rican women, and played an increasingly important role in family instability, crisis, and dysfunction. Migration, alienation, linguistic/cultural barriers, and the rupture of support systems have exacerbated this situation.

Other stresses also impacted the Puerto Rican family. Our ethnographic studies have documented that many Puerto Rican families in Hartford live in overcrowded and deteriorating apartments that are exorbitantly priced leaving few resources for food, health care, and other family needs. High levels of tension due to poverty, cramped space, language barriers, lack of familiarity with the surrounding environment, and limited culture-appropriate social programs have left many families feeling powerless, depressed, and often angry. As a result, as noted in a *Hartford Courant* article entitled "Two Connecticuts: Separate and Unequal," "All too often, researchers say, the lesson learned by Black and Hispanic children is a lesson in self-hate".

The health and social status of Puerto Rican children and adolscents in Hartford is indicated by the following factors: 1) the infant mortality rate among non-Whites in Hartford is 24.3 per 1,000 live births, more than triple the statewide average for White babies; 2) only 42 percent of Hispanic children (compared to 86% of white children) live with both parents; 3) almost 55 percent of Hispanic children (under 16) in Hartford are living below the federal poverty line; 4) only 42 percent of Hispanic children in public school perform above remedial standards (compared to 74% of White children); 5) among Hispanic adults, 62 percent have less than a high school education; 6) 32 percent of families on welfare in Connecticut are Hispanic (although they compose only 4% of the state's population); 7) Hispanics account for 25 percent of clients at shelters for the homeless; 8) 24 percent of inmates in state prisons in the state are Hispanic; and 9) Hispanic families in Hartford are poorer than Hispanics nationally, with 25 percent earning less than $5,000 a year in 1980.

ADOLESCENTS, GANGS AND RISK IN HARTFORD

It is widely recognized that adolescence in our society is a period of turmoil, conflict, and change. Indeed, Margaret Mead's famous study, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, published in 1928, was launched with the explicit intention of adressing two related questions: Are the "disturbances which vex our adolescents" (Mead 1928) the same in all societies of the world? Are these disturbances biological or social in nature? Mead concluded that many of the behaviors we attribute to the developmental stage of adolescence are unique to Western industrial society. Because of the way our society is organized moreso than because of inherent biological factors, adolescents face special problems with identifiable emotional and behavioral consequences.

> Few adolescents believe that they will measure up to the demands of society; they lack an adult identity and often feel powerless. They are told that this is a critical period of preparation and not to be lived for its own sake, but they have a realistic and pervasive dread of the future. Testing and experimentation are an integral part of the young person's search to discover himself and his society and to progress from the dependence of childhood to the independence of maturity. (Millman, Khuri 1981)

Risk-taking, sexual exploration, & alcohol/drug experimentation have all become common features of adolescent response to the conflicts, demands, pressures, and self assertion needs experienced by many youth. While always hazardous, with the spread of AIDS, many of these behaviors have acquired a significant increase in their level of life-threatening risk. This may be especially true among inner-city Puerto Rican youth for several reasons.

First, Puerto Ricans are a young population. While 29 percent of the general U.S. population are below 20 years of age, for U.S. Puerto Ricans this age group comprises 41 percent of the population (Montgomery 1993). Adolescents comprise a shrinking proportion of the total U.S. population, but among Puerto Ricans the reverse is true. Consequently, while Hispanics comprise about 30 percent of Hartford's total population, they represent 51 percent of the school population (Gaffney, Mitchell 1995).

Secondly, not only are Puerto Rican adolescents commonly migrants or the children of migrants, they often experience a high level of geographic mobility within and between urban areas in the U.S. For example, in her study of 241 Puerto Rican households in two Hartford neighborhoods, Davison (1995) found a range between 0 and 11 moves over the past five years, with over half of the households reporting two or more moves during this period. Mobility is caused by a number of factors, including poor housing conditions, illness, inability to pay rent, urban renewal, and overcrowding. Cultural and georgraphic mobility has a disruptive effect on family structure and the maintenance of traditional values, leading to sharper intergenerational conflicts. It also may pressure Puerto Rican adolescents to prove themselves to new peer groups while blocking the development of a sense of self-confidence born of having enduring personal relations.

Thirdly, Puerto Rican youth have a significantly elevated school dropout rate, as high as 70 percent in some studies (Lucas 1971). A study of educational attainment in New York City found that 64 percent of Puerto Ricans over the age of 25 had not completed high school, compared to 34 percent of Whites & 41 percent of African Americans (cited in Rodriquez 1989). Reasons for dropping out include

> self-identity problems caused by discrimination, difficulty in relating to parents (and lack of high values of education in the home), and a progressive estrangement of the student from the school. (Dillard 1981)

For every ten Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics who complete high school, another ten drop out of school. Overall, Hispanics comprise about 18 percent of school dropouts but only 7 percent of high school graduates. Moreover, they often drop out fairly early, half do not complete the 9th grade (Duany, Pittman 1990). In Hartford, by the 1983-84 school year, Hispanics comprised 45 percent of high school dropouts, although they only represented 36 percent of the high school population. By the 1990-91 school year, Hispanics comprised 51 percent of high school dropouts. During this seven year period, the overall high school dropout rate in Hartford increased from 10 to 17 percent (Sequin, Rodriguez, Esangbedo, Maine 1995). The academic experience of Hispanic youth is further reflected in a report from the Educational Testing Service. In terms of average reading, mathematics, and science proficiency measured at ages 9, 13, and 17 years, Hispanic youth lag behind their white counterparts in all areas at all ages. The skills of 17-year-old Hispanics in these areas have been found to be comparable to those of 13-year-old White students (reported in Duany, Pittman 1990).

Fourthly, Puerto Rican youth often exhibit a high level of identity confusion. Writing of 'Pedro Castro,' a typical Puerto Rican youth who became involved in street gang life and drug use in Danbury, CT. Westfield notes:

> Without a feeling of historical community — of having come from some place — Pedro Castro, like many Puerto Ricans of his generation in American urban society, found his identity stunted.... Pedro stated, "I have grown up being embarrassed and ashamed to be a Spanish-speaking person". The oppression Pedro's father faced left him with his identity and culture, and did not strip him of his native language or his Hispanic life style; his son's experience is totally different. The oppression Pedro's generation experienced is much greater because the alienation brought about by their ignorance of their history, language, and culture was much greater. The first generation could go back to their home (in thought and action), the second generation had no home, if only because it had no identity. (1981)

The shame expressed by this youth exemplifies a pattern of internalized oppression, a condition we have referred to as *oppression illness*, that appears to be common among U.S.-born Puerto Rican youth (Singer 1995). For this group, drugs help to fill the void. Thus, in their study of Puerto Rican 10-12th graders in New York, Velez and Ungemack (1989) found that youth born in the U.S. had significantly higher levels of drug use than similar age Island-born youth who had migrated to the U.S. The regular use of drugs by Puerto Rican youth to cope with internalized oppression and the daily direct and indirect experience of structural racism is carefully documented by Philippe Bourgois (1995) in his ethnographic account of Puerto Rican crack dealers in New York City. Blocked in their genuine efforts to succeed in the alien White-dominated mainstream culture, Puerto Rican youth often retreat into the only available alternative, the drug-drenched oppositional street culture dominated by gangs.

Finally, large numbers of Puerto Ricans have been found in the ranks of homeless youth in the Northeast. For example, Rotheram-Borus, Koopman, and Bradley (1989) recruited a consecutive series of adolescents who sought shelter services in New York City. The ethnic distribution of recruited youth was 53 percent Hispanic, 26 percent African American, and 16 percent White. In a follow-up consecutive enrollment study (Rotheram-Borus, Meyer-Bahlburg, Rosario, Koopman, Haignere, Exner Matthieu, Henderson, Gruen 1993), 64 percent were African American, 28 percent Hispanic, and 8 percent White and Other. These adolescents reported having a large number of sex partners, avoidance of condoms, high frequencies of injection drug use, and frequent involvement in violence. In addition, most had dropped out or been expelled from school. Many were homeless because of the break-up of their family of origin. The case of Joselita (pseudonym), a participant in a Hispanic Health Council youth program, exemplies the life experience of many of these homeless youth.

> Joselita was the oldest of three girls born in Puerto Rico in the slums outside of San Juan. She came to Hartford when she was four. Her mother fled from San Juan because of Joselita's father, who used to come home every Friday night from the factory drunk and "smelling like alcohol."...."He used to hit my mother so many times, hit her on her face where her beauty is." Soon, Joselita's mother met a man whom she fell in love with and they lived together. "My mother was happy, but she was afraid because we were so poor. He had a job....I never liked him though. When she went shopping he would come and look at me and touch me all over." Eventually, Joselita couldn't concentrate and "hated her life." She wanted to leave school. She soon met a boy who made her "feel better," and became pregnant at 16. She was afraid to tell her mother though and tried to hide her belly with baggy clothes. The shame this brought to Joselita's mother for her young unmarried daughter to be pregnant caused Joselita to be "thrown" out of the house. "I can't ever forget it, the way she yelled at me and shook me and threw my things out on the street. I had nowhere to go. And I was already 5 months pregnant." After living on the streets for three days she went to her sister's who took her in, but became very depressed because her sister did drugs all the time. "She was a junkie, she had no hope of anything...I used to hate watching the way she acted, and how she treated my little nephew. She would wake up at 3 in the afternoon and feed him then. They had hardly anything to eat, and only ate once a day. And she took everything out on him, hitting him for the littlest thing." She concluded, "I don't know what I want to do really. I wouldn't know where to start. But I just keep thinking, I got to have more in me than this. There's got to be something better for me." (Unpublished interview data, Hispanic Health Council.)

As a result of the conditions described above, many Puerto Rican adolescents in Hartford face severe life challenges with major threats to their health, sense of self-worth, and experience of social acceptance. It is within this context that many Puerto Rican youth join one or another of the street gangs whose beaded necklaces, wall graffiti, and penchant for retaliatory drive-by shootings have made them a painfully visble presence in Hartford's central city Puerto Rican neighborhoods. Vigil (1988) has argued that gang affiliation is best understood within a *multiple marginality* framework, a condition that

> encompasses the consequences of barrio life, low socioeconomic status, street socialization and enculturation, and problematic development of self-identity.

Multiple marginalization combined with the appeal of supportive group membership, lack of many viable life alternatives, and the promise of great wealth and unconditional acceptance have made gangs highly attractive to many Puerto Rican youth.

While there are no historic studies of the emergence of Puerto Rican gangs in Hartford, in Chicago, Glick's research (1990) shows that Puerto Rican youth gangs date at least to the 1960s and were formed in response to attacks on Puerto Ricans by gangs of White youth. Building on encounters with Puerto Ricans from other states while incarcerated in prison, some Chicago gangs formed chapters outside of Illinois. For example, one of the largest Puerto Rican gangs in Hartford has Chicago roots. Interestingly, although still called the

Latin Kings, the Chicago branch of this group now has a multiethnic membership. A front page *New York Times* (Nieves 1994) article describes the contemporary gang scene in Hartford as follows:

> Los Solidos, the Latin Kings, 20 Love, Netas—names unheard of [in Hartford] five years ago—are [now] household words. The police and prosecutors say the gangs are partly the reason for the city's record murder rate, record police overtime costs and a surge in drug dealing.... "The gangs are the Mafia of the 90's," said Christopher Morano, an assistant state's attorney in charge of a statewide gang prosecution unit. The Latin Kings began as a Hispanic fraternal organization in Chicago in the 1940s...The gang branched into Hartford's South End about three years ago. Then as it gained control of... [local] drug dealing...dissident Latin Kings began Los Solidos...Los Solidos with anywhere from 500 to 2,000 members...[is] the biggest Hartford gang....Members talk about being a family that offers support and love and unity against the threats of a hostile world. "If you live where we come from, you see we offer the best," said Martin (Sharp) Delgado, a 22-year-old Solido with two children, 4 and 2.

As they do elsewhere (Fagan 1989), street gangs now control Hartford's drug trade, providing both power and a lucrative source of income for high ranking members and a sense of community and purpose for the rank and file. Unlike the legal employment market, which creates few jobs for minority youth, the illicit drug trade has numerous "job openings." Many Puerto Rican youth find initial employment as either "lookouts" who monitor the appearance of the police or as "pagers" and "runners," middle men who negotiate transactions between drug customers and "gates," which are apartments, commonly controlled by gangs, that serve as distribution centers for neighborhood drug sales. Notably, in the early 1990s, Hartford had the highest per capita rate of narcotic arrests in the country. In 1990, for example, there were 297 narcotic arrests of adolescents under the age of 17. In a study of under 21-year old entrants into the national Job Corp program, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (1995) found that 18 percent of participants who reported that they were gang members also reported illicit drug use compared to 3 percent of those who were not gang members.

The impact of drug trafficking in Hartford's street gangs is seen in the case study of Maria, a participant in Las Jovenes, a Hispanic Health Council demonstration project on gang prevention among teenage girls 12-16 years of age.

> Maria and her boyfriend, Juan, were clean-cut Puerto Rican kids who grew up in Hartford and "hung" with kids in the neighborhood. When she got pregnant, they moved into his parents' house, and she went to school at night. They both worked, but, according to Maria, it was "tough making ends meet." Through his connections to gang-involved friends, Juan began dealing drugs to make extra money, and spent a lot of time on the street. He had grown up with a number of boys who were now drug dealers. Then he "made it big," and had a set of boys who were out on the street selling drugs under his direction. The income was substantial. Maria had a private doctor for her baby, they moved into their own apartment, they had a car, and she was able to purchase nice clothes and jewelry. She became involved in the dealing activity, and her four female cousins became sexually involved with gang members. One of her cousins is still involved with one of the biggest dealers in Hartford, another cousin's partner is a gang leader who just got out of jail. Still another cousin just "escaped" from Puerto Rico where she was being "held captive" by her boyfriend, also a gang member. Maria's boyfriend started being unfaithful to her, because, as she explained, "part of being a big dealer is you have beautiful women after you." He also started to control her behavior and set a curfew. Maria complained, "If I didn't do what he wanted, he'd withhold my money. See, I had two kinds of money — one allowance for me and one for the baby." Ultimately, Maria left Juan in an effort to get away from gang invovlement. (Unpublished interview data, Hispanic Health Council)

In addition to exposure to drug use, gang membership significantly increases a youth's likely involvement in violence. Expressions & effects of gang violence take many forms, including "beat downs" of errant members, intimidation of local businesses, rape, creation of an atmosphere of community fear, and destruction of public community social life. As noted by Hartford City's Office of Human Services,

> Hartford is quickly becoming an inhospitable city, a city of fear and violence. Drug-related crime has made life increasingly difficult for

> both Hartford's residents and visitors. (Piurek, Brown 1990)

Typical is the following account reported by a Puerto Rican man interviewed in Project COPE,

> Gangs cause the violence. Like this little kid, Edgar. He's about 12 years old. He started bothering me. He picked me to always mess with. He's a gang member. Cause he 's a gang member, he thinks he can do that. (Unpublished interview data, Hispanic Health Council)

Notable among the types of violence perpetuated by gangs is the drive-by shooting as well as other forms of rival assassination, which have become regular features of youth gang activity in recent years (Spergel 1984). Consequently, while the rates for most types of crime decreased in Hartford in 1993-94, one of the few categories "that showed an increase [was] murders, up from 30 to 57, which was attributed to gang related activity" (Sequin et al 1995). Moreover, gang members are both perpetrators and victims of violence. S. Singer (1981) found that 94 percent of gang members who had been victims of violence also reported that they had committed at least one serious assault. Exemplary of the relationship between the drug trade and violence is the following account provided by a participant in Project COPE.

> I'm involved in violence every day, just to get by. Everyday I do something. Yesterday, this guy was going to cop [buy drugs]. He wanted to buy 5 bags for $43. I saw that money. I called my friend and we jumped him and took his money. I just saw the money and went for it. (Unpublished interview data, Hispanic Health Council)

Beyond drug use and violence, gang membership generally puts youth at heightened risk for exposure to AIDS. For many Puerto Rican teenagers, AIDS has a special meaning because it has touched their lives through the infection of someone they know or love. Because of the disproportionate rate of HIV infection among Puerto Ricans, there are many young people who have lost one or even both parents or other relatives to AIDS. Additionally, as Marín stresses,

> It should be kept in mind that acculturation processes, personality, and subgroup differences will have powerful effects on the values held by individual members of any culture. (1988)

For example, a major conflict of adolescence emerges from an attempt to understand one's own sexual identity, i.e. what it means to be a female or a male. For Puerto Ricans sexuality tends to be a somewhat more private and personal matter than for Whites. Often, sexual issues are not even discussed between sexual partners. However, adolescents are exposed to a variety of often conflicting influences with varying outcomes in terms of resulting beliefs and values. In a study conducted by Canino (1982) with female Puerto Rican adolescents residing in Philadelphia, for example, it was found that sex role expectations appear to be changing in three areas: attitudes towards childrearing, values related to maintaining virginity, and beliefs about working outside the home. In terms of virginity attitudes, half of the first generation female adolescents studied said that the male should also be a virgin until marriage, suggesting a rising acceptance of sexual equality among these adolescents. The data from this study also suggest differing attitudes among first generation U.S.-born and Island-born Puerto Rican adolescents.

Recently, members of our research team in Hartford completed a study of AIDS attitudes, knowledge, and risk behaviors in a stratefied sample of 246 adolescents aged 12-19 years (59% Hispanic) structured by ethnicity, age, gender, and peer group through Project YOUTH. Puerto Rican boys in this study were more likely (68%) than African American boys (60%) to be uncertain that condoms provide any real protection from AIDS. They also were much more likely to be unsure if they could protect themselves from contracting AIDS (13% for African Americans vs. 32% for Puerto Ricans). Overall, Puerto Rican youth were less like to worry about getting AIDS (15%) than either African American (22%) or White youth (29%) and were less knowledgeable about the sharing/re-use of drug injection equipment as a route of HIV infection. Almost half of the Puerto Ricans (43%) believed that AIDS could be transmitted by mosquitos. They were also more likely to believe that you can get AIDS by eating food prepared by a person with HIV infection, that the virus is spread by sneezing and coughing, that there is a cure for AIDS, that you can tell if someone has HIV infection by looking at them, and that an HIV test protects you from infection. Among the Puerto

Rican youth in the study, only 15 percent reported that AIDS was a more important issue in their lives than gangs, only 20 percent indicated that AIDS was of greater importance to them than violence, and only 17 percent stated that AIDS was a greater concern to them than alcohol/drug use. Participants in this study who indicated they were members of street gangs (all of whom were Puerto Ricans) were significantly more likely to drink alcohol ($P<.05$) and use drugs ($P<.0001$) than individuals who were not gang members. Gang members also were more likely to report multiple sex partners ($P<.001$) than non-members.

CONCLUSION

It has been the argument of this paper that substance abuse, violence, and AIDS are not best understood as three separate, coterminous problems in the inner city. Rather, they form a socioeconomically contexualized complex of mutually reinforcing components of a syndemical health crisis that we have termed SAVA as a way of emphasizing underlying interconnections. SAVA constitutes a critical threat to the lives of the Puerto Rican adolescents and adults we have been studying and attempting to assist through our research and intervention projects in Hartford. It is our sense that if we seek to develop programs that meaningfully address the problems faced by these youth and their counterparts in cities across the country we need a holistic perspective that sees the significant linkages between various health and social conditions (Bernard 1990). While common in the social sciences to break social phenomena down into manageable units for purposes of research, to the degree that this reductionist strategy blocks recognition of interconnected processes and conditions its utility is limited and its product distorted. As Eric Wolf asks,

> If there are connections everywhere, why do we persist in turning dynamic, interconnected phenomena into static, disconnected things? (1982)

Introduction of terms like SAVA and syndemic are intended to move social science analyses of the problems of the inner city toward the kind of holistic understanding that is needed to effectively address critically pressing health and social issues.

END NOTES

[1] This team consists of researchers from the Hispanic Health Council and the Institute for Community Research. Members of this research team are engaged in a number of studies that have provided the life history, ethnographic, and survey data presented in this paper, including Project COPE II (supported by a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse), Project YOUTH (supported by grants from the Public Welfare Foundation and the Connecticut State Department of Public Health), the AIDS Community Research Group Studies (supported by grants from the Connecticut State Department of Public Health), and the Drinking Patterns of Puerto Rican Men Study (funded by a grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism).

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THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES: THEORY AND METHOD IN GANG FIELD RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

In the last few years there has been a resurgence of field research on gangs. In New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Detroit, St. Louis, and elsewhere social scientists have gone "back to the field" to study gangs, drugs, and violence. This has been a welcome development. However, the recent profusion of field research has also brought to light a few problems.

This paper intends to initiate an academic discussion about the representativeness and validity of data in modern gang studies.[1] I think we need to ask two rudimentary questions of every study: 1) how representative are their samples? and 2) how have the researchers separated lies and "hype" from more valid and reliable data? Let me briefly explain how our research in Milwaukee has prompted me to ask these questions.

In my early research (1988) I learned what Thrasher (1963) meant in saying "no two gangs are just alike." Milwaukee's gangs vary by neighborhood, ethnicity, age, and gender and are quite different from gangs in other cities (Moore 1988). But while each gang may be different, my current research (1994a) has taught me there also are differences *within* each gang. Some studies I've read interview only one or two members of a gang, and we're not told why the researchers think their respondents are representative of all or most gang members. If there is substantial variation within a gang, selectivity in sampling may strongly influence the findings and distort any theoretical conclusions based on those findings.

Further, even if a sample is representative, gang members simply don't always tell the truth. Yablonsky (1966) warned long ago that to gang members "every researcher could be a 'cop.'" I've learned that gang members, like everyone else, present "accounts" of themselves which project an image they wish to maintain in the eyes of outsiders (Campbell 1984). Gang members manage their appearances to researchers and few of us have reported on how we have seen through such "presentational" data (Goffman 1959).

These methodological problems have theoretical consequences. Could some studies which conclude that gang members are strongly committed either to deviant or to conventional norms be based on interviews with unrepresentative outliers? Might some proponents of cultural deviance theories have interviewed or observed only atypical gang members who were "loco," violence-prone, or drug-crazed? Might some strain theorists have taken at face value self-serving comments from gang members or "wannabes" who were just trying to "look good?"

These issues are also crucial if the new nineties gang research is to be used for humane policy ends. I am particularly concerned with research that paints gang members as "hopelessly deviant" and thus provides a justification for right wing policies of increased incarceration. But I also cannot neglect critiquing studies, like my own, which see gang members as basically conventional, and may be incorrectly minimizing the gang problem.

Many of the nineties gang field studies are important contributions to the literature. However, until we examine the methodology of these studies we cannot be convinced of the validity of their findings or theoretical conclusions. Without such a methodological critique, our appreciation of any these studies may be no more than sociologists admiring the emperor's new clothes. This article examines how the findings and theoretical conclusions of contemporary gang research-including my own-have been influenced by selectivity and how gang members distort information. In conclusion, I discuss some political and ethical consequences of our research.

SELECTIVITY IN SAMPLING

The truism that "gangs vary" is as old as gang research itself. Variation between gangs in different cities and between gangs within a city have long been acknowledged (Cloward, Ohlin 1960; Moore's introduction to Hagedorn 1988; Spergel 1964). Gangs also vary by ethnic group (Spergel 1989) and by gender (Campbell 1990).[2] Specific gangs may also become more or less violent over time (Moore 1993). Klein (1995) has forcefully reminded both the social science and law enforcement communities that not all gangs deal drugs or are violent.

There are only a few studies which have overlooked variation between gangs. However, I think researchers today who find no between-gang variation have a sociological burden of proof. Attentiveness to variation becomes even more theoretically relevant when we look at differences within a gang.

The "gang" in research is often seen as a monolithic entity. Observations or interviews with one or a few gang members are sometimes assumed to be descriptive of the gang as a whole. Since accessing street gangs is quite difficult, often studies only interview those gang members who are willing to be interviewed and ignore the implications of such selectivity (Moore 1978; Whyte 1943). Our study (Hagedorn 1994a) has demonstrated that even among core members of gangs, there are both conventional and deviant lifestyles as well as different orientations toward the future (Vigil 1988). We found most adult gang members ("homeboys," "legits," and most "dope fiends") had a conventional orientation with a varied work history, while only a minority of the gang, some "dope fiends" and the "new jacks," eschewed work and glorified violence.

I suspect some studies which portray gang members as adhering to deviant or violent norms may have sampled only new jacks or other outliers. Other studies which have downplayed organization or violent behavior may have interviewed only legits or less involved "wannabes." Ignoring variation within the gang can distort our understanding of the extent to which gang members are committed to gang norms or whether they aspire to mainstream American cultural goals, as suggested by strain theory (Cloward, Ohlin 1960).

For example, Martin Sanchez Jankowski (1991) bases his cultural deviance model on his conclusion that gang members as a whole are "hard nuts" with "defiant individual" personality traits quite different from other residents in their neighborhoods. His respondents appear to have similar hard-nosed outlooks and lifestyles. They appear unlike the complicated and conflicted people usually found in field work (Becker 1970) as well as the respondents in our Milwaukee study. While admittedly Jankowski's interest was in analyzing the gang as a unit, he virtually ignores within-gang variation. This may have led Jankowski to mistakenly attribute the personal characteristics of some gang members to the entire gang.

Sanders (1994) also neglects variation within the core membership of the gang and finds core gang members are *defined* by their adherence to violent subcultural norms. Sanders spent ten years riding with police gang squads investigating drive-by shootings. His interviews with gang members involved with homicides gives a chilling, but perhaps not representative, picture of amorality. For example, he reports that "gang members"-apparently as a whole-"lack remorse" for the accidental killing of babies in drive-by shootings (Sanders 1994). Surely this finding would shock most veteran field researchers. In our own study, the vast majority of gang members we interviewed reacted with deep remorse to incidents of tragedy and death within their communities. Sanders does not quote anyone who felt remorse, and we don't know if the gang amorality he found is typical of San Diego gang members. Might Sanders' method of access and homicide-based sample have influenced his findings?[3]

Finally, in a much quoted study, Skolnick (1990) interviewed 39 inmates in a one-shot, one hour interview. He concluded from this study that northern California African American gang members were part of "instrumental" gangs, similar to organized crime, while southern California Latino gangs were more "cultural," or neighborhood based. Were Skolnick's respondents representative of gang drug dealers of each ethnic group? Skolnick interviewed only those members of a gang who had been arrested, convicted, and sentenced to prison for committing crimes and then were picked out for an interview by correctional officials. Might his prison-based, prison-guard-selected sample have contributed to his rather sweeping findings?[4]

The problem with all of these studies, as well as many more from contemporary gang research,[5] is selectivity. We don't know how the respondents who were interviewed or quoted differ from others within their gang or how prevalent the cited views are within their gang. Could the methods of selection in these studies have led these researchers to mistakenly conclude that gang members are deeply committed to criminal or violent norms? Might more attention to sampling within gangs have led these researchers to different conclusions?

Sampling Strategies

One well respected and often used sampling strategy in gang field research is the "snowball sample" (Biernacki, Waldorf 1981).

A snowball sample can be constructed by asking one respondent to refer a second, and so on. This is normally done when "there are no known lists or populations from which respondents could reasonably be selected" (Lauderback, Hansen, Waldorf 1992). However, while gangs may be "hidden populations" like drug users, burglars, or the homeless, they do have a definite, if diffuse, social organization with loosely definable populations which can be sampled. This makes snowball sampling a strategy of second choice, and a choice that presents its own problems in selection.

Decker and Van Winkle's (1994, 1996) study is a good example. Through a snowball sample they interviewed 99 active gang members from 29 gangs with respondents varying in age from 13 to 29 years. Unfortunately we do not know how responses differed by age, a reasonable question for a sample with such a wide age range. Decker and Van Winkle do not tell us why they believed those interviewed were representative of all gang members, or members of any specific gang. They did corroborate gang membership by field observation, but that still begs the question of representativeness.

A snowball sample is also only as good as the gatekeeper or the key link on the chain (Whyte 1943). If the chain referral begins with non-gang members, like Decker and Van Winkle's (1996), or with community agencies, like Fagan's (1990), we may have problems with selectivity. This problem then compounds itself as initial respondents refer researchers along "chains" which may also be unrepresentative.

How can a researcher be sure those contacted by snowball are active gang members and not "wannabes" who might puff themselves up, ex-members with an axe to grind, or non-gang hustlers out for a buck? In Biernacki and Waldorf's (1981) snowball method, theoretically the researcher exercises increasing control over the referrals, deliberately searching for representativeness. Respondents also could be asked if they could refer to the researcher someone else within the gang who is "different" than the respondent in some key aspect (Guba, Lincoln 1989). I have not read many instances, however, where gang researchers utilized these techniques. Our Milwaukee research has found that referrals from non-gang sources tend to produce a disproportionate number of respondents who are on the fringes, not the core of the gang (Medico 1995).

Sampling from Rosters

Another method of sampling is based on constructing rosters of gang members. Whyte's (1943) study was with a known population of a single Cornerville gang as was Padilla's (1992) in Chicago. Short and Strodtbeck's (1965) classic test of cultural deviance and strain theories worked from rosters of Chicago gangs. Joan Moore (1978) randomly sampled from age-graded rosters of multiple "klikas" from gangs in East Los Angeles. Both our Milwaukee studies were based on sampling from gang rosters. All of these studies, it should be pointed out, have found variation within the gang and shifting membership rosters. Each of them also found conventional success goals were important to gang members and questioned the validity of cultural deviance theories. So how is a roster compiled and maintained?

Few gangs issue membership cards or keep written rosters and police lists of members of a gang are notoriously inaccurate (Klein 1971). In our 1988 research we simply asked those interviewed to list the street names of all those people who were present when the gang took a name. We wanted only those "core" members who hung out everyday, not hangers-on who came and went. The first respondents were gang members who I had either hired or had worked with me for several years in my capacity as a gang intervention program director. I knew from years of work with these respondents that they were original or founding members. The rosters they compiled were then checked with each successive respondent, who was asked whether there was anyone left off the list or anyone listed who wasn't really a member. The respondent was asked whether each of the members was working, had been to prison, and how involved each member still was with the gang.

In our initial study we interviewed only two or three people from each gang, mainly leaders. We developed an accurate roster from the gang my collaborator, Perry Macon, belonged to, and from a few others. However, some of the other rosters proved to be incomplete. In the current follow-up research, all our staff were founding members of their gangs and they interviewed all or nearly all of the members on their own gang's roster.[6]

Problems of Sampling from Rosters

Unfortunately, drawing up a roster does not, in itself, guarantee representativeness. For one thing, gang members vary by age-group. Moore (1978, 1991) solved this problem by randomly sampling all known "klikas" or age-groups of East Los Angeles gangs. In Milwaukee, where gangs formed in 1980s, we interviewed only members from the *founding* group of Milwaukee gangs, those men and women of roughly the same age who were present when the gang first took a name. Therefore we can't be sure the Milwaukee founding group is representative of succeeding groups of gang members. For example, the founders may be more enterprising or daring than gang members who later joined an established gang. Core members, like our founders, also differ from peripheral members or wannabes (Vigil 1988). On the other hand, our strategy was to learn as much as possible about one age-group of gang members over time in order to develop "working hypotheses" about gang drug selling (Lincoln, Guba 1985). For this purpose, our sample worked well.[7]

I have spent quite some time criticizing how others have sampled, and it would only be fair to subject our own work to the same scrutiny. While most of our rosters were confirmed by each of our respondents, some gang members never did agree on who was properly a member, though the disputed list was quite small. Sometimes "gang members" were improperly included on the roster so our community researcher could interview them and pay them the $50 fee. We weren't always successful in developing satisfactory rosters for gangs from which we had not hired staff.

Once a roster was drawn up, even more problems ensued. While in three of the gangs we interviewed at least 90 percent of the original founding gang members, in two other gangs, we were able to interview only about a third (15 of 35 founding members and 11 of 36). Anyone who does gang research knows that getting interviews is not always easy. We didn't always succeed either and that means we had to be alert for problems of selectivity.

In one of these two gangs where we didn't interview everyone, we limited the number of interviews ourselves due to constraints of time and after getting a detailed picture of the gang drug business, our main objective. While we can't be sure our sample was representative, no one refused to be interviewed. But in the other gang we did run into problems of some members refusing to be interviewed. Refusals may introduce systematic bias, perhaps hiding involvement in drug use, violent behavior, or gang members who have gone "legit" and do not want to dig up their past.

Refusals in this one case turned out to be a staff related problem. The staff person for the gang where we had many refusals was a "legit" (Hagedorn 1994a) - someone who had been a member of the gang about the time of its founding, but had moved away, held a job as a security guard for a while, and had gone on to college. He and his family were well known and had been well respected among the gang, but his upward mobility led to tensions with the gang. We generally had the most success getting good interviews when our homeboy interviewers had been to prison or had once been a "new jack" themselves. These interviewers were more trusted by their homeboys than legits or someone who had never done time.

Our legit was not trusted by some within the gang and his first interviews were with more deviant "dope fiends" who mainly wanted the interview fee. Those interviews contained little information and lots of lying. Further interviews came slowly. Our staff member felt discouraged and panic set in that maybe we weren't going to be able to get the interviews we needed. At that point the gang looked to us like an anomic association of cocaine addicted dead beats.

We solved this problem by continuing to interview. We did get several more interviews of high quality over the next few months, but still we had not located most members of the gang. The gang, however, then began to look more like other gangs we were researching. We looked back over those we interviewed and made sure we had interviewed some who were involved with drug sales and some who were not, as well as some who had actively sold dope and some who had quit the dope game. We ended up interviewing about a third of the entire roster, and fortunately we discovered we had interviewed "homeboys," "dope fiends," "legits," as well as "new jacks." Had we generalized about the entire gang from our initial interviews, we would have received a much different picture of the gang than the one we patched together after all the interviews were done. Still, we can't say that our interviews in this gang were "representative."

To summarize: gang research needs to

avoid the convenience sample, where gang members are interviewed and observed not because of representativeness, but because of their availability or their uniqueness. *Our research suggests that interviewing everyone on the roster, or sampling rosters on theoretical grounds, would, in most cases, find gang members who resemble middle class Americans more than underclass demons.* But we have too few studies of the entire membership of individual gangs to confidently generalize. I suspect many findings of extreme deviance of gang members are tied up with issues of selectivity which interact with a researcher's prior theoretical assumptions.

THE PRESENTATIONAL ACCOUNTS OF GANG MEMBERS

Representativeness is not the only problem in gang research. We also have the problem of validity. What kind of information are we getting when we interview a gang member? Campbell points out there are many "realities" from which gang members, like all of us, "present" to others.

> Social interaction is a creative process in which we select to present ourselves as a particular type of person and then offer accounts of our actions which support that view of ourselves... So the accounts the girls give are likely to be a function of their conceptions of themselves and the persons they wanted to present to me. In that sense, everything they say is true. Sometimes however, the facts may have been altered. (Campbell 1984)

An important issue for research is to understand when "the facts have been altered" and when they are reported accurately. Otherwise we report whatever our respondents have to tell us without any context or regard to validity or reliability. Their "accounts" may tell us something about the individual respondents, but little about the social reality in which those individuals are embedded. This is an important consideration in all research, but particularly today when the media has discovered the new and scary role of "gang member" (Ice-T 1994). The violent, drug-selling "gangsta" has attained "a special place in the commercially organized fantasies of the nation" (Goffman 1959).

I question whether cultural deviance theories of gangs may be based on data drawn from gang members' hyped-up "presentational" accounts of their lives as "gangstas" (Shakur 1993). But the rigors of social science also compel me to explore the opposite possibility: could strain theories of gangs, which stress the adherence of gang members to common American cultural goals, be based on "accounts" which emphasize gang members' conventional side and minimize deviance? How can we methodologically differentiate "presentational" from "operational" data (Van Maanen 1979) and untangle its effects on our research?

"Interviewees," Oakley (1981) reminds us, "are people with a considerable potential for sabotaging the attempt to research them." Use of "hype" is a common strategy for gang members, particularly younger kids, who want to build themselves up to an outsider. Taylor (1989) reports that members of "scavenger" gangs were "very talkative and some were great braggarts." The problem is made worse when interviews are done in a group where such braggadocio can be contagious as gang members seek to impress one another as well as the interviewer. Younger people also tend to brag more than older ones (Waldorf 1993).[8]

The less familiar the interviewer is with the respondent, the greater opportunity exists for the respondent to exaggerate or to produce an "account" which creates a role of "gang member" to match the "background expectancies" of the researcher (Hyman 1954; Scott, Lyman 1968). Thus studies which seek out an interview with a gang member and then never see him or her again are particularly susceptible to "hype." Conclusions drawn from such interviews could mistakenly find gang members are firmly committed to deviant gang norms and paint an exaggerated picture of a gang.

For example, is this respondent interviewed by Carl Taylor (1989) giving his real feelings, or playing a role for the interview?

> I likes to bust heads. Violence? What's that? [laughing] You got to dog everybody or they gonna dog you. Doggin' is my speciality... I'll just see someone and start doggin' them in the street.

On the other hand, why should we believe Jankowski's (1991) class conscious respondents, like this one, who uniformly claim their gang "helps the community:"

> Me and the guys in our group we try to help the

> community because that's the only way that all of us can protect ourselves from those rich bastards!

It is extremely difficult for outsiders to cut through hype or lies in gang interviews. Even sincerity is a poor test. As Goffman (1959) points out, an actor's performance must be sincere to be successful. In most one-shot gang interviews the respondent has an "account" to present which he can freely develop at the time of the interview, unconstrained from past experience with the interviewer or the anticipation of future contact. How can any sensible theoretical conclusions be drawn from such presentational data?

In our study, through peer interviewers, we tried to capture the individual perspective of gang members looking back over their lives reflectively. The accounts we wanted were not those which might be given to outsiders, but rather "insider" information, "operational data" concerning how the drug game worked and how it affected the life of the respondent. We wanted to go "back stage, " to listen to how friends talk with one another privately, where "suppressed facts make an appearance" (Goffman 1959). While such data are themselves accounts, and not some objective reality, we believed these insider accounts would yield an insightful picture of the drug game minus the hype often given to outsiders.

Hype was a minor problem in our interviews mainly because we knew the people we were interviewing. When the respondents tried to play a "gangsta role" to their homeboy interviewer, it was considered crass and was confronted. We did our interviews privately, one on one, with the express purpose of allowing the respondent to talk about his/her life and reflect upon it. Vigil and Long (1990) explain that in certain situations gang members drop their "cholo" front, and this was our expressed intention. The interview situation was not set up to be a chance to brag about exploits as a gang member but, as much as possible, as a talk between friends.

Sometimes hype is the result of a strong belief in the mythology of the gang. There are certain norms that some gang members hold that they may not want to admit are broken and may even deny to themselves. They want their "account" of the gang to reflect the myths they firmly believe. Consider the question of snitching. While most of our respondents discussed instances of snitching, some denied any such thing ever took place within the gang. In discussing a practice which strongly violates gang norms, some respondents would suddenly switch their identity from "friend" of the interviewer to the stereotypical role of "gangsta":

> Q: Have any of your gang ever snitched on you or anyone else in the gang?
>
> #44. No! That was against the rules.

What is remarkable about this answer is that the interviewer and respondent were from the same gang. Several years back the interviewer himself had been snitched on by a fellow gang member and went to prison. This incident was well known by everyone in the gang and it caused serious repercussions within the gang, a tightly knit group of friends. The respondent was well aware of the incident but allegiance to mythical gang norms forced him to deny it even to a friend of his - the interviewer - who was the one who had been snitched on! How would an outsider have figured out that this respondent was lying?

On the other extreme, respondents may also lie or give socially acceptable answers to outsiders on some questions on difficult topics. Hyman (1954) pointed out that questions of extreme sensitivity like those asked about communist sympathies in a "period of public fear" like the McCarthy era were most likely to be distorted to researchers. Getting valid data on drug use and gang activities in today's "period of public fear" about gangs and drugs is a rather good analogy to doing research during the 1950s red scare. Denial of involvement in drug dealing is a common response in gang research today (Taylor 1989; Waldorf 1993).

It happened to us too. While we got detailed descriptions of drug sales by the gangs of our staff, we were often lied to by respondents from other gangs. We interviewed two members of one gang which had come to dominate one area's drug business in the last few years. The first interview, with the leader, was a disaster. Although we knew he ran the gang, which was no more than a drug business, he steadfastly denied any involvement with drugs:

> Q: How has selling dope changed from when the gang started selling it?

> #22: What gang? Far as gangs, period? Oh, you know, they got the money, bigger guns, more cars, posse members trying to get deeper, you know how that goes. Like I said, I just say no to drugs.

We knew this was nonsense. When our interviewer was selling drugs several years before in the same neighborhood, he had become friends with this respondent, who was a major dealer in the area. Still, this respondent did not want to admit on tape of his involvement with drug selling. We then followed up that interview with another member of the same gang who gave us detailed information on the gang's lucrative drug trade.

The issue here is that reporting information from this respondent or the one who said snitching was "against the rules" tells us something about the individual gang member, but gives a false picture of reality on those issues. We used Whyte and Deans's (1969) first check in detecting distortion - "implausibility." Our community researchers, by virtue of their prior gang status, simply *knew* what was a plausible story and what was not. Then, by interviewing others within the gang, they could get beneath the "presentational" account and reconstruct the "real story" - or at least the "real story" as it is presented among intimates.

Problems of Peer Interviews

Hype may be the main threat to validity in most gang research, but minimizing deviant behavior was the main problem in our study. While cultural deviance theorists need to look at how their methods may have led to their conclusions, those of us who see gang members as more conventional than deviant also need to look at how we capture data.

Other research has shown that minority populations in general have less trust in research than whites. Researchers must be concerned that "respondents will provide socially desirable responses or will not be able to provide accurate retrospective reports of behavior" (Collins 1992). While we thought interviewing by persons very familiar with the respondent would counter the tendency to provide socially desirable responses, the strategy at times backfired. While almost 90 percent of the interviews were scored by our community researchers as "truthful" or "mostly truthful" there were several problems.

First were three concerns about the nature of the interaction between the interviewers and the interviewed. Our community researchers interviewed all the members of their own gang, meaning any interviewer effects would be constant across each gang (Hyman 1954). For example, one interviewer was involved in acts of gang violence and consistently failed to question his homeboys about those acts. Another community researcher was discharged when his interviews were few and poor in quality. His homeboys didn't trust him enough to do an interview and we never did get a good picture of that gang.

A second problem was that our community researchers had a certain status within their gangs, and had a long history with each of the respondents. Where relationships were strained, the interview suffered. More significantly, the respondents reacted to the gang status of the community researcher, and perhaps did not share details that might compromise that relationship. In one extreme case, a community researcher's current husband had been previously married to another homegirl. This created some rather touchy problems in the interview.

Third, the "community researcher" role adopted by our interviewers led to some jealously from peer respondents, who would have loved to have the job themselves. The community researcher's "advocacy" role also may have led some respondents to want to give their "advocate" what he or she wanted, rather than give out the unvarnished truth. For example, one of our interviewers was very active in finding jobs for respondents and some people may have sought out an interview in the expectation of getting work. They would not have wanted to offend or disappoint their link to a job.

It is important to understand the "accounts" our homeboys and homegirls received as the voices of gang members talking to their friends, as opposed to talking to outsiders. This tight relationship between interviewer and interviewed gives our study its uniqueness. But just as you, the reader, are unlikely to be perfectly frank about all aspects of your lives to every friend, that's also the case for gang members. Accounts varied among gang members and even within an interview.

Gang research needs to learn the lessons of feminist methodology which has been exploring variation in accounts by reporting "polyphonically" (Cancian 1992) all the voices they hear, not just the ones that agree with the researcher. In anthropology as well there are increasing concerns with how research may report stereotypes or average frequencies, rather than a more complex reality. Hopper (1995) examines several ways that respondents distort information to ethnographers, even when the ethnographer is well aware of a different reality.

In some cases, outsiders might actually get more information than insiders. For example, many of the gang members I interviewed revealed differences within the gang and criticisms of leaders that might not have come out in peer interviews (1994b). Some respondents confessed beliefs and actions to me they might not have shared with homeboys. I also knew what I was looking for theoretically, and could probe on certain questions where peer interviewers might not. On the other hand, my interviews were not shared reminiscences between friends, and certainly lost important detail. Having a variety of interviewers would probably improve validity.

Minimizing Deviance

Overall, both in interviews by peers and by myself, respondents clearly stressed conventional aspirations. It is not clear if those same sentiments would have emerged in interviews given to strangers. The conventional orientation we uncovered cannot be entirely ruled out as an effect of the collaborative method.

For example, respondents consistently minimized or even denied cocaine use. I discovered this as I interviewed the members of one gang, all of whom I had known for ten years. As I did each interview, the respondent claimed his own drug use was minimal, but others were heavy users. This bothered me and concerned me even more when I interviewed a celebrated "dope fiend" of the gang and asked him about the prior respondent.

> Q: Was Bob using heavily that year too?
>
> #33: Yeah, we all was smoking ... heavy.

Perhaps since I was a non-gang outsider, some respondents did not want to admit heavy use to me. A few other respondents from other gangs had claimed light or moderate usage when I knew they were crackheads and they knew I knew. But surprisingly, community researchers also reported their own homeboys minimized cocaine use in their interviews. Why?

Several explanations were explored by staff. Among Latinos, who were still heavy into the gang, drug use, if known, could get them "violated." Respondents may have been unsure whether our staff, some of whom once had "rank" within their gangs, might report them to the current "chiefs." Cocaine use, unlike heroin use in Moore's study of East Los Angeles, was relatively new in Milwaukee. Norms did not exist which recognized and legitimized its use.

The order of the interview questions also contributed to some respondents downplaying their drug use. The first hour of the interview concerned the operation of the drug business and the reflections of the respondents over what happened to them and the gang over the last five years. By the time we got to the section where respondents report their drug use, the interview was already two hours old. Even our interviewers complained by then they were "tired out."

The basic problem, however, was how the interview situation itself led to gang members minimizing drug use. Our two to three hour taped interview focused on the adult gang experience and respondents were asked to detail their involvement in drug dealing. In most cases they were looking back at a life they had left or wanted to leave. They often spoke deprecatingly of the dope fiends who had bought their drugs. To their minds, the role of "heavy drug user" was inconsistent with their more "manly" role of "drug dealer." To be seen, even by their homeboys, as a heavy drug user was considered "shameful." Gang members saw their drug use as demonstrating weakness, as this African-American respondent explains:

> #90: As I see it it's a mind game, and if you ain't a strong person it's (cocaine) the wrong thing to mess with.

Their reports consistently minimized drug use, even when the interviewer knew better. Our male respondents simply did not want to admit to their homeboy interviewers or to me that they were not "strong." This pattern was repeated by female respondents, who similarly did not want to be stigmatized as "dope fiends" by their homegirls or those listening to the tape.

There is some confirmation in the literature that familiarity with an interviewer may contribute to under-reporting drug use. In the 1984 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Mensch and Kandel (1988) found that when follow-up interviews were conducted by the same interviewer, respondents under-reported drug use as opposed to those who were re-interviewed by a different interviewer. They concluded:

> We speculate that interviewer familiarity increases salience of normative standards and that participants respond not only in terms of their past familiarity but also in terms of their subjective expectations regarding the probability of a future encounter with the interviewer. (Mensch, Kandel 1988)

If we ask ourselves whether our collaborative method may have influenced our findings, we have to answer "yes." Our research prompted gang members to reflect on their lives and that process itself may have encouraged more conventional judgments. Some deviance, particularly if it cast the respondent in a poor light, was minimized to peer interviewers.

On the other hand, our conclusions concerning the conventional orientation of gang members were based on many questions in the interview and on harder data like work and family histories (Hagedorn 1994a). In fact it was our collaborative method which allowed us to detect distortion and report it to you along with the rest of our findings. Adherents of cultural deviance models need to similarly examine how their methods may have contributed to the nature of their findings.

DISCUSSION

The use of multiple methods (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, Sechrest 1966) is still the best way to "triangulate" and verify data. Our own study utilized official statistics, interviews with gang members, surveys of a probability sample of neighborhood residents, interviews with "old heads" from those neighborhoods, the life experiences of our staff, and participant observation by the author in various drug selling locales. All these methods have contributed to our emerging interest in strain theory.

Some researchers who have found deviance where we've found conventionality may be working from biased samples or unsuspectingly reporting "hype" as data. When researchers sample from rosters and understand some of their data as "presentational," I believe they will find that most gang members are not socio-paths, but a lot like the rest of us. Confronting selectivity and the presentational aspects of our own data has been a rewarding and healthy process. Today's gang researchers must more seriously examine how their methods have influenced their findings and report it to us. Otherwise, we are in danger of engaging in theoretical debates which are little more than fashion writing about the emperor's new clothes.

I am convinced of the overall utility of our collaborative methods, despite a tendency of our respondents to minimize some types of deviance. Collaborative research is designed to describe the reality of the streets from a back stage perspective which is seldom attained by outsiders, even if they may live among the "natives" for a spell. By involving gang members in every facet of the research, and using representative sampling, the entire gang can be described, including conventional and deviant aspects. Thus while our study argues that most gang members have a conventional orientation, we avoid romanticizing gang life.

These issues are not abstract and significant only for theory - they also have public policy implications. There are at least two mainstream political agendas on gangs which have their own distorted "official definitions" (Mills 1959) of the reality of gang life. Politicians pick and chose from research to buttress their own agendas.

The main policy thrust toward gangs, the law enforcement agenda, wants justification for its war on drugs and build-up of the criminal justice system. It supports and encourages research which presents gang members as especially violent, imperialistic drug dealers, or as purely evil underclass villains (Reeves, Campbell 1994). Law enforcement officials embrace field research whose findings can lend credibility to their self-interested notions of the "threat" posed by gangs. Cultural deviance theory is especially suited to be used by politicians to demonize gang members and make it seem that the only solution is more police and more prisons.

On the other hand, some researchers who are looking to counter this law enforcement juggernaut tend to underplay the organization of drug-dealing, violence, and other ugliness of gang life. William Julius Wilson (1987) pointed out that liberal sociology has suffered a "confused and defensive" reaction to the pathology of the ghetto. One such reaction may be to selectively look for field data which dispute talk-show stereotypes and to report such findings, even though the data may be questionable. I believe such presentational data, like the gang leader in our interviews who "said no to drugs," are not ultimately convincing and their use will backfire.[9]

While this discussion of our research methods has theoretical and political aspects, there are also ethical reasons for paying attention to representativeness and selectivity. Susan Sontag (1973) has said that "to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed." This is also true of academic descriptions of gang members. As one of our community researchers put it, distorted studies "do violence" to the lives of our respondents. They stigmatize and label gang members and impose on them an outside definition of their lives. Improper labels, like "sociopath," are not only used by authorities, but may be destructively embraced by some of the labeled (Lemert 1967). Portraying gang members as helpless victims is similarly demeaning, takes away agency, and paints a false and unbelievable picture of gangs in poor communities.

We should never forget that what we as sociologists write has consequences. We must exercise extreme care that the new theoretical realities we construct do not contribute to the dehumanization of a segment of the American people.

END NOTES

[1] Reliability and validity are old problems in gang research. Here is Spergel's candid admission on his classic research thirty years ago:

> It should be clearly understood that the research was neither rigorously designed nor executed. While much care was exercised in the collection and processing of data, there were no systematic checks on validity or reliability. (Spergel 1964)

There are few current discussions of gang member veracity in the literature. Waldorf (1993) raises the issue briefly in the Final Report of his San Francisco gang study. Also see Vigil and Long (1990) on emic and etic perspectives in anthropological research.

[2] Some still forget female gangs. For example Jankowski claims to be studying the "gang problem in general" but he omits any discussion of female gangs (Chesney-Lind 1993). Jankowski's overall methodology has also come under severe attack (Fagan 1993; Klein 1992; Sullivan 1994).

[3] Sanders' study is informed by Goffman's work, but he apparently neglected Goffman's rather categorical advice to field researchers:

> There's no way in which, if you're dealing with a lower group, you can start from a higher group... You can't move down a social system. You can only move up a social system. So, if you've got to be with a range of people, be with the lowest people first. (Goffman 1989)

[4] Skolnick's defense that his interviews with both inmates and correctional officials were consistent confounds reliability with validity. That everyone gave roughly the same story should raise suspicion or at the least prompt a negative case analysis or use of multiple methods (Lincoln, Guba 1985; Webb et al 1966). For other problems of gang interviews in prison, see Moore 1993, Hagedorn 1990, and Decker and Van Winkle 1994.

[5] For example Daniel Monti (1994) conducted interviews with "approximately 400" students in a suburban school district. Many - but we don't know how many - of these were selected by the principal of each school and interviews took place in the school office. In at least one school, administrators were present during the interview. Monti simply abandoned any notion of scientific sampling - and confidentiality, for that matter.

[6] Our original 1988 rosters were revised by staff and cross-checked with each person interviewed until we were confident of their accuracy. In the first study, N= 19 gangs and 260 members. For the second study we were not satisfied with updated rosters for three gangs and we added rosters from two other gangs which were not included in the 1987 study but had special characteristics which made them important to include. We thus tracked 18 gangs with 296 founding members.

[7] Some studies regrettably do not report the age of those interviewed (Lauderback et al 1992) and this can have distorting effects. For example, a sixteen-year-old may report his/her activities in the gang quite differently than a twenty-five-year old. If samples are to be drawn across age groups, each age-graded group should be sampled (Moore 1978, 1991) or else the gang should be sampled by developmental age (Waldorf 1993).

[8] Our interviews were done individually, not in groups, to minimize gang members saying things to please friends, leaders, or influential members. Subordinates may play more exaggerated roles to impress leaders or, on the other hand, do little more than second what leaders say as a way to hide divisions from outsiders. Group interviews tend to mask variation (Short, Strodtbeck 1965). They are particularly susceptible to what Goffman (1959) calls "team performance." A group will typically cooperate "to maintain a particular definition of the situation" toward the audience, i.e. the researcher. A key aspect of any team, according to Goffman, is it "must be able to keep its secrets and have its secrets kept". Gang members with intense group solidarity may also demonize the researcher in the same way as they have been demonized by the media and some research. Group interviews are more useful as a means to triangulate with other data than as a sole source of information (Fontana, Frey 1994).

[9] Researchers might not confront a respondent who is giving "politically correct" information minimizing deviance. Goffman explains that such a researcher may be:

> motivated to act tactfully because of an immediate identification with the performers, or because of a desire to avoid a scene, or to ingratiate themselves with the performers for purposes of exploitation. (1959)

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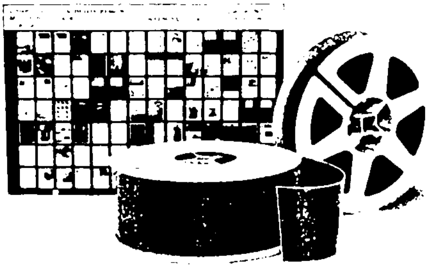

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"DRINKING, KICKING BACK AND GANG BANGING": ALCOHOL, VIOLENCE AND STREET GANGS

Geoffrey Hunt, Institute for Scientific Analysis,
Karen Joe, University of Hong Kong, and
Dan Waldorf*, Institute for Scientific Analysis

THE VIOLENCE QUESTION

Criminologists and sociologists have had a longstanding interest in gang violence, dating back to Thrasher's (1927) ethnographic observations of Chicago's gangs in the 1920's. Debates have focused on a range of issues such as whether violence is a defining property of gangs. This question has led to analyses of the frequency, variability, severity, and organization of violence in gang life (Moore, Garcia, Garcia, Cerda, Valencia 1978; Sanchez-Jankowski 1991; Sanders 1994; Taylor 1989). The etiology of gang violence also has been of central concern with a variety of reasons being advanced. Yablonsky (1970) advocated a psycho-social framework in which gang violence was tied to the pathology of the group's leadership. Other attempts to construct a causal model were connected by an interest in class issues. Miller (1958) advocated a culture of poverty argument in which gang life including violence merely reflected the focal concerns of the lower classes. Cohen (1955) argued that gang members' hostility and aggression represents a reaction-formation to their inability to measure up to the middle class measuring rod. They reject their rejecters, and status is achieved through an alternative value system which emphasizes negativistic, malicious, and non-utilitarian behavior. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) took the notion of status deprivation further, suggesting that the variations in the legitimate and illegitimate opportunities in different lower class communities influences whether a gang is criminal, retreatist or violent.

As Moore notes (1990), however, such explanations obscure the great variability in gangs, gang related violence, and the communities they live in. Recent studies (Sanchez-Jankowski 1991; Sanders 1994) suggest that questions of causality also must distinguish between individual and collective forms of violence among gang members as the former predominates over the latter. This point is important in understanding the gang, drug and violence connection (Moore 1990). Studies have found variability in gang participation in drug dealing and related violence (Decker, Van Winkle 1994; Joe 1994; Waldorf 1993). Skolnick, Correl, Navarro, & Rabb (1989) and Skolnick, Blumenthal & Correl (1990) argue that two types of gangs existed - a "cultural" gang, similar to the traditional neighborhood gang as described by Moore (1978) and an "instrumental" gang which was organized for the explicit purpose of generating income. Taylor (1989) outlines a similar typology with the scavenger and corporate gangs. Those who follow this framework further suggest that, not only has a new type of gang emerged, but also that "instrumental gang" have exacerbated violent behavior. For example, Goldstein (1985, 1989) refers to the systemic violence used to maintain strict organizational discipline and to ensure market regulation and control (Cooper 1987; Mieczkowski 1986). This concern with drug related violence not only re-affirms the strong association between delinquency and drug use (Elliot, Huizinga, Ageton 1985; Fagan, Weiss, Cheng 1990; White, Hansell, Brick 1993), but reinforces the tendency to overlook the role of alcohol within gang life.

Gang researchers have noted that drinking is a major component of the social life of gangs, and a common place activity (Campbell 1984; Fagan 1993; Hagedorn 1988; Moore 1991; Padilla 1992; Sanchez-Jankowski 1991; Stumphauzer, Veloz, Aiken 1981; Vigil, Long 1990). Few, however, have looked specifically at the role of alcohol within the social life of gangs, or even the relationship between drinking and gang violence. Existing research on the role of alcohol in youth gangs has been, to paraphrase Dwight Heath (1975), a "felicitous by-product" of other interests.

The connections between drinking and gang violence is an important area for investigation for several reasons. First, it allows us to determine whether gang members' alcohol use is important in "violence prone situations" and at the same time, reveals the sequence of events that lead from drinking to violent or aggressive behavior (Burns 1980). Second, it demonstrates the ways in which individuals are potentially both offender and victim (Sampson, Lauritsen 1994). Gang members are constantly involved both in defending their masculinity, their honor and their territory or attempting to gain status by asserting their masculinity. Therefore while on one occasion, gang members may be the perpetrators of violence, they may at other times, find themselves the victim (Sampson, Lauritsen 1990). Third, it illustrates the way in which new members are socialized by their peers into both acceptable drinking behavior and acceptable aggressive behavior. From the moment a new member joins the gang, the novice is expected to exhibit his/her ability to support the gang and fellow gang members in whatever ways are necessary, whether that be in the world of drinking or within the world of aggression. Taken together, the role of alcohol in the social life of youth gangs constitutes a natural and highly symbolic arena in which to fulfill the call for further research on the nexus of drinking and violence (Collins 1993; Pernanen 1991; Roizen 1993).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data for this analysis are drawn from two studies on ethnic youth gangs in Northern California in which we conducted field work and interviews with 659 gang members between 1990 and 1994 in the African American, Asian, and Hispanic communities. There are no exact figures on the number of youth gangs in the Northern California area. We initially sought police estimates for comparative purposes, but did not rely on law enforcement for any referrals. We relied on a snowball sampling strategy (Biernacki, Waldorf 1981), and were able to locate and interview members from 99 different gangs.

We conducted the interviews in two steps with an initial quantitative survey followed by an in-depth, tape recorded session in which members responded to open-ended questions about life in the gang. The use of traditional ethnographic and survey methods provided the means for looking at the group's history, organization and activities, personal demographics, drug and alcohol use, individual and group involvement in violent acts, and self reported contact with the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Interviews lasted, on average, two hours, and respondents were compensated with a monetary honorarium. The fieldworkers conducted interviews in a variety of settings including respondent's home, parks, coffee shops, cars, and office space in community agencies. Our two African American interviewers had known or had connections to gang members in their communities and initiated several chains. The Latino fieldworkers initiated contact with gang members through a number of community youth agencies, and over time, the referral source became other gang members. The four Asian interviewers were recruited through contacts with gang members and social agencies. Validity and reliability concerns were addressed in a variety of ways including rephrasing and repeating of questions and cross checks on respondents' veracity through weekly staff discussions and field observations (Joe 1993).

Briefly, the gang members in our sample have the following socio-demographic characteristics. The ethnicity of our sample was 44 percent African American, 24 percent Latino, 24 percent Asian (including Southeast Asian), and 8 percent other. Respondents ranged in age from 13 to 40. The median age was 20, however, our Southeast Asian respondents tended be slightly younger having a median age of 18. The educational level of the interviewed gang members was generally low. Younger members tended to still be in school; 31 percent of the interviewed gang members were still attending school. Among those who were no longer in school, the majority had dropped out. Within each ethnic group, the dropout rate was: 38 percent among African Americans; 27 percent among Asians; and 20 percent among Latinos. The majority of the gang members' came from working and lower class backgrounds as measured by father's and mother's occupation.

YOUTH GANGS AND DRINKING

Hanging Around

Gang members spend the majority of their day "hanging around" (Corrigan 1976) or "kickin' back," and typically describe this in the very mundane terms of "doing nothing." Although adults perceive these activities as a waste of time, the everyday practice of "doing nothing" is often an intense and busy period of time (Corrigan 1976). Activities that occur while members are "kickin' back" include talking, recounting details from previous events, joking, discussing business, defending one's honor, maintaining one's respect, fending off insults, keeping the police at bay, "cruising" around in a car, doing a few deals, defending turf, and getting high. Drinking is endemic to gang life, and as some gang members indicate, the consumption of alcohol occurs through the course of everyday social activities.

This Latino gang member's account of a usual day illustrates that the mundane activity of "hanging around" involves a hectic and long day:

> I: Describe the activities of a usual day of a Home Boy? What time did you get up?
>
> R: Mine began about 6:30 or 7:00. Because I take the people who are going to go to work, they want to stop off and get their morning fix to get on to go to work.
>
> I: You take care of the morning crowd?
>
> R: Right that involves getting my morning beer you know. I drink down the beer which calms my stomach you know. I fix and then I got out and hit Mission between 16th and actually maybe only 18th. For the two times I can make up to like $800. You know what I mean, selling quarters at $30 to $45 a thing depending on how square they are or if they are a regular one you know how to trim that. Then after that I go take me a nap. I get up at 10:00. The other one comes on and I rest for a couple of hours. What I have to do is I take a shower and get dressed change clothes, so that the narc don't start to recognize me because I am wearing the same thing constantly ..... I will come out and maybe work an hour or two for the afternoon. It is a group of us though, we work the afternoon and drink a bunch of beer. Just get kind of buzzing. Then you kill time until the evening crowd.
>
> ....What is good about the Home Boys man is one will go out and spend $25 on food ..... bring a bunch of tacos and burritos back and say it is time to eat. Because you got to keep as much powder as you do you, make sure you put some nutriment in that body. And after that, after lunch time some of us kick back smoke a little herb and drink some more beer and kind of let the newer people get out there. And catch the stray people here and there.....
>
> This is getting to be about 4:00. Then we bring the young guys from the inside with the girls and give them a break. Feed them and than those guys go attract the evening crowd. Because the evening after work everyone gets off of work and they want to boom do it again.
>
> Take care of that business you know. Now this is getting to be about 6:00 or 6:30. Through out this continually thing there is drinking you know you are always having your cervaco, man. And okay so like about 6:30 it slows down a little bit. There is still a lot of freak action going on constantly. So we would either change the clothes because we know at 3:30 or 4:00 the chotas (police) change shifts too. So we change clothes. We shift people around a little bit around so that they can, no one is really getting identified so to speak right there.

This vivid account demonstrates the intensity and order in "hanging out": meeting up with others; earning a day's pay; arranging and eating meals together; getting energy to last through the day; and avoiding police attention. Importantly, it also underscores the extent to which drinking is an integral part of those activities. His drinking begins with an early morning beer, in the afternoon a "bunch of beer" is consumed, supplemented with a "little herb", and at this point the "buzzing" begins. Once the evening commences, drinking becomes continuous. His case is not an isolated one, as can be seen from another Latino gang member's description of a normal day:

> I called my friends up and told them let's meet somewhere. We got some money and go buy beers. Got some beers and kicked back. We played some basketball and talked to some girls. After we finished talking, we got some more beer, and kicked back and go meet another friend and go for a ride...after we cruise around we rest until 5.0 we meet everybody and drink up some more.... Then when night comes we should be drunk by then. I guess we are all pretty drunk because I was drinking all day long.

This prevalence of drinking is not confined solely to Latino gang members, but also occurred among other ethnic gangs. This African-American gang member recounts his typical day:

> I: Describe the activities of a usual day. Like yourself, you wake up at what time?
>
> R: Wake up, go to the store, get some drink, hold it for later on 'til when we come outside.
>
> I: About what time do you get up? And get out?
>
> R: Well, I get out and go job hunt for a minute, come back, go get the drink, take it to the house. About 11.30 am come back outside. Somebody might be out there. We just get the party started.
>
> I: Oh, okay, and hang out how long?
>
> R: 'Til everything is gone.
>
> I: What you mean, "everything is gone?"
>
> R: 'Til the drink, the dope, everything.

In comparing the experiences of

different ethnic gangs, we found that although Latinos commenced regular drinking (defined as drinking any type of alcohol more than once a month) earlier than other ethnic groups, African Americans reported much higher alcohol use for all three categories of alcohol - beer, wine and hard liquor. In terms of units of alcohol, the mean number of all units reported by African-Americans was three times that of Latinos and five times that of Asian-Americans.

Still Asian American gang members similarly report that "hanging out" involves drinking usually in public settings like bars, parks, and housing projects, and, occasionally private parties.

> Most of the day, the biggest problem with being in a gang is boredom. Most of the gang guys, everyone is looking for fast money, hardly anyone works, so you got a lot of free time on your hands. You wake up late, you hang out, planning ways to make money. Most of the time you are bored...Most of the time is spent hanging out either at the bar or the coffee shop.

Even when gang members have legitimate employment, the role of alcohol in "kicking back" remains central in their everyday social activities. This Chinese gang member, who works part time, describes the organization of a typical day:

> I went to work in the morning, stayed home and then ate dinner. Made some calls, hooked up with everyone in the project, and we went out to a bar in the Richmond, had a lot of drinks, met back in Chinatown to have a real late dinner, two or three in the morning...Sometimes we just get buzzed at the project and just stay there.

"Partying" is another regular activity, where drinking is an integral component (Moore 1991; Moore et al 1978; Vigil 1988; Vigil, Yun 1990). As one gang member remarked when asked about the most frequent activities he did with his homeboys, replied:

> The most activities I do with my homeboys is we party a lot. We party and we go cruising. We go to dances...we go to street parties ...and we party and drink beer and gettin' high.

According to Moore (1991), "partying", for Latino gangs was synonymous with drinking or getting high. We found this to be the case among the different ethnic gangs with "partying" occurring in public places like dance halls, bars, and parks, or private parties held in someone's apartment or garage. Private parties were sometimes formally arranged, and were organized either as occasions for celebrations as well as occasions for grieving. More frequently, partying was informal and spontaneous as this gang member described the weekend:

> Well we just kick back, so you know on Saturday night, somebody always comes by, hey how much you got, I got five bucks, well I got three, lets go see if we can get some 12 packs or something, or some other one got some more money, everybody comes in, lets party, its like everybody goes to party everyday.

Symbolic Significance

Drinking is a commonplace and integral part of everyday life among gang members, and in all these activities, alcohol can be said to act, as with many other social groups, as a social "lubricant", or social "glue" working to maintain cohesion within the group (Moore et al 1978; Vigil 1988; Vigil, Yun 1990). Moreover, in male dominated gangs, where intoxicated behavior is more acceptable, it also works to affirm masculinity and male solidarity (Dunning, Murphy, Williams 1988; Messerschmidt 1993; Peace 1992). Comparisons across the different ethnic gangs, however, suggests that drinking affirms masculinity in culturally defined ways. Existing research on Latino gangs suggests that drinking plays a key role in the creation of a "macho" identity.

> Yeah, we just cruised around [yesterday]. We stopped by and picked up some beers and drink up. And then we went to his house and just mess around, use weights, pumped up.

"Machismo" includes demonstrations of strength and "toughness" as well as "locura" (crazy or wild) (Feldman, Mandel, Fields 1985; Moore 1991; Padilla 1992; Vigil, Long 1990). As Vigil and Long (1990) have noted, alcohol can work as a "facilitator" in the observance of ritually wild or crazy behavior, especially in violent conflicts with outsiders.

Studies of African-American gang life suggest the construction of a different cultural identity. One where "the overall street style and the desired approach to projecting an individual's personal image can be summed up in the word 'cool'" (Feldman 1985; Hagedorn 1988; Taylor 1989). In this sub-culture, occasional drinking is the norm (MacLeod 1987) in public and private settings.

> After everybody's pockets were financially secured we went to one of our partner's houses and drank until about nine or ten at night and then retired.

Although the African-American gang members in our sample reported relatively higher alcohol use than the other ethnic groups, the style of drinking and the behavior associated with stresses that intoxicated drinking undermines the "cool" image, and is likely to be interpreted as a sign of "being out of control." In the case of Asian-Americans, the available research suggests different attitudes to drinking. On the one hand, Chin (1990) suggests that intoxication is frowned upon by Chinese gangs. On the other hand, our own work on both Asian-American and Southeast Asian gangs (Toy 1992; Waldorf, Hunt, Joe 1994) suggests that although drinking is not heavy among these groups, it is nevertheless widespread and intoxication in public and private places appears acceptable. In addition to its role as a cohesive mechanism, particular drinking styles within gangs may operate, as with other social groups (Cohen 1985; Hunt, Satterlee 1986), as a mechanism to maintain group boundaries thereby demarcating one gang from another. In this way, particular drinking styles can be seen as similar to other symbolic insignia including tattoos, dress colors and codes.Alcohol was also ritualistically used to remember absent gang members who had either been killed or who were currently in prison or jail. For example, Campbell (1991) describes an incident where each gang member, during a drinking session, ritually poured alcohol on to the floor prior to drinking from a bottle of rum which was being passed around, "....he pours a little of the rum on the ground in memory of those who are dead or who are in jail".

AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

In the same way that drinking appears endemic to gang life so also does aggressive and violent behavior. According to Sanchez-Jankowski (1991), violence is the "currency of life" within gangs. Furthermore, just as drinking can be seen to fulfill certain symbolic roles or functions within a social group, so also does violence. It can work symbolically as a way of demonstrating to one's peers that one is a dependable member of the gang (Messerschmidt 1993; Padilla 1992; Vigil 1988). In addition, it reinforces solidarity among the group (Sanders 1994). Violence also operates as a way of gaining "recognition" and status. Just as heavy drinking can operate to allow gang members to exhibit special traits of masculinity and toughness, so also can violence. As Messerschmidt (1993) has noted, young minority males who are denied access to legitimate resources often create a context for public and private forms of aggressive masculinity, within which violence and drinking are key components.

The symbolic elements of violence have unfortunately tended to be neglected by many researchers, who in accepting common sense definitions of violence, have failed to examine either the ritualized qualities or the rules of behavior that underlie their operation. In attempting to uncover some of these symbolic meanings or hidden rules, Marsh and his associates (1978) distinguish between aggression and violence. Confrontations between male gangs, in this case football hooligans in England, often possess ritualized aggressive behavior which are largely symbolic and instead of leading inevitably to violent behavior operate as a break on the aggression developing into severe violence. Marsh identifies a number of features, used by group members to signify symbolic aggression including dress styles, known as "the gear", as well as particular postures.

These features are clearly similar to those described in several gang studies in the U.S. For example, Conquergood (n.d.) discusses in great detail not just different styles but also intricate body representations, for example tattoos, which signify a wide range of symbolic gestures. Many of these gestures, such as hand signals both affirm one's own gang and negate the other. Other examples of symbolic negation include erasing another gang's graffiti or drawing the characteristic symbols of another gang upside down or reversed. "This represents a symbolically complex way of killing the Other through the desecration of his or her name" (Conquergood n.d.). Such gestures illustrate that aggressive behavior may not always be through physical or violent confrontation, but instead can be produced through forms of cultural and symbolic practice.

Marsh and his colleagues (1978) also examine the existence of "...a distinct and orderly system of roles, rules and shared meanings" which operate to determine conflict resolution. Marsh shows the way in which "taken-for-granted" rules dictate when it is appropriate for one group to attack another, how the fight should proceed and how the fight should be closed. A similar system of rule-governed behavior also operates in gang cultures. For example, Moore (1991) discusses the importance among Latino gang members of the notion of control, which refers to both individual and group control. This belief in a sense of control "never starting fights but being willing to fight if necessary" was so strong that members who violated the norm, often referred to as the extreme "locos", were frowned upon and, if they persisted in stirring up trouble, could be expelled from the gang.

These symbolic gestures and rules of conduct are not unique to gang culture, but are similar to other forms of fighting and warfare, in our own society as well as in other cultures. As many anthropologists have shown, fighting and warfare include ceremonial activities with specific sequential structures, elaborate preparatory stages, and stylized social means for the issuing and acceptance of challenges. These activities suggest a mode of fighting that seems guaranteed to inflict the least possible amount of death or injury (Marsh et al 1978; Riches 1986).

One central task then is to examine and compare those circumstances whereby ritualized aggressive behaviors dominate and those that lead to more overtly violently behavior. Moreover, this would also include an examination of the role of alcohol in these settings. We now turn to explore some of the social settings and conditions under which gang members drink and engage in aggressive and violence.

VIOLENT ACTIVITIES AND DRINKING

Internal Violence

Parkin (1986), in examining the role of violence and death among the Giriama of Kenya, distinguishes between violence whose cause is seen as being within the group or community and violence emanating from outside forces. This distinction can be used to distinguish violent gang activities. Violent activities directed internally include, for example, induction ceremonies where members are put through different forms of physical trials - referred to as "jumpin-in" - "...which test member's toughness and desire for membership" (Vigil, Yun 1990). Such ceremonies are common for both male and female gang members (Campbell 1990, 1991). The ritualized physical testing of potential group members is a common occurrence in many societies and has been described and analyzed by many anthropologists. As Heald (1986) has noted, group initiation are similar to examples of "battleproofing" in military training, where the new recruit experiences a situation of stress that allows them "...to develop confidence in their ability to face danger". Similar to Padilla's findings (1992), we also found these gang initiations or "rites de passage" ceremonies are sometimes accompanied by drinking both for the participants and for the spectators. Other examples of internal gang violent activities associated with drinking include fighting between members because of notions of honor, respect, rivalries or tensions. Tensions may arise when two gang members or cliques compete for power or status within the gang, or when two members compete over the affection of another. After bouts of drinking, these simmering rivalries may erupt and fighting often occurs. As one Latino noted, when asked if there was intra-gang fighting:

> Sure, if it gets hectic and we are kind of drunk. We don't know what we are doing sometimes. That's alcohol, especially that Old English. You fight and smile today but laugh about it tomorrow.

In such cases, as other researchers have noted, alcohol works to create a ritualized context for fighting, and violent confrontations, whether physical or verbal (MacAndrew, Edgerton 1969; Szwed 1966), in which in-built tensions can be released or disputes settled within a contained arena. Once resolved through alcohol-related violence, the group can maintain its cohesion and unity. In fact, on some occasions once the conflict has ceased, the antagonists seal their unity by sharing a beer. As another Latino respondent remarked:

> Yeah, we fight amongst each other, over a little argument but it never goes no further than a fist fight. And then we just shake hands and go have a beer and that is that.

However, in spite of the endemic nature of drinking within gangs, different views may operate, especially between men and women.

on definitions of acceptable and unacceptable behavior while drinking or being high. For instance, a number of our female respondents complained about sexually violent male behavior. In the following example, the Latina respondent, although expressing anxiety for reporting her homeboy to the police, felt that she was justified because the homeboy had violated a sense of trust between her and her homeboys. This trust extended even to situations when she was high.

> I: Do any of the homeboys hit on or bother the homegirls sexually?
>
> R: Well, yeah, it did happen to me once with one of the guys from 18th..... When this happened to me, I told one of my homeboys, but he's in jail..... I pressed charges on him because he raped me ...... I felt real bad. I didn't go to the park. I wouldn't show my face. I wouldn't hang out with them no more because, you know, I felt so bad because he was from 18th. I had been there for three, four years now and none of them had ever did stuff like that to us...... But I pressed charges on him, you know, and I told my other friends that day - one of 'em, when I told them, he was crying 'cause he's known me since I was twelve and he's always taken care of me. And, you know, he told me that if he would have been out, this wouldn't have happened to me.......One of 'em that was real close to him. He's the friend, right? And he was talking shit to me, telling me oh, I wasn't supposed to go back and tell him 'cause I was high when this happened, right? And he was trying to tell me, "Oh, you got drunk with him. It was your fault. You got high with him. That was not right." And I told him, you know, that I could get high with the other guys and none of this would happen to me, you know? And I could get drunk or whatever with anybody.

Violent Activities and Drinking: External to the Group

External violent activities encompass many different types of activities including: violence targeting a member or members of a rival gang; violence against residents of the gang's own neighborhood; and violence against gangs or residents of another neighborhood (Sanchez-Jankowski 1991). The reasons for such conflict are varied and include such issues as: gang members testing others, gang members' perceptions that they or their territories have been "disrespected", gang members' fears that their turfs are under threat, and gang members' attempts to expand their turf, and fighting over the affections of another. In many of these types of external violent activities, drinking prior to the event is common.

The gang members in our sample report drinking immediately prior to most of the violent inter-gang incidences that they were involved in. Aggressive and violent encounters with others was usually unplanned, and took place in the context of socializing and drinking with their fellow gang members. This gang member captures the frequently described happenstance nature of inter-gang fighting:

> Well we got into different fights with different group... Like the one with SS...We were just all at a bar one day and I don't even remember what started it. It started outside. One of them got into a fight with someone that hangs with us... I forgot [how the fight started] but you know, one thing led to another. Somebody threw a punch and then everybody went at it in the street.

This African-American gang member recounts when a "keg party" deteriorated into a fight.

> We went to a party it was about 6 months ago. We went down there to a party. Someone said come down because we are going to have a kegger. We are going to party. A couple of my Home Girls are going to be there. Come down. So four of us went down there..... We were partying and all of a sudden some Home Boys from Diablo Park had come up there. They came in talking shit. He came up to one of my Home Boys saying "this is D.C. (Daly City) east side D.C." my Home Boy was like we don't want no problems we just came to party. The Home Boy was like I don't give a fuck, we are going to get it on. Some Home Boy went and another Home Boy came in with a fucking golf club and started going wild. So one of my Home Boys went out to the car and he got the gauge (gun) and came in, he was blasting. I was like so lets get out of here. Lets just go because D.C.P.D. (the police) is going to be here......I don't know who got hit or whatever, we were just at a party.

The occasion for drinking, as described above, is tied not only to celebrations but also to grieving. Another gang member describes a shooting that took place at a funeral party.

> A funeral I went to ...my friend started getting drunk and got into with this dude. The dude was going to fight with him. My Home Boy whipped

> his ass and the dude got mad... went to the car...came out with a 22 and shot him.

But violence and drinking are not only associated in a spontaneous way, but coincide more deliberately. As both Vigil (1990) and Moore (1991) have noted, gang members may drink deliberately prior to an inter-gang confrontation to assist them to develop a sense of "locura" or wildness. Moreover, gang members may deliberately consume alcohol prior to doing a job, which in turn may develop into a potential violent conflict. For example, several Southeast Asian gang members talk about drinking prior to a "home invasion" to embolden themselves before doing the job. In these cases, alcohol works, not as the literature would suggest as an excuse or deviance disavowal mechanism (Heath 1978; MacAndrew, Edgerton 1969), but instead as an enabling mechanism. While drinking can act as an enabling mechanism, it can also result in "letting one's guard down." This can, sometimes, lead to gang members' victimization. In everyday gang life, the gang member is potentially both offender and victim.

In one case a Latino respondent amusingly recounts a situation where, because he was so drunk, he unwittingly found himself in a party hosted by a rival gang.

> Well, I was like a gold mine to them, I was in a party, they threw a party, which I didn't know that they were throwing a party, and I was with my sister and all to pick up her brother, mean not her brother, her boyfriend. So I'm over there, I'm already drunk, so I went inside the party, and I seen them taking pictures of girls, so I tried to get into it, and without knowing who was throwing the party, those 30th boys, so they all looked at me, like what I am doing here, and I ain't even sure .... and one of them came up to me and.... asked me what I'm doing here? Since I knew him from the past, in ways that came up to me when we talked to me, nothing, I'm drunk, so I just hit him, and then, realizing I'm with each different faces I'm beginning to. remembering all of them, I said oh no, I'm in a party full of these guys, and that was it.

One Chinese gang member recalls an evening at a club which resulted in a shooting and the death of another gang member. The gang rivalry had taken advantage of the setting.

> I: What happened?
>
> R: I don't know, we just drinking beer in X [dance club], and then me and my wife were there. I don't know, he tells me something. I tell him to have one last drink. He wanted to go home already but I tell him to stay back until 2:00 and he say all right. We sit there and a lot of us, about 15 of us. We kind of old homeboys and we drinking a lot and we got out at two something. Me and my wife go another way to get my car. His girlfriend parked in the other lot. And all I hear is boom boom boom and I try to run over and he already lay down.
>
> I: Who shot him?
>
> R: I don't really know...[he had a] stocking on his face.

Clearly the relationship between drinking and violence is a complex one. Importantly, although gang violence is typically portrayed as an event involving planning and drug dealing (or drug using), our respondents' experiences suggest that drinking is frequently a precursor to internal and external forms of aggressive, often violent behavior. In addition, the context of fighting, whether it is internally among members or externally with rivals or "outsiders," is normally episodic. Members reported aggressiveness with other members while drinking, and this served as a release, mechanism. In some instances, however, it would lead to deviance disavowal as reported by the Latina who had been sexually assaulted. External violence also was typically spontaneous, as gang members, while drinking, let their guard down. Ironically, drinking among gang members acts in two directions in internal and external situations of violence, as a disavowal and as an enabling mechanism. In this connection then, the role of alcohol in gang violence may operate similarly to other social groups like football hooligans or working class males in pubs.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined an area which has heretofore received very limited attention. Few researchers have examined the inter connections between two endemic features of gang life: violence and drinking. To date, most gang researchers have focused on violence and its relationship to illicit drugs. This focus has led to a neglect of the importance of alcohol in gang life both as a cohesive and divisive factor. As a corrective to this oversight, we have tried to show, not only the extent to which drinking is a pervasive feature of gang life, but also the way in which drinking connects with different types and settings of violent behavior. In tracing the possible relationship between these two activities, we have sought to emphasize their symbolic and ritualized content, as opposed to their purely instrumental nature. Gang life is a rich symbolic arena, in which dress codes, graffiti, hand signs and initiation rites express an agreed upon and shared group language. When viewed as symbolic behavior within a socio-cultural context, drinking and violence may begin to display an order, and a structure. The existence of such an underlying structure, often overlooked in societal notions of gang life, may also lead to a realization that gang life, far from epitomizing the extremes of "violence-prone" behavior, may instead merely reflect behaviors common to our own culture and society. Future research should compare the symbolism and context of drinking and violence between gang members and other groups, and in the process, close the distance between "us" and the "other."

NOTES

The term "kickin-back" refers to gang members hanging around and the term "gang banging" refers to inter-gang confrontations.

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GETTIN' RIGHT WITH HUMPTY: OR HOW SOCIOLOGISTS PROPOSE TO BREAK UP GANGS, PATCH BROKEN COMMUNITIES, AND MAKE SCARY CHILDREN INTO CONVENTIONAL ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

A critical reappraisal of the social scientific literature on gang research and intervention strategies finds the social disorganization paradigm employed by most experts in the field sorely wanting. Its central problem is that it severely undervalues or dismisses altogether the viability of the civil society in those communities where gangs have emerged. Based on this premise, experts end up predicting that gangs will appear anywhere and are content to recommend intervention strategies that do not work and further erode the capacity of local groups to respond to their gang problems. An alternative perspective on youth culture and gangs in communities is offered based on a stronger view of civil society and the capacity of communities to integrate young persons into a grown-up world.

INTRODUCTION

Popular and scientific curiosity about gangs spiked in the last two decades. It is not surprising that sociologists, who have studied gangs since the 1920s, rushed to satisfy the demand for information about these groups. The large and varied body of literature they produced is not easy to summarize. Major findings about the organization and behavior of gangs often are inconclusive and sometimes contradictory. Pieces of evidence can be interpreted differently, depending on one's theoretical prejudices and reformist leanings, and arguments are to be had about everything from the proper method to study gangs right up to the relation between local gangs and national drug dealing syndicates. We even continue to disagree about the best way to define what a gang is (Klein 1995; Spergel 1995).

On two surprising points, however, there appears to be some consensus. We think that a general explanation or theory about gangs is within our grasp. (It all has something to do with "social disorganization".) We also are pretty certain about what needs to be done to control gangs. (You have to shut off the supply of members or break up the groups.) We come to these points be way of different paths, but our research and reform programs lead us to these general conclusions.

This concordance in a field otherwise riddled with disagreements and competing schools of thought can be tied to a convenient marriage of science to reform that has characterized our treatment of gangs this century (Klein 1995). The particular mix of activism and expertise we favor introduces a variety of social services to communities with gangs and many types of counseling and training to actual or would-be gang members (Goldstein, Huff 1993). At other times the gang itself is the object of these intervention strategies. Our goal, in any case, is to weaken gangs or to minimize their impact on the communities where they were found.

Unfortunately, gang prevention and reform programs, as Malcolm Klein (1995) refers to them, have not enjoyed much success. This fact notwithstanding, Irving Spergel notes,

> there has been a significant expansion of resources to local human service agencies to address the spreading and worsening gang violence problem in the 1980s and 1990s. (1995)

That these efforts would go forward despite questions about "how different or innovative the newer programs really are compared with traditional programs" ought to have alarmed more persons than it did.

The poor record of these programs has not gone completely unnoticed, of course. It contributed to the growing popularity of gang suppression programs initiated by law enforcement officials during the past decade (Klein 1995). The objective of these programs has been to disrupt gangs and to interfere with their criminal activities in an aggressive manner. Police departments and the courts that undertook gang suppression programs scored some victories along the way and incarcerated many gang members.

Regrettably, gang suppression programs carry a big risk with them. They can make the gang problem in a community worse. Inasmuch as youth gangs take some measure of strength from the reactions of local officials and community residents, suppression might well produce "more gang cohesiveness, more gangs, (and) more gang violence" (Klein 1995). There is evidence to back up this claim. Federal, state, and local efforts to get tough with gangs in recent years occurred even as the number of youth gangs was growing dramatically and the groups were appearing in places where they had not been before. If these strategies were intended to discourage young persons from joining gangs or acting violently, it did not work. We can feel no better about the prospects for gang suppression strategies than we do about the track record of gang prevention and reform programs that more liberal persons favor.

In the face of these failures, Malcolm Klein (1995) proposes that we shift our attention away from places like Los Angeles and Chicago where "it may be too late" to control gangs and concentrate instead on "smaller, emergent gang cities." Once these places have been chosen, states and federal agencies will be called upon to provide

> jobs, better schools, social services, health programs, family support, training in community organization skills, and support for resident empowerment. (1995)

This is necessary, Klein (1995) believes, because "gangs are by-products of incapacitated communities" which need a great deal of help before they can accomplish anything. In short, we need to do more of what didn't work before.

Communities may have a bigger role to play this time around. They would provide the organizational muscle and leadership that puts all of the state and federal resources to good use. Some cities already have witnessed the birth of community coalitions consisting of "law enforcement officials, social service providers, and other... groups." Together they are "developing community-based strategies that take into account the complex nature of street gangs" (National Institute of Justice 1993). Such collaborative efforts may be overdue, but it is not clear that new attempts to mobilize communities against gangs will prove any more successful than earlier attempts by outside agencies to mount programs with their professional staffs. Nor is it apparent that persons from the neighborhoods where programs are initiated would be in any more control of the new initiatives than they were of the old ones (Klein 1995; Spergel 1995).

In truth, we are not likely to do more of what did not work before. Yet the feeling to do so is strong and widely held. The liberal impulses of sociologists and many other persons would encourage them to intervene, even if they were not certain of how much good new programs would do. Furthermore, social scientists are more likely to benefit than not from government spending on social programs dedicated to persons and places involved with gangs.

However accurate these observations may be, something more, or maybe something less, than the politics of doing well by doing good is at work in the sociological agenda for protecting the world from gangs. We simply may not know what else to do. We tinker with established canon and reform packages but never abandon them because we have nothing with which to replace them.

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION AND GANGS

Central to their thinking about gangs and reform packages is the concept of "social disorganization." Scientists, not surprisingly, disagree about the term's precise meaning and how best to apply it in their studies of gangs. At a minimum the term implies that parts of a society have broken down (Tilly, Tilly, Tilly 1975). These parts can be institutions, communities or sets of beliefs, or even individual persons; but they are to varying degrees, either alone or in combination, broken.

The problem is that scientists usually have no direct way of measuring this breakdown. They look instead to certain features of populations that live in areas that have gangs. These variables frequently include the number or percentage of poor or minority persons in the area and/or the amount of movement in and out of the community (Bursik, Grasmick 1995; Esbensen, Huizinga, Weiher 1993). An area with a larger share of minority or poor persons or showing a great deal of movement in its population is assumed to be disorganized. Alternatively, the breakdown is discovered in answers given by these persons to questions posed by survey researchers or in official records showing how many crimes they commit or pathological states they share.

The breaking down, whether measured or not, can take place in one or two ways. It can occur at the level of cultural beliefs and values, or it can be at the level of routine social and organizational life. The former is manifested as a falling apart in our understanding about what is important or as the inability to reconcile competing views of right and wrong. The latter involves disruptions in customary ways of acting alone or in groups or it shows up as the inability to reconcile different ways of making groups and working through groups.

Sociologists have developed explanations for gangs and about deviant behavior that generally focus on the breakdown of cultural beliefs and values or the disruption of social routines and organizations (Hirschi 1969; Kornhauser 1978). Clear as these distinctions may be in principle, it is hard to keep ideas about social structure from sneaking into discussions about values and beliefs because our understanding of the world and of matters related to right and wrong are tied to the way we have made a society and act in it. In a similar way, descriptions or explanations of gang behavior that focus on a breakdown in social roles and institutions can call forth ideas regarding what persons think and believe about the right and wrong way to do things.

Evidence acquired by social scientists who have studied many aspects of delinquency and gang behavior appears to favor social or structural explanations for these problems (Hirschi 1969; Kornhauser 1978). A breakdown in groups and institutions is thought to be more important in accounting for this behavior than is any confusion we might have about our values and beliefs. Nevertheless, much academic writing about gangs still refers to the culture of gangs and places with gangs or the values and attitudes that distinguish gang members from persons who do not join gangs (Esbensen et al 1993; Klein 1995; Spergel 1995). When we talk about "social disorganization" in relation to gangs, we usually harbor ideas about both a breakdown in the way persons believe or think about the world *and* a disruption in the way persons or groups act toward each other. When we propose to do something about gangs we usually do it with the intention of making persons whole or putting communities back together.

Unfortunately, we know that gang prevention, reform, and suppression strategies have not produced the results expected of them. More gangs are forming. Gangs have not bent in response to attempts to "reform" them, and the police and courts have not been able to suppress them. The failure of virtually all traditional gang intervention strategies to make much of a difference for very long should be treated more seriously than it is. In fact, it could be viewed as a rather detailed test of social scientists' favorite theory about the origins and conduct of gangs.

Something called "social disorganization" is held to account for the presence and behavior of gangs. It also is the primary rationale behind most conventional gang intervention strategies. Insofar as the strategies do not work it seems fair to conclude that ideas about social disorganization probably cannot help us to understand much about the origins and conduct of gangs. There must be some other explanation for the emergence, persistence, and behavior of gangs.

Resistance to this conclusion will be strong and broadly based. It could not be otherwise. After all, a whole research tradition and reform industry have been built up around the idea that gangs are a by-product of broken persons living in disorganized places.

In truth, however, there were many signs that the presumed connection between gangs and "social disorganization" was suspect. Sociologists going back as early as Frederic Thrasher (1927) had posited too strong a break between a conventional world inhabited by most persons and an unconventional or disorganized world filled with immigrants, poverty, and, of course, gangs. Our world was orderly, and we had a relatively coherent culture. Their world was poorly organized and had a culture that was incomplete or a poor match for our own. Our world may have had problems and persons who did not behave well all the time, but their world was a mess and had many more troublesome persons living in it.

There were sociologists studying deviant behavior and gangs who knew better (Fine 1987; Matza 1964; Moore 1991). Common to their work is the idea that the boundary line between conventional and delinquent behavior for adolescents is fluid. There may be a subculture of delinquency that parallels the peer culture we associate with adolescence. Not all youngsters participate in it, however, and those who do usually keep one foot planted in the conventional world.

Young persons better connected to the conventional adult world or to mainstream values may be less likely to participate in delinquent acts (Hirschi 1969; Tracy 1987). Boys who join gangs may commit more delinquent acts than boys who do not join gangs, and they may persist in delinquent behavior longer than those who never did (Rand 1987; Wolfgang, Thornberry, Figlio 1987). Still, it seems that most adolescents dabble in deviance and break rules every bit as much as adults do. Experimentation is to be anticipated. Much of their deviance is "normal" or at least should not surprise us.

This was a valuable, even critical, insight. However, this work either was ignored by most students of gang behavior or it was acknowledged for ideas that did not bear on this point (Klein 1995; Klein, Maxson, Miller 1995; Spergel 1995). If observers of contemporary gangs were to comment directly on these ideas, they probably would take great exception to them. They might note that when David Matza used the phrase "delinquency and drift" in 1964 to capture the way adolescents moved easily between deviant and conventional activities, he could not have imagined a world of drive-by shootings and crack cocaine. And when Gary Fine spoke in 1987 of "normal deviance" among adolescents who "ganged" together, the kind of aggression and drug abuse he talked about had not yet emerged full blown in suburban townships and rural villages. Gangs today are different, the experts would say. Their violence is deadly, and there is more of it. The use and sale of narcotics are out of control all over the place.

Joan Moore's telling and prophetic rebuttal to this argument came in 1991, a mere four years after Gary Fine published his thesis about "normal deviance." Her words bear repeating.

> The...youth-culture continuum from goody-goody to rowdy shifts over time. The goody-goodiest group...today is considerably more active sexually...than in the past. And the rowdiest group — the gang — is likely to slip much further in the direction of real deviance. Over the past generation American adolescents in general began to act out more. The gang can be expected to be more deviant as the adolescent subculture in general becomes more deviant. (1991)

Moore backed her way into an important point about adolescence in general through her careful descriptions of the extreme behavior she witnessed in barrio gangs. Youth gang members, she and others would argue, are not exaggerated versions of normal teenagers. What they do is push all the boundaries between adolescence and adulthood to the point of rupture and presume to take responsibility for matters of life and death that are supposed to be the special province of more grown-up and seasoned persons.

Over the course of this century adolescents gradually have been ceded more freedom by adults without having been given corresponding bites of responsibility, safe ways to make mistakes, and enough time to grow accustomed to making big decisions (Adams 1995; Modell 1989). There may not have been so great a gulf between the conventional world we occupy and the disorganized world that gangs are supposed to fill as sociologists thought. Nevertheless, it was important for gang experts to continue positing the existence of such a rift in order to justify their view of gangs and to support intervention strategies that provided social scientists with groups to study and programs to evaluate.

One might expect this view of gangs to soften and support for intervention strategies based on it to wane as more evidence about similarities between gang members and youngsters not in gangs becomes available and is publicized (Esbensen et al 1993; Monti 1994; Rand 1987). Unfortunately, that is not likely to happen. There simply exists among many gang researchers a much stronger tendency to ignore evidence that contradicts their views about gangs, or to ignore the fact that even "conventional" youngsters perform illegal and violent acts. Alternatively, they recast such evidence in ways that make it fit the idea of a disorganized world which they have been carrying in their heads for seventy years.

It is not hard to find examples of research being ignored or read so as to keep scholarly attention focused on the presumed alienation of gang members or the hypothetical breakdown of civil society in places that have gangs. The way academics view girls in gangs and the passage of members out of gangs, a process called "maturing out," provides us with evidence of just how big a stretch it is to hold onto the idea that gang members are cut off from regular society. The appearance of gangs in places far removed from city slums, on the other hand, points to a serious problem with our fixation on the idea that only places that are "socially disorganized" have gangs.

It is important to recall that the alienation of gang members figures prominently in both theoretical models accounting for gang behavior and in strategies designed to keep youngsters out of gangs or to wean them from these groups (Sanchez Jankowski 1991). Perhaps this is why Malcolm Klein's (1995) exhaustive profile of persons who join gangs paints a picture of gang members as individuals with no strengths and many shortcomings. Gang members, according to this view, are little more than broken human beings with bad attitudes.

Earlier in his book, however, after noting the many similarities between boy and girl gangs, Klein described the way girls handle their gang identity. His comments are revealing.

> (F)emales, being under such social pressures to develop into nice young ladies, must tread a fine line between their gang roles and the more traditional role behaviors for girls. The girls must find a form of 'acceptably deviant behavior' in order to maintain their dual roles (as) gang girls and developing young women. Some succeed far better than others do. (1995)

The importance of this passage is immediately apparent. Girl gang members are portrayed as being tentative about their involvement in these groups. They also are seen as being drawn to more traditional ways of becoming a girl and as being compelled by those around them to keep their deviant behavior within certain tolerable limits. Girls in gangs may have problems and cause trouble, but Klein has let slip that they are much more complex beings than we usually imagine them to be.

This is not all that is implied in Klein's oversight. After all, if girl and boy gangs are as similar as he contends, then one should expect to find similar types of persons joining them. It follows that boys could be tentative in their involvement with gangs and more conventional in their orientation to the outside world as well. They might be under pressure to become fine persons every bit as much as young women are.

It is possible of course, that lower-class young women somehow "have more exposure to mainstream ideals...and lifestyles" than do young men from the same background (Spergel 1995). Inasmuch as girls live in the same communities and witness the same array of opportunities and pressures as the boys, however, it seems a bit of a stretch to say that girls are more "exposed" to conventional ideas and ways of life. Furthermore, we know that most youngsters living in communities with gangs do not become gang members. Many boys and girls from these neighborhoods, therefore, must be "exposed" to conventional lifestyles and find ways to adopt them.

This line of reasoning is consistent with arguments made by sociologists David Matza, Gary Fine, and Joan Moore, and even Irving Spergel (1964) who have said that gang members are connected to a larger and more conventional world beyond their groups. This idea is corroborated by Esbensen et al (1993) who found virtually no difference in the involvement of gang members, non-gang offenders, and non-offenders in a variety of conventional activities and only small, but statistically significant, differences in their attitudes. It also is confirmed by Daniel Monti (1994) who discovered that many suburban gang members had close ties with their peers, families, schools, and fellow community residents.

The existence of such ties between gang members and a larger, more conventional world certainly is important to these youngsters, but it also is crucial to the way we think about gangs. These ties show that persons who become gang members have many things in common with those who stay out of gangs. They also reveal that most youngsters probably stay connected to the conventional world in a variety of ways even after they join gangs. Gang members are not completely cut off from regular society, and they have social accomplishments and psychological strengths that would make it hard to distinguish them from their peers.

All of these points help to clarify why so many attempts to prevent youngsters from joining gangs, to wean them from gangs, or to pull gangs apart end up failing so miserably. Such initiatives really tear at the fabric of a community that is stronger or at least woven more tightly than social scientists think. Gang members are enmeshed in their community to varying degrees, and they can pass with relative ease between their peer group and other parts of the community when they choose to avail themselves of that opportunity.

This is why reformers and the police find it hard to make much headway against gangs. These groups are simply too easy to build and much too supple for outsiders to contend with. However, it is that same flexibility and access to the outside world which makes it comparatively easy for gang members to leave their gangs or to "mature out" of being an active gang member when they are ready to do so.

Not much is known about the decision individuals make to leave a gang or to greatly curtail their involvement in most gang activities. We do know that some persons remain in touch with their old gangs and assume limited roles as "old heads" or advisers to the group. Other veteran members leave gang life altogether. They simply "find an alternative, less stressful, way to meet social and economic needs" by, among other things, marrying and finding steady employment. Alternatively, they grow weary of fighting, worrying about being caught for crimes they commit, or going to jail (Spergel 1995). Though the reasons for leaving the life of a gang member vary, most gang members "mature-out" successfully over a period of time (Spergel 1964; Vigil 1988).

The quiet end of most careers in gangs affirms what we already have noted about the front and middle part of these careers. Persons have a life apart from gangs, and a good portion of that life is dedicated to some pretty conventional ideals and ways of behaving. Even big chunks of a member's routine association with his fellow gangbangers involve patterns of behavior and thinking that would strike one as "normal" or "age appropriate." That is the only reason so many former gang members are able to live out the rest of their days much like the rest of us do: quietly. They have had practice in behaving and thinking like most conventional persons.

The problem for social scientists, public officials, and police departments is that quiet does not sell. It is not especially exciting to study and government agencies do not set aside money to deal with a problem that has taken care of itself. We prefer instead to study and do something about all the nasty noises gang members make while they still are active.

As a practical matter, of course, "maturing out" is the cheapest as well as the most obvious and successful gang intervention strategy ever devised. A more cynical person might note that this is reason enough for social scientists to have missed it and government officials to ignore it. However, there probably is a better explanation for why social scientists failed to study the process of "maturing out" and government officials did not try to exploit it. The idea never occurred to them. They could not have made sense of it in the context of their theories about what made gangs and gang members work as they do. Nor did the idea that members might move on to quieter lives after leaving their gangs fit the accepted view of these persons as being cut off from regular society. The additional concern that these persons would not be received into a well organized community with a sound culture was not invoked. It was enough to say that gang members were ill-prepared to enter regular society.

The idea of "social disorganization" did play a much bigger part, on the other hand, in accounting for the appearance of gangs in places not at all like inner-city slums. Gangs, as we all know, are supposed to be the by-product of life in rundown city neighborhoods populated by immigrants, other minorities, and the poor. Something about the social structure of these places and the culture of the people living there makes the pursuit of deviant styles of life all but inevitable. Gangs were but one expression of the predisposition of persons and groups living in such circumstances to commit deviant acts.

Communities that are not similarly distressed or populated by disagreeably common human beings are not likely to have gangs. The social structure of these places is theorized to be more developed and integrated. The culture of the persons living there is supposed to be better articulated and in line with the prevailing values and beliefs of the larger society. Deviant thoughts and ways have less room to grow in such communities, and residents have fewer reasons to embrace them.

Despite the absence of evidence pointing to the fundamental erosion of all civil society in city neighborhoods and the availability of information suggesting just the opposite was the case (Gans 1962; Warren 1975), this line of reasoning could hold up as long as gangs were found only in cities. The argument that many city neighborhoods were socially disorganized fit both popular prejudice and scientific theories about the types of persons who lived there, the beliefs they embraced, and the odd customs they practiced.

Once gangs began to appear in communities outside of central cities, however, social scientists had a serious problem. They had to account for the presence of gangs in places whose social structure, culture, and residents had formerly rendered them immune to outbreak of serious deviant behavior carried out by groups. There were two ways to handle this problem. Social scientists could acknowledge that their theory about the breakdown of civil society in places with gangs was in need of a major revision. Or, they could find ways to demonstrate that the breakdown had spread to places far removed from inner-city slums.

It should come as no surprise that we chose the latter course. What may be more of a surprise are the intellectual twists and turns that we had to take so that new data could be made to fit our old theory. The most important step we took was also the easiest to accomplish. Simply call every place a city, and be done with it. So no matter how small a place might be, as long as it had a gang it must be a city.

There is a certain elegance in this solution, and it is one that Malcolm Klein (1995) readily embraced when he summarized the results of his and Cheryl Maxson's study of gang migration in the United States. It seems, according to Klein, that even places with fewer than 10,000 residents qualify as cities. Now, it is altogether possible for small towns and villages to have urban features (Lingeman 1980). And the census bureau's definition of a city as a place with at least 50,000 residents may strike some observers as arbitrary and a bit too high. Still, it is a hard thing to imagine a place with so few persons having all the diversity and complexity of a city or being as disorganized as cities are supposed to be.

It should be noted, in fairness to Malcolm Klein, that on occasion he also uses the word "town" when referring to these small "cities." More striking, however, are the bold graphs that display the prevalence of gangs in "cities" of different sizes. The word "town" never makes it into these charts. The effect, in any case, is to fix in the reader's mind the idea that it still is only cities or city-like places that have gangs. Not much new need be said about gangs or offered by way of a remedy, because gangs do more or less the same kind of things no matter where they are found. The only important difference about gangs today is that they arise in more and smaller "cities."

How they came to be there, precisely what they do once they appear, and how we are to treat them are all matters that social scientists and public officials can still explain to the rest of us. We already have described in some detail how gangs are to be handled in the new places they emerge. What gangs will do after their arrival on the scene is less well known.

There are two studies that define the range of activities in which gangs outside of central cities probably will engage. In the first study, Muehlbauer and Dodder (1983) describe a small group of teenagers from an affluent Chicago suburb in the mid-1970's that rebelled against many forms of adult authority. They fought other teenagers from their town on occasion, destroyed property, and engaged in activities dangerous enough for several members to be jailed. Impressive as the exploits of "The Losers" were, even the authors acknowledge that this group was not like the typical inner-city gang of that era (Muehlbauer, Dodder 1983). They had more in common with the rebellious peer groups described in much of Gary Schwartz's (1987) fine book about youth subcultures. At the other end of the range is Monti's (1994) analysis of more than a dozen gangs from the suburbs of St. Louis that had established territories and acted in ways more reminiscent of contemporary street gangs. Composed largely of minority teenagers from different social classes and family situations, these groups engaged in organized drug dealing and violence with gangs from other towns. At the same time, they were much more restrained than many of their big-city counterparts.

Public attention these days is on groups that are more like suburban St. Louis street gangs. Hence, we are interested in what social scientists say when they try to explain how such groups came to be in suburbs at all. The answer, not surprisingly, fits comfortably within their favorite theory about social disorganization, but it goes much further. It implies that the whole country is becoming as mixed up and messed up as the inner-city slums which once were the only place you would find youth gangs.

"The accelerated emergence of gangs," Malcolm Klein (1995) believes, is attributable to the growth of an "urban underclass and the widespread diffusion of gang culture through the media and other sources" into "thousands of towns and cities." The inner-city neighborhood "may serve as the original basis for the emergence of the gang," Bursik and Grasmick (1995) argue, but "the mobility of gang members may expand the geographic range of the group." Whether the new gangs emerging in suburbs and towns are home grown or transplanted there from other places is less important than the fact that "mass population movements" spread "social disorganization across culture, race/ethnicity, and community" lines (Hagedorn 1988; Spergel 1995).

There are two processes at work in the spreading of youth gangs across the United

States, according to these experts. One involves the migration of persons and ideas closely associated with gangs to places unfamiliar with these groups. The second involves assembling a sufficient number of these persons or youngsters sympathetic to them in the same place so that they will fall together and make a gang. These processes, called respectively "contagion" and "convergence" in studies of collective behavior, were first described in the earliest study of gangs in this country (Thrasher 1927).

Robert Bursik and Harold Grasmick (1993, 1995) rely on both processes in order to support their updated version of social disorganization theory. The old version could not account for the appearance of gangs in "relatively stable, low-income neighborhoods" with "ongoing traditions of gang behavior" and in places "beyond the boundaries of the residential neighborhood." What enabled social disorganization and gangs to take root in new and unexpected places, they and others maintain, was that the carriers of disorganization — the urban underclass — have themselves spread or passed on their influence through the media and other outlets for popular culture like rap music.

The "evidence" Bursik and Grasmick (1993, 1995) adduce to support their thesis is not drawn from studies that show big-city gang members setting up groups in suburbs or villages or local youths forming gangs after listening to rap music or watching movies about these groups. It comes from the movement of some minority lower-class persons into communities outside of cities. Inasmuch as social scientists have used the underclass argument to enrich and enlarge their explanation of why gangs have proliferated in cities, there is no reason not to apply that same argument to the sudden appearance of gangs in suburbs and small towns.

There is little doubt that youngsters who were part of a big-city gang would have taken that experience with them when their families moved to new surroundings. Enough of these youngsters could help to start new gangs or to adapt what they know about gangs to fit whatever tradition of peer group affiliation and rivalries they discover in their new towns (Monti 1994). The only thing that could account for the proliferation of gangs in places that have not received many of these youngsters, however, is an extremely weakened civil society. That is exactly what Bursik, Spergel, and Klein are suggesting when they allude to the spreading of a youth gang culture through the media.

As with so many elements in the old social disorganization theory, there is not much in the new or expanded version of disorganization theory advanced by Bursik and Grasmick that is especially helpful or even new. Allusions to contagion or convergence "theory" were once a staple in research about riots, mass delusions, panics, and other seemingly spontaneous acts. These "theories" played to the idea that outbursts of collective behavior occurred when the social order was crumbling and persons were, to put it kindly, upset and confused. Frederic Thrasher adapted these ideas in order to explain the emergence of gangs in the "socially disorganized" neighborhoods of Chicago during the 1920's.

These ideas fell out of fashion among students of social movements in the late 1950's when academic writers tried to find more sympathetic ways to portray protests, sit-ins, and boycotts that were a staple of the campaign to secure civil rights for black Americans. Social scientists happened onto something called "emergent norm theory." It depicted collective behavior as something that could make new, and presumably better, rules for us to live by in a confusing and changing world (Turner, Killian 1972).

Gang researchers, unable to find much that was ennobling about gangs or the society that spawned them, did not give up the contagion or convergence ideas. However, they did introduce their own version of "emergent norm theory" through the work of persons like Gerald Suttles (1968) and more recently in the work of Joan Moore (1991). Suttles saw gangs working out

> a set of practical guidelines that neither rejects nor inverts conventional values but elaborates a code for situations when they are not readily applicable. (Kornhauser 1978)

Gangs did not reinforce a belief system or set of customs that belonged to a vital people. Rather, they helped youthful slum dwellers bring a bit more order and clarity to their disorganized and unsatisfying world (Moore 1991).

GETTIN' RIGHT WITH HUMPTY

So many persons have been saying it for so long that today it is all but taken for granted that gangs emerge where they do and behave as they do because large pieces of our society are disorganized. The available evidence, though, simply does not support that view. This explanation cannot account for the different ways in which gangs behave. It cannot account for who joins and does not join gangs, how individuals act while they are members, why they leave gangs, and what happens to them after they have gone.

All young persons who become gang members are not defective, and they are not cut off from the regular society as they are said to be. If they were, then few if any of them would "mature out" of their gangs and go on the lead inconspicuous and peaceful lives. Most do.

We are hard pressed to make a convincing case that all American communities have become disorganized and, hence, are likely candidates to have gangs. Even if one agreed with the way social scientists describe or measure "social disorganization," there is no consistent relation between the composition of a community's population and the presence of gangs. All communities with poor minority residents do not have gangs. Places without many poor or minority youngsters have had groups that may not be the mirror image of contemporary street gangs but certainly remind us of them (Muehlbauer, Dodder 1983; Schwartz 1987).

Gangs do not organize and behave in the same way, and these differences are related to the kind of community in which the gangs are found. Yet different types of gangs can appear in communities with similar demographic profiles (Monti 1993). Hence, there is no simple or straightforward relation between a community's population profile and the organization or behavior of gangs.

If the composition of a community's population were related to social disorganization and it, in turn, were tied to the presence of gangs in a clear and consistent way, then strategies that experts developed to deal with gangs and to fix their communities would have worked better than they did. All the money spent over the last seventy years to implement those strategies surely would have made a difference by now. It has not.

There is only one reasonable conclusion that can be drawn regarding the poor showing of social disorganization theory for those persons trying to understand and alter the behavior of gangs. It is wrong.

Our civil society produces and reflects both the conventional and unconventional behaviors of local groups. No great gulf stands between the conditions of social life that produce clubs, churches, businesses, and festivals and those social conditions that yield marches in behalf of women's suffrage or against abortions, religious pilgrimages and cross burnings, or public beatings for neighborhood miscreants and gangs. They spring from the same source (Tilly et al 1975).

Insofar as these ideas constitute a different way of looking at the world, the world I see can have difficulty accommodating itself to many of the things that gangs do but has no fundamental problem with peer groups exercising considerable influence over young persons. "The resurgence of the peer group and slackening of family influence," suggests Edward Shorter (1975), probably began no later than the 1960s in the country as a whole. He may be correct, but concern about independent children had been expressed in big cities long before Frederic Thrasher conducted the first large-scale study of gangs in the 1920s (Boyer 1978).

The impact of this more recent and broadly felt shift was the same in any case. It enabled adolescents to escape

> with increasing frequency into a subculture that is not so much in opposition to the dominant culture as independent of it. And the typical posture of young people in generational relations is not so much rejection as indifference. (Shorter 1975)

This is not the first time in history that young persons managed to slip from the control of their families. Something like this occurred in traditional villages as well, but there was an important difference according to Shorter.

> The distinguishing feature of the traditional youth group was its complete integration into the larger structure of community life. All the adults sanctioned the *jeuness* because it served certain essential functions, particularly the organization of mating, sexual surveillance, and the control of anti-social behavior. So there was basic harmony between youth...and the surrounding adult world. (1975)

In its place has come a kind of counterpointed melody between the generations that sometimes roils over into a lot of noise. Gangs are a good example of that noise.

The studied indifference of many young persons to the demands of adults is apparent in several studies of youth culture and gangs (Fine 1987; Monti 1994; Moore 1991; Muehlbauer, Dodder 1983; Schwartz 1987). Rather than expressing outright opposition to many of the central rituals surrounding family life, schooling, and being neighborly, many teenagers show independence in ways that bewilder adults but actually reflect and reinforce much of what goes on in the community every day (Moore 1991).

Slums are not now and may never have been the only places where gangs take root. Sociologists got it at least half right, however, when they insisted that gangs filled an important spot in the lives of their members and, by extension, in the life of the community where they are found. Gangs serve as a kind of rough hewn bridge for many young persons trying to make the sometimes difficult crossing between childhood and adulthood. In turn, how gangs act and the kind of person they help to build tell us something important about adult authority in the community and relations between the several generations dwelling there (Schwartz 1987). If the social scientists who wrote so long and assuredly about "social disorganization" had managed to put a face on their idea, that is what it would have looked like.

Elijah Anderson (1990) raised his finger at the same point when he described the breakdown of adult authority and relations between young persons and "old heads" in the impoverished ghetto community he called "Northton." Several years before Anderson's book received so much attention Gary Schwartz, citing even earlier research by Rivera and Short (1967), observed that much "useful information is missing from the contact black gang youth have with local adults." The absence of good ties between them weakens the

> support and guidance (that) underwrite respect for the authority of the older generation. Black gang youth are deprived of the kind of ordinary assistance from adults that other youth take for granted. (Schwartz 1987)

Apparently this has not always been the case for gang members. Frederic Thrasher (1927) stumbled onto a similar idea when he noted how boys could be kept in line by local adults who gave them work and involved them in other grown-up activities. Yet he did not build on that key insight, one supposes, because of his disdain for the adults who dwelled in "Gangland" and some of the questionable enterprises into which they drew young persons.

The picture is not entirely glum. Despite the rather nasty turn gangs have taken in recent years, many communities still do a pretty good job of working their young charges into a conventional grown-up world. Even those communities that have severe gang problems frequently have an array of viable groups and voluntary organizations run by adults that can be mobilized to that end. How many adults and groups actually end up working in behalf of young persons in this way should determine whether a community develops gangs and what those gangs do.

Here in embryonic form, therefore, is the making of a testable hypothesis regarding the organization and behavior of youth gangs in different communities. Places in which relations between young persons and adults are good probably will have fewer gangs, and those gangs should be more restrained. Communities with nominal ties between the generations will have more gangs, or those gangs they do have should be less restrained.

There is no straight-line connection between the economic and demographic profile of a community and its likelihood of having gangs or for those gangs to be more or less rambunctious. Based on what can be gleaned on this point from existing studies, it would seem that communities with a relatively stable working-class or lower-middle class core would have fewer, more restrained gangs. Communities with a lower or higher economic profile and less stability would have more gangs or less restrained groups of adolescents (Cummings 1993; Monti 1993; Moore 1991; Muehlbauer, Dodder 1983; Pinderhughes 1993; Schwartz 1987; Spergel 1964).

The critical factor in this scheme, however, is not the wealth or status of the persons living in a community. It is the ability and willingness of adults working through informal groups, voluntary organizations, and local businesses to engage young persons in a constructive way. Not all youngsters would be "saved," if a community were mobilized to work them into the conventional adult world in a clear and consistent way (Hirschi 1969; Monti 1994; Spergel 1964; Wolfgang et al 1987). In such a community, however, their chances of making a smoother and faster transition into a conventional adult world should be much improved.

In sum, the secret weapon against gangs has been planted in front of us all along. It does not require a government commission to be discovered. It does not need millions of dollars in grants to be put into operation. It has been tested under extremely inhospitable conditions. And it works.

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ALCOHOL, DRUGS, AND VIOLENCE AMONG YOUTH, 1992

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of alcohol, drugs, and violence among youth age 12-21 is estimated from the youth supplement (Youth Risk Behavior Survey) of the 1992 National Health Interview Survey. We present national benchmarks on the extent of alcohol, drug, and violence-related behavior among youth. Risk activities among six race/ethnic and gender groups are compared and examined by educational and employment status. School and work are selected because of their economic significance to youth. The incidence of risk among youth by race and gender is complex; the prevalence of alcohol, drugs, and violence varies by education and employment for the different groups of youth. Nonetheless, we discover that Mexican American men and white men exhibit comparable risk profiles. Among women, alcohol use was greater among the employed than those without a job; college attendance was associated with greater alcohol use among Mexican American women. For blacks, a lower incidence of health risks was associated with more favorable educational and employment status. The findings suggest that greater attention be given to differences in health risks by race/ethnicity and gender and to the contributions of education and employment in determining health risks among youth.

INTRODUCTION

Across the nation, young people are encountering unprecedented social and economic challenges. Several reports (Carnegie Council 1995; Children's Defense Fund 1991) have sounded an alarm about the vulnerability of adolescents to a host of social problems and risk activities. In this study, an assessment of the prevalence of alcohol, drug, and violence activities is provided for a nationally representative sample of youth age 12-21. We focus on six race/ethnic and gender groups—Mexican American women and men, black women and men, and white women and men.[1] Our aim is twofold. First, we offer national benchmarks on the extent of alcohol, drug, and violence-related behaviors by gender and race/ethnicity. Most reporting of these activities are drawn from small, geographically-restricted samples or from national samples that exclude out-of-school youth (e.g., dropouts). The second objective is to address the extent of risk associated with educational and employment status and to evaluate variations in these rates by gender and race/ethnicity. School and work are selected because of their economic dimensions; education and employment provide youth with opportunities for successful transitions into adulthood. For youth to take advantage of educational and employment opportunities, the risk of alcohol abuse, drug use, and violence must be minimized.

The importance of alcohol, drugs, and violence on the health development, educational progress, and employment opportunities of youth can not be overstated. Not only are risk behaviors estimated to have contemporary effects, but risk activities undertaken by youth are hypothesized to contribute to problems into adulthood (Newcomb, Bentler 1988). Contrary to popular misconceptions, the incidence of risk among youth by race/ethnicity and gender is complex and merits close examination.

COMPLEXITIES OF ALCOHOL USE, DRUG USE, AND VIOLENCE

Prior research indicates that generalizations about the prevalence of alcohol, drugs, and violence among youth by race/ethnicity and gender are complex. Data on alcohol and drug use by race/ethnicity and gender reveals differences by survey and collection methods (Aguirre-Molina, Molina 1994; Castro 1994). The prevalence of some risk activities is also cyclical; alcohol and marijuana use were more prevalent among youth in the 1970s and early 1980s than during the mid 1990s (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman 1994). Youth violence, such as fighting and use of weapons, among high school seniors shows little change in the last decade (Maguire, Pastore 1994). In contrast, arrest rates for violent crimes for 18-year-old men nearly doubled between 1965 and 1988 (Children's Defense Fund 1991). Arrest reports are, however, problematic as trend indicators because crime statistics are as likely to reflect other changes (e.g., law enforcement, public awareness) as changes in risk behaviors.

Second, school enrollment, immigration, and other characteristic differences within the youth population limit generalizations about risk activities. Although not all youth are attending school, most survey information on alcohol, drug, and violence involvement is however typically based on national, school-based samples which only include enrolled youth. To the extent that some groups of youth are more likely not to be in school estimates of risk activities can be misleading (National Center for Health Statistics 1995). Among Latinos, the decline in alcohol use between 8th graders and 12th graders has been attributed to the disproportionate number of Latinos who drop out of school (Aguirre-Molina, Caetano 1994). Risk behavior can also vary by nativity: Mexican immigrants, for example, have some of the lowest rates of drug and alcohol use (Farabee, Wallisch, Maxwell 1995). Our understanding of race/ethnic variations in risk-taking is further complicated by the difficulty of obtaining valid and reliable data on these behaviors. Fendrich and Vaughn's (1994) research suggests that mis-reporting of drug use among youth varies significantly by race.

Third, it is important to recognize the causality problem in observing the prevalence of risk activities by race/ethnicity and gender. Differences in poverty, urbanization, immigration, and low educational attainment among youth are potential contributors to the race/ethnicity and gender disparity in risk activities (Earls 1994; Rodriquez, Brindis 1995; Yin, Zapata, Katims 1995). As a further illustration of causality issues, drug use is assumed to lower productivity & negatively affect employment, work hours, and wages. Yet research shows that the relation between substance use and employment is at best inconclusive and potentially non-existent (Johnson, White 1995; Kaestner 1994b), and contrary to popular wisdom, studies suggest that drug use is associated with higher wages (Gill, Michaels 1992; Kaestner 1994a; Register, Williams 1992). Finally, the causal relation between risk activities remains difficult to untangle—the link, for example, between substance use and violence (Blumstein 1995; Watts, Wright 1990).

DATA AND METHODS

Data for the analysis are drawn from the youth supplement (Youth Risk Behavior Survey-YRSB) of the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (Adams, Schoenborn, Moss, Warren and Kann 1995). The NHIS is a nationally representative, household-based sample; households are selected for the NHIS sample based on a multi-stage, probability design (Benson, Marano 1994). Black and Hispanic households were oversampled in the 1992 NHIS. Youth age 12-21 in the YRSB supplement were interviewed (April 1992-March 1993) about two months after the household interview. Persons who had left the NHIS household (e.g., for marriage, for school) were included in the youth supplement. The NHIS-YRSB data are advantageous because, unlike most national samples of youth, both in-school and out-of-school youth are represented. In addition, we are able to conduct separate analyses for Mexican Americans, rather than aggregating the various heterogeneous Latino populations into one category. Mexican Americans are highlighted because of the insufficient sample sizes of the other Hispanic groups. Mexican Americans are also the largest Hispanic sub-group and likely to differ by socioeconomic and health status from other Hispanic groups (Aguirre-Molina, Molina 1994). The analysis is thus restricted to Mexican American women and men (N=1201), black women and men (N=1724), and white women and men (N=7297).[2]

The analysis addresses the prevalence of seven health risk behaviors in the youth population: alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, crack/free base cocaine, "other" illegal drugs, physical fighting, and carrying weapons. The time referents for these behaviors vary in the NHIS data: use in the lifetime and use in the last month (alcohol, marijuana, cocaine), lifetime only (crack/free base, illegal drugs), past 12 months (fighting), and past month only (carrying weapons). Although lifetime use data for alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine are reported, the most recent time referent (past month) is used for the majority of the analyses; use of a common time referent, we believe, increases the accuracy and reliability of reporting risk behavior. To reduce the dilemma of collecting sensitive information about risk activities within a household setting, NHIS-YRSB youth were given an audiocassette headset, with questions about risk behaviors (repeated twice) asked by someone of the same sex, and an answer sheet to record responses.

Multiple risk measures were constructed by summing positive responses to the series of risk questions. One multiple risk summary reflects "exposure" to alcohol, drugs, & violence. The specific behaviors included in the exposure measure are alcohol consumption of 5 drinks or more within one 24-hour period, alcohol consumption if legally under-age (reflecting legal risk), use of marijuana, cocaine, crack/free base, other illegal drugs, participation in a physical fight, and weapons-carrying; the exposure measure yielded a maximum of eight risks. An additional multiple risk measure represents more serious involvement and

Table 1: Prevalence of Alcohol, Drugs and Violence Risk Behaviors by Gender, Race and Ethnicity (in percentages)

	Women			Men		
	Mexican n=585	**Black n=894**	**White n=3706**	**Mexican n=616**	**Black n=830**	**White n=3591**
Alcohol						
Lifetime	57*^	62*^	71	69	59*	68
30 days	34*^	36*^	48	50	39*	48
> 2 days w/5 drinks	9*^	5*^	17*	21	13*	24
Marijuana						
Lifetime	19*^	23*^	30	28	25	28
30 days	7*^	8*^	11*	13	13	12
> 3 times	3*^	4*^	5*	8	8	8
Cocaine						
Lifetime	6	2*^	7	10*	3*	7
30 days	1	1	1	4*	1	1
> 3 times	1	1	0*	2*	1	2
Crack/Free Base Cocaine						
Lifetime	4	1 ^	3	4	2*	3
> 3 times	1	1*^	1	2	1*	2
Other Illegal Drugs						
Lifetime	11*^	3*^	15	11*	3*	14
> 2 times	5*^	2*^	9	6*	2*	9
Physical Fighting						
12 months	30*	42*^	26*	48	58*	47
> 2 times	16*	24*^	16*	29	37*	30
Weapon						
30 days	6*	11*^	5*	23	20*	25
> 2 times	4*	8*^	3*	18	14*	20
Risk Exposure						
0	51	39	42	29	26	27
1	25	36	25	27	39	29
2	12	14	15	18	17	18
3	6	6	9	10	8	11
4+	7	5	9	15	10	15
Mean including 0 risks	.99*^	1.03*^	1.23*	1.69	1.41*	1.70
Mean excluding 0 risks	2.01*	1.70*^	2.12*	2.39	1.90*	2.32
Risk Involvement						
0	75	70	66	54	51	47
1	17	22	22	26	33	30
2	4	6	7	11	10	14
3	3	2	3	4	4	6
4+	1	1	2	5	2	4
Mean including 0 risks	.38*^	.42*^	.51*	.83	.73*	.92
Mean excluding 0 risks	1.54*	1.38*^	1.53*	1.82	1.50*	1.72

* p < .05 vis-a-vis white men; ^p < .05 vis-a-vis white women--with only women of color included in the tests with white women.

was constructed by summing responses of risk activities that were undertaken on two or more occasions (for alcohol, fighting and weapons) or three or more occasions (for marijuana, cocaine, crack, and illegal drugs), thus representing a maximum of seven risks. The use of different cut-offs for serious risk involvement is due to the different coding schemes in the NHIS data.

Education and employment are the two types of exogenous variables used in the analysis.[3] Youth who are enrolled in either elementary, middle school, or high school are classified as students; high school dropouts are those persons who have not completed 12 years of schooling and are not currently attending school. All other youth are classified by their educational attainment: high school graduates with no college experience, and high school graduates with some college experience.[4] To be sure, age and educational status are highly correlated for youth; high school graduates and those who have attended college are significantly older than persons enrolled in high school or lower grades of school and, in the NHIS sample, are slightly older than high school dropouts. Correlation issues aside, school enrollment status nevertheless provides valuable insight into the relationship between educational attainment and the incidence of health risks.

In addition, for youth enrolled in grades 1-12, we constructed a grade-delay measure to examine the relationship between educational performance and risk behaviors. Our measurement of grade delay is more conservative than others (National Center for Education Statistics 1991) and is based on the legal requirement in most states that children are not eligible for public school until age 5, but often reach their 6th birthday within weeks of starting school. Hence, those in grade 1 who are older than 7 are considered grade-delayed, in grade 2 and older than 8, and so forth through grade 12 and older than 18. We anticipate a positive relation between grade delay and alcohol, drug, and violence-related risks; recent research (Byrd, Weitzman, Doniger 1996) supports our hypothesis about alcohol and drug use among grade-delayed students.

To examine the relationship between labor market status and health risks, we classified youth into those who were currently employed and those not employed, i.e., unemployed or out of the labor force. For employed youth, we also examined the incidence of health risk by current occupation; national surveys suggest that illicit drug use and heavy alcohol use vary among workers by occupation and industry (Hoffman, Brittingham, Larson 1996). The occupational data are recoded to represent four categories: white-collar (executive, professional, technical and administrative support), blue-collar (precision production, machine and transport operators, handlers, and laborers), sales, and service. The latter two occupational categories were not aggregated with the white- and blue-collar clusters because of the large proportions of youth who work in these fields. In addition, the employment and occupational analyses are restricted to youth age 18-21 because these data were not collected for other ages.

We use t-tests (two-tailed, $p \leq .05$) to assess the statistical significance of gender and race/ethnic differences in risk behavior. The statistic is calculated to evaluate whether the proportion of those reporting exposure to risk activities differs significantly from a designated reference group. We use two reference groups: 1) white men are contrasted with the other five gender-race/ethnic groups, and 2) white women are contrasted with black women and Mexican American women.

An overview of the prevalence of specific risk behaviors and the two multiple risk scales, by gender and race/ethnicity, is presented in the next section. We then turn to an examination of the relation between selected risk activities by educational and employment status; alcohol exposure (any use in the past month), marijuana (past month), and fighting (past 12 months). These specific behaviors and the multiple risk exposures were selected primarily because these risks were modal among youth and these activities provided a sufficient sample for an assessment by education and employment status.

OVERVIEW OF RISK BEHAVIORS

Table 1 presents the prevalence of the seven risk behaviors, and distributions for the multiple risk exposure and involvement by race/ethnicity and gender.

Alcohol and Marijuana Use

As expected, involvement with alcohol and marijuana is more pronounced than involvement with cocaine, crack, or other illegal substances. More than two-thirds of white men, Mexican American men, and white women acknowledge lifetime exposure to alcohol and one-half report alcohol use in the last month; estimates for lifetime and past month marijuana use for white women, Mexican American men, and white men are 28-30 percent and 11-13 percent, respectively. The alcohol and marijuana exposure profiles for white men and Mexican American men are statistically comparable; white women show statistically different patterns from white men for selected exposure measures, including the highest reported proportion of persons with lifetime alcohol use. Mexican American women are the least apt to report alcohol and marijuana use; black women exhibit rates only slightly higher than Mexican American women. Indeed, alcohol and marijuana use rates for women of color are significantly lower than both white women and white men. Black men present perhaps the most interesting alcohol and marijuana use patterns: alcohol exposure is statistically lower than that for white men whereas marijuana use is comparable to that of white men.

Cocaine, Crack, and Other Illegal Drugs

Black youth show lower rates for use of cocaine, crack, and other illegal drugs than both whites and Mexican Americans. Only 1-3 percent of blacks report exposure to these substances and the rates statistically differ from those for white men and women for 15 of 21 use measures; the exposure percentages for Mexican Americans and whites range from 6-10 percent for cocaine and 3-4 percent for crack/free base cocaine. Notably, the use estimates for cocaine and crack/free base generally do not statistically differ by race/ethnicity or gender for whites and Mexican Americans. Mexican American men are the exception, exhibiting the highest rates for cocaine use. The data for other illegal drugs suggest that Mexican American men (and women) have significantly lower rates of exposure to these substances than whites, with 11 percent of Mexican Americans reporting lifetime illegal drug use vs. 14-15 percent for whites. Moreover, the tendency for the greater use of other illegal drugs by whites holds for the involvement indicator ($\geq$ 2 times over the lifetime). Notably, gender does not differentiate these particular risk behaviors. Women and men in the youth population generally show comparable use patterns for cocaine, crack, and other illegal drugs.

Violence

Fighting and weapons-carrying are differentiated by both gender and race/ethnicity. Several observations are noteworthy. Women exhibit lower rates than men for both activities, but within the gender categories, Mexican American and white youth have comparable patterns for fighting and weapons-carrying. For men, blacks have the highest rate of exposure to physical fighting but the lowest rate for weapons-carrying; both activities statistically differ from the estimates for white men. In contrast, for women, blacks have the highest rates for both fighting and weapons. More than two-fifths of black women reported engagement in a physical fight in the last 12 months, and almost one-fourth were involved 2 or more times, compared to estimates of 26-30 percent for fighting in the last 12 months and 16 percent for at least 2 encounters for Mexican American and white women. Of course, these data do not allow an understanding of the context of fighting (e.g., street fighting, physical violence between romantic partners, self-defense), of the severity of contact, or whether the weapons were used.

Multiple Risk Exposure

Women, irrespective of race, are less likely than men to have multiple risk exposures; about one-half of Mexican Americans, and about 40 percent of blacks and whites, report no exposure to alcohol, drugs, or violence. In contrast, just over one-fourth of men, irrespective of race, report no risk exposure. The means for risk exposure tell us that black men engage in significantly fewer risk behaviors than Mexican American men and white men. For women, blacks and Mexican Americans have relatively comparable multiple risk exposures when those with 0 risk behaviors are included in the calculation; Mexican American and white women are more alike when the means are based on the population engaged in at least 1 risk behavior (i.e., means excluding 0 risks). Hence, the data show that among youth who have crossed the barrier from no risk exposure to some risk exposure, black men and women have the lowest rate of participation with alcohol, drugs, and physical violence.

Multiple Risk Involvement

Recall that multiple risk involvement taps the number of risk activities that were undertaken on 2 or more occasions (for

Table 2: Selected Risk Activities by Educational Status, Gender, Race and Ethnicity (in percentages)

		Women			Men	
Alcohol Use	**Mexican**	**Black**	**White**	**Mexican**	**Black**	**White**
*Educational Status***						
Student	29	27*^	33	40*	25*	33
HS dropout	25*^	56	55	59	57	62
HS graduate	54*^	51*^	67	71	75	72
College	61*	53*^	72	70	60*	75
Grade Delay						
No	28	25*^	33	39*	24*	32
Yes	36	37	35	40	31	38
Marijuana Use						
Educational Status						
Student	6	5*	7	12*	7	8
HS dropout	5*^	18	19	16*	29	26
HS graduate	8*	10*	15	16	26	19
College	12	11*	16	12	20	18
Grade Delay						
No	6	4*^	7	11*	6	7
Yes	8	8	7	18	8	11
Physical Fighting						
Educational Status						
Student	36*	48*^	31*	56	65*	53
HS dropout	27*	54^	30*	37*	57	51
HS graduate	19*	38^	22*	42	45	40
College	14*	20*	15*	30	30	33
Grade Delay						
No	36*	47*^	31*	56	64*	53
Yes	32*	53^	34*	55	74*	54
Risk Exposure: 3 or more behaviors						
Educational Status						
Student	13*	8*	14*	22	13*	19
HS dropout	15*^	28*	27*	28*	31	41
HS graduate	11*^	14*^	25*	35	35	41
College	14*	10*^	21*	30	19*	35
Grade Delay						
No	13*	7*^	13*	20	13*	19
Yes	13	10*	15	31	16	25

* $p < .05$ vis-a-vis white men; ^ $p < .05$ vis-a-vis white women--with only women of color included in the tests with white women.

** "Students" are currently enrolled in elementary, middle and high schools; "high school dropouts" and "high school graduates" are not currently enrolled and graduates do not have post-secondary experience; the "college" category includes both those enrolled in college and those with some post-secondary experience who are not currently enrolled.

alcohol, fighting, and weapons) or 3 or more occasions (for marijuana, cocaine, crack, and illegal drugs). Like the risk exposure data, we discover that women demonstrate less involvement in multiple risk activities than men: estimates for zero risks ranging from 66-75 percent for women versus 47-54 percent for men. Notably, Mexican American women have the least likelihood of participating in more serious risk activities, followed by black women and white women. White men and Mexican American men have the greatest likelihood of high risk involvement. Fully 24 percent of white men and 20 percent of Mexican American men report 2 or more serious risk behaviors, followed by black men (16%), white women (12%), and Mexican American and black women (8-9%). The gender and race/ethnic significance patterns established in the risk exposure panel are essentially replicated in the means for risk involvement.

RISK BEHAVIORS AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS

Table 2 presents the use of alcohol and marijuana within the last month, involvement in a physical fight, and presence of 3 or more health risks by educational status, gender, and race/ethnicity. We are attentive to two types of differences in risk behaviors in the discussion of the table—across educational categories, and by gender and race/ethnicity within educational categories; the significance tests assess the second issue.

Alcohol Use Within 30 Days

Because older youth are more likely to use alcohol, it is not surprising that high school graduates report drinking more frequently within the last month than students enrolled in school. The likelihood of alcohol consumption within the last month was similar for high school graduates, irrespective of college attendance, except for black men and Mexican American women. Black male high school graduates without college experience are 25 percent more likely to report drinking than those who went to college whereas Mexican American women who attended college are 13 percent more apt to drink than non-college high school graduates. Additional race/ethnic differences merit comment. Mexican American men rank foremost (40%), and black men rank last (25%), among students with alcohol use. Alcohol use among high school dropouts is not significantly different by gender or race/ethnicity, with the exception of Mexican American women: they report exceptionally low rates of alcohol use—25 percent vs. more than 50 percent for other dropouts.

Turning to students, the relation between alcohol use and grade-delay status is quite important for some youth. Grade-delayed black women were 48 percent more likely to drink than those not grade-delayed; in addition, the incidence of alcohol use was about 29 percent greater for grade-delayed Mexican American women and black men, and 19 percent more for white men. Notably, significant race/ethnic and gender differences within the two grade-delayed categories are only observed for those current in the progression through school.

Marijuana Use Within 30 Days

Identification of a distinctive pattern of marijuana use across the educational categories is difficult. To illustrate, marijuana use is lowest among students and highest among dropouts for 4 gender-race/ethnic groups: black women, black men, white women, and white men. Mexican American men, in contrast, show identical (lower) rates for students and for those in college (12%) and slightly higher identical rates (16%) for dropouts and high school graduates. The rates for Mexican American women do not vary by educational status until we consider those who enter college, for whom the reported use of marijuana increases slightly. Within the educational categories, few significant differences in marijuana use are observed, with the exception that use for some women of color (and Mexican American men) diverges from that of white men of the same educational status.

For students, use of marijuana within the last month was generally equivalent by grade-delayed status, except for Mexican American men. Indeed, nearly one-fifth of grade-delayed Mexican American men reported using marijuana vs. just over 10 percent of those in an age-appropriate grade. Like the results for alcohol use, the statistical tests are only significant for non-grade-delayed students and only for selected groups.

Physical Fight Within Last Year

Involvement in a physical fight is most prevalent among students and high school dropouts. Almost two-thirds of black male students and slightly over one-half of Mexican American men and white men in school, fought within the last year. The tendency for students and dropouts to report greater involvement with violence holds for women as well. High school graduates are generally less apt to fight than students or dropouts; the risk of fighting is further minimized among those who attend college. The statistical tests reveal that gender significantly differentiates exposure to physical violence irrespective of educational status.

For students, the risk of fighting is generally equivalent by grade-delayed status, except for blacks. The incidence of fighting is greater for grade-delayed black youth; for grade-delayed students, three-fourths of black men and one-half of black women reported an incidence of fighting—rates which are 16 percent and 13 percent, respectively, greater than those not grade delayed. We further observe significant gender and race/ethnic differences for both grade-delayed and non-grade-delayed youth, unlike the results for alcohol and marijuana use which demonstrated statistical significance for non-delayed students only.

Multiple Risk Exposure

In-school youth generally exhibit the lowest occurrence of multiple risks. Looking at students, black women reported the lowest proportion (8%) of multiple risks and Mexican American men, the highest (22%), although neither of these estimates differ significantly from same-sex white peers. Turning to those out of school and in college, the educational category with the largest concentration of multiple risk youth varies by gender. High school dropouts tend to have the greatest incidence of multiple risks for women (although the differences by educational status are slight for Mexican American and white women). In contrast, for men, high school graduates more often experience multiple risks in the Mexican American and black populations (35% had 3 or more risk behaviors) whereas graduates and dropouts report the highest exposure to multiple risks (41%) among whites. The proportion of those with 3 or more risks generally falls for those in college, especially for black men.

The significance tests for race/ethnicity and gender within the educational status categories reinforces for the most part the conclusions drawn from Table 1: multiple risk exposure is highest for Mexican American men and white men, and moreover, white women tend to engage in more risk activities relative to women of color. The data suggest that educational status does not fully account for the prevalent race/ethnic and gender patterns in terms of multiple alcohol, drug, and violence activities.

For students, the occurrence of multiple risks is almost uniform by grade delay status, with some exceptions. The incidence of multiple risks jumps for Mexican American men from 20 percent for non-grade-delayed students to 31 percent for grade-delayed students; the next highest increase is observed for white men (from 19% to 25%). Only one statistically significant difference in multiple risk exposure is discovered for delayed students (black women vs. white men); gender and race/ethnic differences in multiple risks are more conspicuous among non-grade-delayed youth.

RISK BEHAVIORS AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Table 3 presents the use of alcohol and marijuana within the last month, involvement in a physical fight, and presence of 3 or more health risks by employment status for youth age 18-21.

Alcohol Use Within 30 Days

Employed women, irrespective of race, were more likely than those without a job to report drinking within the last month. Drinking patterns were less consistent by employment status for men. For black men, alcohol use was 13 percent greater among those jobless as compared to those employed. In fact, the incidence of drinking for men was lowest (62%) among employed blacks. For white and Mexican American men, no differences in the pattern of alcohol usage were evident by employment status.

Turning to the occupational data, blue collar workers are both the most apt and the least apt to drink. Mexican American women in blue-collar jobs report the lowest proportion (18%) of alcohol use, and black men and women incur the highest incidence of drinking (80-82%) among blue-collar workers (although the estimates for black youth do not significantly differ from whites). Alcohol use also varies widely for persons in sales occupations, ranging from 40 percent (for Mexican American women) to 78 percent (for Mexican American men). Given that few occupational exposure rates attain statistical significance, it is striking that women of color in sales occupations have statistically lower alcohol use rates than both white women and white men.[5] The data thus show that no one occupational category is consistently associated with higher or lower alcohol use. In addition, the incidence of drinking is more uniform across occupations for white men than for other gender-race/ethnic groups.

Marijuana Use Within 30 Days

Use of marijuana was most frequent (32%) among black men without jobs. Higher rates of marijuana usage were also noted for jobless Mexican American men (22% versus 12% for those employed) and for white men (24% vs. 18%). Employment status does not distinguish marijuana use for women.

Like the incidence of alcohol exposure, the precise association between marijuana use and occupational location is difficult to establish. To illustrate, black men in blue-collar jobs show exceptionally higher rates of marijuana use vis-a-vis other gender-race/ethnic groups, but blue-collar work is not consistently associated with higher rates of marijuana use. The dramatically lower incidence of marijuana use for Mexican American men in sales is equally puzzling.

Physical Fighting Within Last Year

White and Mexican American women report the lowest occurrence (about 20%) of a fight within the last year, and more importantly, employment status generally does not alter the risk of fighting for these women. For black women, and for men as well, the likelihood of fighting increases for those without a job. The incidence of fighting for black women and men who are jobless is 28-38 percent greater than for those employed; for Mexican American and white men, the risk difference is between 11-14 percent greater for the jobless. Moreover, we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no difference in fighting for black women and white men, again intimating that black women are unique on the issue of fighting relative to white and Mexican American women.

The association between occupational location and fighting is generally as equivocal as that for occupation and alcohol and marijuana use. Black men in blue-collar jobs display an inclination for fighting, but the tendency is quite weak for Mexican American and white men, and for women, nonexistent. In addition, the data show that youth in white-collar jobs are not exempt from physical encounters, with 26-33 percent of men and 15-23 percent of women reporting involvement in fighting. Only white women show a statistically divergent pattern of fighting from white men within the occupational categories; the observation is important because white women and white men are typically comparable on other risk measures when occupation is controlled.

Multiple Risk Exposure

The occurrence of multiple risks is not influenced by employment status for women, yet for men, multiple risks occur more frequently for jobless persons than those employed. Minority men without a job are 40 percent more likely to report multiple risks than those employed; for whites, the comparable risk difference by employment status is 23 percent. The relation between occupation and multiple risk-taking, as expected, is far from predictable. Consider the following occupations with the highest percentages for the respective gender-race/ethnic groups: white-collar and service jobs for Mexican American women, sales jobs for black women, service jobs for white women, sales jobs for Mexican American men, and blue-collar jobs for black and white men.

The gender and race/ethnic statistical tests within the occupational categories tell us that white women, Mexican American men, and black men share the same multiple risk tendencies. Women of color differ from white men in most occupational categories (indicating significantly lower involvement with multiple risks) but differ from white women in only two occupational milieus.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Among American youth, alcohol and marijuana use is more pronounced than the use of cocaine, crack, or other illegal substances. The incidence of alcohol for whites and Mexican American men are similar and more prevalent than for other youth; risk of marijuana use was uniform among whites, black men, and Mexican American men. Although blacks are less apt to use alcohol and other illegal drugs (e.g., crack, cocaine), we are not suggesting a lack of risk to these problems. Most national surveys do not adequately capture the risk of alcohol and drug use for inner-city residents or disadvantaged neighborhoods. Unlike other groups, the use of illicit drugs increases for older black adults and the youth data misses these risk activities (National Institute of Health 1995). The risk behavior of youth discussed in the study can however be valuable for developing comparative perspectives, e.g., national trends versus local patterns, or countering popular misconceptions of alcohol and drug users among our nation's youth.

Our findings also suggest that certain groups are at higher risks than others. For blacks, male students and female school dropouts are especially at risk for violence. Among students, Mexican American men are vulnerable to alcohol use. High school dropouts who are white or black are at greater risk for marijuana use than other youth. As for multiple risks, youth on average incur 2 or fewer risk behaviors; men are, however, more likely than women to have multiple risks. Although multiple risks increase with education, Mexican American men students, especially those grade-delayed, encounter various multiple risks. Among the multiple risk activities, alcohol use, especially under-age drinking, and fighting comprise the modal pattern combination for all youth.[6]

The findings also illustrate differences in health risks across educational and employment status by gender and race. We have not attempted to show cause and effect; rather that the risk incidence is not uniform by education or employment for youth. Differences in the health risks by education and employment among youth suggest that the causal effects may vary by race/ethnicity and gender. For example, alcohol use was lower among blacks who attended college than high graduates who did not attend; the reverse was true for Mexican American women. For blacks, college attendance could imply greater economic status or academic success; for Mexican American women, college potentially signifies greater acculturation. Likewise, more economic and social opportunities to drink could exist for employed women than those without jobs. On the other hand, employment and a better educational status among blacks, i.e. less grade-delayed and more college attendance, appears to lower their health risks more so than other youth.

The differences in health risks among youth by race/ethnicity and gender suggest several policy and research considerations. For one, better data at the national level is needed to capture the variations in health risks by gender and race; sample sizes should be sufficiently large to examine differences by nativity, acculturation, and poverty status. Secondly, greater attention should also be given to the economic and educational dimensions associated with the incidence of health risks for youth. Do alcohol, drugs, or violence reduce the educational and employment opportunities for youth? Are some youth more likely to engage in certain health risks because of an unfavorable employment or educational situation? For other youth, does a more favorable employment or educational status represent more acculturation and greater social pressure, thus a higher risk for alcohol or drug use? Finally, the answers to these questions are needed for the development of policies to reduce the health risks among American youth; findings in our study suggest the answers are not likely to be uniform by race/ethnicity or gender.

ENDNOTES

[1] Mexican American refers to both U.S.- and foreign-born youth of Mexican heritage. We use "men" and "women" to distinguish gender, recognizing that some may quarrel with the use of these terms for 12-year-old adolescents.

[2] Youth who self-identified as Mexicano/Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano were classified as Mexican Americans; the group can be of any race. Youth who self-identified by race as white or black and did not self-identify as Latino comprise the white and black groups.

[3] For Hispanic youth, education and employment status are compounded by immigration or nativity status. Immigration also serves as a proxy for acculturation; unfortunately place of birth is only asked of youth age 18 and older and the small number of observations prevented further analysis.

[4] Just over 60 percent of the sample were enrolled in grades 1-12; 42 percent of those enrolled were in high school at the time of the survey. High school dropouts comprised 9 percent of the sample, high school graduates with no post-secondary experience 11 percent, and high school graduates with post-secondary experience 19 percent.

[5] Although black men in sales also have significantly lower rates of alcohol use than white men, conclusions are tentative due to the small sample size for black men in sales.

[6] Type of risk activities by pattern combinations were not shown in the data presented because the patterns are too idiosyncratic to render conclusions.

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FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH A HISTORY OF FIREARM INJURIES IN JUVENILE DRUG TRAFFICKERS AND VIOLENT JUVENILE OFFENDERS

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Abstract

Firearm injuries have reached epidemic proportions within both juvenile and adult correctional populations. Relatively little is known, however, about the individual and community factors associated with an increased risk for violence in offender populations. Understanding these correlates of violent victimization would represent the first step in the identification of putative risk factors; permitting the development of meaningful and effective prevention programs. The primary objective of the present study was to develop a model of individual and community factors associated with firearm injury prevalence in a sample of incarcerated juvenile drug traffickers (n = 217), and violent juvenile offenders (n = 239). The results indicated that the pattern of offending, drug selling or violence, was important in determining the particular factors associated with firearm injuries in juvenile offenders. The results were consistent with the hypothesis that juvenile drug traffickers may have been injured as a result of a general inability to function effectively within the drug trafficking arena, or adequately judge dangerous situations; including situations where they were at increased risk for robbery or other violent victimization. The profile that emerged for the injured violent offenders suggested that they may have precipitated a violent attack through an aggressive interactional style, or the predatory nature of their offending. A preliminary review of community variables indicated that the firearm injury prevalence for the two different offender groups varied across locality, again suggesting that community or environmental factors may interact with offending in defining the overall risk for injury.

INTRODUCTION

Recent evidence indicates that firearm injuries have reached epidemic proportions within both juvenile and adult offender populations (May, Ferguson, Ferguson, Cronin 1995; McLaughlin, Reiner, Smith, Waite, Reams, Joost, Gervin 1996). These findings support the suggestion that the single best predictor for violent victimization may be involvement in criminal offending (May et al 1995; McLaughlin, Daniel, Reiner, Waite, Reams, Joost, Anderson, Gervin under review). Relatively little is known, however, about the individual and community factors associated with an increased risk for violence in offender populations. The potential consequences of intentional injuries in offenders are significant (Farrow 1991). Prior research links adverse reactions to traumatic or stressful events, as could be represented by an intentional violent injury, with increased social maladjustment including depression and suicidal ideation, as well as increases in violent acts and increased criminal offending (Armfield 1994; Elliot, Huizinga, Ageton 1985). Studies indicate that younger, economically deprived individuals with poor support systems, diminished identification with the majority culture, less education, a history of childhood behavior problems, and physical abuse may be particularly vulnerable to developing an adverse reaction to a traumatic or stressful event (Armfield 1994; Elliot et al 1985). This would not be an unusual profile for a juvenile offender population.

Involvement in drug selling, violence and an increased prevalence of penetrating trauma pose serious threats to the health and well-being of juvenile offenders. These behaviors also significantly impact the larger society through the increased demands placed on the legal, health care and social service systems serving at the forefront of this epidemic; as well as the climate of fear that saturates communities inundated with drugs and violence (Reiss, Roth 1993). Understanding the correlates of violent victimization in offender populations would represent the first step in the identification of putative risk factors; permitting the development of meaningful and effective prevention programs. Therefore, the primary objective of the present study was to develop a model of individual and community factors associated with firearm injury prevalence in a sample of incarcerated juvenile offenders. These factors could be utilized to elucidate the causes, consequences, and correlates of violent victimization in a population at extremely high risk for intentional injuries. It was predicted that the overall pattern of offending (e.g., drug trafficking or violent offending) would be an important indicator for determining individual variables associated with firearm injuries, while youth poverty was expected to emerge as an important community variable associated with firearm injuries in the drug traffickers.

METHODS

Subjects

The subject population and data collection have been described previously (McLaughlin, Smith et al 1996). Briefly, data for the study were collected during a retrospective chart review of all juveniles committed to the Commonwealth of Virginia, juvenile correctional centers for drug trafficking offenses (n=266) during fiscal years 1993 and 1994 (1 July 1992 through 30 June 1994). The trafficking offenses included "possession [of controlled substances] with the intent to sell or distribute." Offenses pertaining to the sale, distribution, or manufacture were included; however, offenses relating to the "simple possession [of controlled substances]" were not included as they are presumed to relate to possession for personal use rather than selling (a complete listing of the specific offenses used to construct the groups is available upon request). Because the relationship between drug trafficking and violence has been emphasized recently (Chaiken, Johnson 1988; Dembo, Williams, Wothke, Schmeidler, Getreu, Berry, Wish, Christensen 1990; Goldstein 1985; Goldstein, Brownstein, Ryan, Bellucci 1989; Hamid 1991; Inciardi, Pottieger 1991, 1994; Johnson, Natarajan, Dunlap, Elmoghazy 1994; Li, Feigelman 1994; Stanton, Galbraith 1994), a comparison group of violent juvenile offenders was constructed. The juveniles were classified as violent offenders based on histories of multiple felonious assaults, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) working definition of violent delinquent offenders (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 1993; offense codes and decision rules available upon request). Preliminary analysis with our sample indicated that classification as a "violent" offender correlated highly with several other indices of violence contained within the youth record (unpublished results), as well as the existing literature on violent juvenile offenders (Huizinga, Loeber, Thornberry 1994; Mathias, DeMuro, Allison 1994). These juveniles were matched to the drug traffickers for gender and race.

In an effort to provide a delinquent comparison group representative of the general incarcerated offender population, a second comparison group was generated. Like the violent offender comparison group described above, the "demographic" comparison group (McLaughlin, Smith et al 1996) also was matched to the drug traffickers for gender and race. In addition, these juveniles were matched to the juvenile drug traffickers on age (15 to 17 years, inclusive) and committing court location. Briefly, the juveniles comprising the demographic comparison group were selected from the communities within the Commonwealth (n=9) responsible for the majority of drug selling commitments. This permitted some control of community variables while allowing the inclusion of juveniles from a variety of geographic locations and economic strata.

The drug trafficker group was almost exclusively male (98%) and African American (96%); and most juveniles were adjudicated for the distribution of cocaine (93%). Preliminary analysis of the records for all juvenile offenders committed during fiscal years 1993 and 1994 (n=2916), indicated that females, non-African Americans and sex offenders were sufficiently different on many of the variables of interest, and their sample sizes prohibitively small in the present study, as to preclude their inclusion in the final analysis. Therefore, to increase the homogeneity of the sample, females, non-African American males, and juveniles with a history of sex offenses were not included in the final analysis. In addition, the records for some of the juveniles were unavailable for review (n=1 and 43 for the drug traffickers and comparison groups, respectively). These subjects were also excluded from the final analysis. Therefore, the final sample sizes for the three groups were 239, 217 and 373 for the drug traffickers, violent offenders, and demographic comparison group, respectively. It should be noted that there was some overlap between the violent offenders and the demographic comparison group (n=83). This was unavoidable as the communities which committed more juvenile drug traffickers also tended to commit more violent offenders, as well. Removing the violent offenders from the demographic comparison group, however, would have resulted in a skewed representation of this population, consequently these juveniles were retained in both groups. In that the demographic comparison group and violent offenders were never compared directly, this overlap was permitted. Therefore, accounting for overlap, the final sample size for all three groups was 746 distinct individuals. Finally, some of the

Table 1: Comparison of Firearm-Injured Juvenile Offenders

	Sample Size	Number Injured		Prior Firearm Injury	Age at Time of Commitment Mean (SEM)		Total Number of Offenses Mean (SEM)		Percentage of Violent Offenders
		#	%						
Total	746	100	13	No	15.9	.04	7.1	.18	31
				Yes	16.0	.11	7.8	.40	34
Juvenile Drug Traffickers	239**	32	13**	No	16.1	.08	5.3	.20	7
				Yes	16.3	.19	6.6	.76	9
Demographic Comparison Group	373**	47	13**	No	16.0	.04	7.4	.23	20
				Yes	16.1	.12	8.2*	.52	34*
Violent Comparison Group	217	31	14	No	15.4	.08	9.1	.39	0
				Yes	15.8	.20	8.8	.74	100

*Correlated with a prior firearm injury ($p<.05$).

**(McLaughlin, Reiner, et al 1996)

juveniles in each group had been incarcerated more than once during the two fiscal years examined (n=38). Delinquency, social and psychological data from all incarcerations of these juveniles were included in the analysis of individual variables, however, information pertaining to overall firearm injury prevalence and the analysis of community variables were based on only the most recent incarceration.

Instruments and Procedures

The youth record included information pertaining to current, prior and pending criminal offenses; social and medical histories; a complete physical examination; a psychological assessment; and measures of intellectual functioning and academic achievement. The medical histories and physicals were completed by trained nurses and physicians, respectively. The social histories were obtained by the case managers. The psychological evaluations were performed by trained psychologists and included a standardized test of intellectual functioning (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - 3rd Edition, [WISC-III]; Wechsler 1991), a mental status interview and projective psychological testing, as needed. Educational information was obtained by educational specialists. All evaluators received extensive and continued training with regard to issues of juvenile offending and high risk behavior. Most of the global decisions regarding overall levels of functioning were made collaboratively at an assessment conference where all evaluators had an opportunity to contribute information. These ratings were frequently composite scores based upon the results of the objective data, test results and clinical impressions compiled during the evaluation period. It is important to note, however, that the evaluators participating in the assessment process were familiar with the juvenile's offense history. Therefore, the data were interpreted with caution, particularly information which relied on a relatively subjective decision process. Again, many of the subjective decisions were made by the entire evaluation team at the assessment conference. It was hoped, therefore, that any potential individual bias may have been sufficiently attenuated by the multiple sources of converging evidence and consensus ratings at the assessment conference.

Information collected during the assessment phase was then used to complete the "client profile"; a structured survey of the legal, psychological, social, medical and educational data described above. The client profile is routinely completed for every juvenile committed to the Virginia juvenile correctional centers, and contains over 300 data points. These data include multiple lines of converging evidence regarding salient features of the juvenile's history and behavior. Elements of the client profile have been described previously (McLaughlin, Smith et al 1996).

Data associated with the community where the juvenile was arrested and adjudicated, were also analyzed. Because the juveniles in the demographic comparison group had been selected based upon their committing court location, as well as other demographic variables, the analysis of community variables was limited to those communities from which the demographic comparison group had been generated (n=9). This resulted in the inclusion of the larger communities in the state, while excluding localities with relatively

Table 2: Stepwise Regression on Firearm Injuries

Variables	b	(beta)	SE b
Aggregate Sample			
Self-reported promiscuity	.12*	(.17)	.02
Dysfunctional current family situation	.04*	(.11)	.01
Constant = .02, Adjusted R squared = .04 (F=17.42, p<.05)			
Juvenile Drug Traffickers			
History of suicidal ideation	.35*	(.19)	.12
Self-reported promiscuity	.12*	(.17)	.04
Judged to be chronically delinquent	.11*	(.15)	.04
Rated level of maturity	.10*	(.15)	.04
Constant = .84, Adjusted R squared = .11 (F=8.60, p<.05)			
Violent Juvenile Offenders			
History of brandishing or possesing a firearm	.15*	(.21)	.04
Self-reported promiscuity	.12*	(.17)	.04
History of suicidal gestures	.23*	(.17)	.09
Poor vocational skills	.05*	(.13)	.02
Constant = .67, Adjusted R squared = .11 (F=7.74, p<.05)			
Demographic Comparison Group			
Self-reported promiscuity	.10*	(.14)	.03
Perceived to be a loner	.14*	(.13)	.05
Dysfunctional family of origin	.04*	(.12)	.02
Reported suicidal gestures	.15*	(.10)	.07
Constant = .29, Adjusted R squared = .05 (F=6.56, p<.05)			

*p<.05

small samples which may have skewed the results. All community information was obtained from databases maintained by the Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ; formerly known as the Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Youth and Family Services [DYFS] 1995). The community variables analyzed included youth population and youth poverty rate. Youth population was gathered from 1990 U.S. Census Data and reflects the number of children, birth through 17 years, residing in the community (DYFS 1995). The youth poverty information was obtained from the Virginia Department of Social Services for fiscal years 1991-1992, and represents the average, monthly per capita rate of children living in households receiving aid to dependent children (DYFS 1995). The community data employed in the present study represented the most current information available at the time of data analysis.

A conservative statistical approach was employed because this study consisted of a retrospective chart review, and conclusive cause-effect relationships could not be determined. The variables were analyzed initially with correlation analysis in an effort to elucidate variables associated with a history of firearm injuries in juvenile offenders (Howell 1992). Most of the variables contained within the youth record were nonparametric in nature; therefore, the statistical analysis employed for evaluation of the individual variables were the Spearman nonparametric, rank-order correlation, and Chi^2. This permitted direct comparison of the injured to the uninjured juveniles for the overall sample, as well as within each category of offending. Odds ratios (95% confidence limits) were employed as descriptive statistics. Multiple linear regression was subsequently employed to evaluate the relative importance of variables found to correlate with the prevalence of a prior firearm injury, such that a model for firearm injuries in juvenile drug traffickers and other juvenile offenders could be developed. Finally, the multiple linear regression was employed for the community data in a effort to determine community factors significantly associated with an increased risk for firearm injuries in juvenile offenders.

RESULTS

Consistent with earlier data (McLaughlin, Reiner et al 1996), the firearm injury prevalence for the violent juvenile offenders was 14 percent. It was interesting to note that, while it was expected that the juvenile drug trafficker group would have included a large number of violent offenders, the demographic comparison group actually overlapped with the violent offender group to a greater degree (Table 1). An examination of all individuals presenting with a prior firearm injury confirmed that self-reported promiscuity was correlated with firearm morbidity prevalence ($r=.17$, $p<.05$; McLaughlin, Reiner et al 1996). We have reported recently that incarcerated juvenile offenders from the Richmond, Virginia metropolitan area with a prior firearm injury were twice as likely to have fathered a child (McLaughlin, Reiner, Reams & Joost under review); providing tangible evidence of the increases in promiscuity associated with firearm injuries. Analysis of the medical records for offenders from outside Richmond confirmed this finding. Juveniles with a prior firearm injury were more than twice as likely to have fathered a child (odds ratio [95% confidence limits] = 2.6 [1.5 - 4.5]; Chi^2 = 13.3, $p<.05$). In addition, a dysfunctional current family situation was associated with a prior firearm injury ($r=.11$, $p<.05$). These two variables were included in the regression analysis. The results indicated that self-reported promiscuity was somewhat more important than a dysfunctional family in accounting for the overall variance, however, self-reported promiscuity and familial dysfunction together only accounted for 4 percent of the total variance (Table 2). Finally, the average age at the time of commitment is presented in Table 1. The range in age for the injured juveniles was 13-18 years. Although there were no differences between the groups, it is important to note that all of the injuries occurred prior to incarceration. Consequently, the age at which the juveniles sustained the injury would be expected to be somewhat younger.

Juvenile Drug Traffickers

Individual variables associated with a prior firearm injury in the sample of juvenile drug traffickers are listed below. The only relationship consistent with the overall findings described above was a positive association between a prior firearm injury and self-reported promiscuity (McLaughlin, Reiner et al 1996). The injured offenders were correlated with a younger age at first adjudication ($r=-.12$, $p<.05$), and were rated by the assessment team as more chronically delinquent with a poorer prognosis for discontinuing delinquency ($r=.17$ and .14, $p<.05$; for chronicity and prognosis, respectively). They were also rated as having impaired short-term memory ($r=.14$, $p<.05$), as well as poor impulse and anger control ($r=.10$ and .15, $p<.05$, for impulse and anger control, respectively). In addition, juvenile drug traffickers presenting with a prior firearm injury were rated as less mature ($r=-.17$, $p<.05$), and possessing fewer social and interpersonal skills ($r=-.12$, $p<.05$). These juveniles were also more likely to have a documented history of suicidal ideation ($r=.20$, $p<.05$), and gestures (McLaughlin, Reiner et al 1996).

The results of the multiple linear regression indicated that a history of suicidal ideation was slightly more important in determining risk than self-reported promiscuity, when all of the variables were considered together (Table 2). These two variables were followed by the assessment staff's rating of a chronic delinquency pattern and immaturity. This overall constellation of associated risk factors for the juvenile drug trafficker injuries was somewhat more predictive than that found for the aggregate sample; accounting for approximately 11 percent of the variance.

Violent offenders

Again, the prevalence of a prior firearm injury was positively correlated with self-reported promiscuity in the violent offender group ($r=.19$, $p<.05$). Juveniles with a prior history of a firearm injury were also rated by the assessment team as presenting with deficits in both vocational and employment skills ($r=-.15$ and $-.16$, $p<.05$; for vocational and employment skills, respectively). Moreover, these offenders presented with poor impulse control ($r=.12$, $p<.05$), and were rated as both provocative and aggressive with their peers ($r=.12$ and .14, $p<.05$; for provocative and aggressive, respectively). Similar to the injured drug traffickers, the injured violent offenders presented with a documented history of suicidal ideation and gestures ($r=.15$ and .11, $p<.05$; for ideation and gestures, respectively). In addition, a prior history of a firearm injury was associated with a history of self-destructive behavior ($r=.13$, $p<.05$), and treatment with antidepressant medication ($r=.13$, $p<.05$). Finally, the injured violent offenders were six times more likely to have a history of brandishing or possessing a weapon (odds ratio [95% confidence limits] = 6.1 [1.8 - 20.8]; Chi^2 = 10.5, $p<.05$), while the injured drug traffickers were less likely to have a history of brandishing or possessing a firearm (McLaughlin, Reiner et al 1996).

The results from the multiple linear regression indicated that a history of possessing or brandishing a firearm was the most important factor in determining a violent juvenile offender's personal risk for a prior firearm injury (Table 2). This was followed by self-reported promiscuity, reported suicidal gestures, and a rating of poor vocational skills. As with the juvenile drug traffickers, the model predicting prior firearm injuries for the violent offenders was better than that developed for the total sample; accounting for approximately 11 percent of the variance.

Table 3: Stepwise Regression on Juvenile Drug Trafficker Firearm Injuries by Community Variables

Variables	b	(beta)	SE b
Total number of youth in the sample committed by a community	.03*	(.64)	.01
Youth poverty rate	.11*	(.44)	.04

Constant = 1.8, Adjusted R squared= .83 (F=21.09, p<.05)
*p<.05

Demographic Comparison Group

As before, self-reported promiscuity was significantly associated with the prevalence of a prior firearm injury in the demographic comparison group (McLaughlin, Reiner et al 1996). Resembling the aggregate data, a dysfunctional current family situation was related to a prior firearm injury (r=.12, p<.05). In addition, a dysfunctional family of origin (r=.13, p<.05), as well as reported suicidal gestures (McLaughlin, Reiner et al 1996), were also positively related to a prior history of a firearm injury. On the other hand, these offenders were less likely to be judged as being a loner by the assessment team (r= -.12, p<.05). Finally, the injured juveniles in the demographic comparison group were more likely to present with a higher total number of offenses (r=.10, p<.05), and more violent offense histories than those who had not been injured (r=.10, p<.05).

The results of the multiple linear regression indicated that self-reported promiscuity and a tendency to not rate these offenders as loners were most predictive of a prior firearm injury, when all of the variables were considered together (Table 2). These two variables were followed by a dysfunctional current family situation and reported suicidal gestures. As with the aggregate data, however, the overall predictability of these variables was low; accounting for only 5 percent of the variance.

Community Variables

Analysis of the number of firearm injuries in the nine communities analyzed revealed that the overall prevalence of firearm injuries was highly correlated with the number of violent offenders in the sample as well as the total number of offenders in the sample committed by that community (r=.97 and .92, p<.05; for the violent offenders and total number of juvenile offenders committed, respectively). These two variables were highly intercorrelated (r=.93, p<.05), however, and the number of violent offenders in the sample committed by a community emerged as the sole predictive variable in the regression analysis; accounting for 94 percent of the overall variance. On the other hand, the number of juvenile drug traffickers injured in a community was strongly associated with the total number of commitments by that community in the sample, as well as the level of youth poverty (r=.85 and .75, p<.05; for the total number of offenders committed and youth poverty rate, respectively). The results of the regression analysis indicated that these two factors together accounted for 83 percent of the overall variance (Table 3).

CONCLUSIONS

It was hypothesized that the pattern of offending would be an important variable in determining the factors associated with an increased risk for a prior firearm injury in juvenile offenders. Multiple linear regression was employed in an effort to evaluate the relative importance of variables associated with the prevalence of a prior firearm injury, and to begin an initial attempt to elucidate putative associated risk factors for firearm injuries in juvenile offenders. The results of the regression analysis indicated that while single variables do not possess much predictive utility, composites of several, empirically-related factors may hold more promise for future study. These risk factors appeared to differ, however, depending upon the juvenile's pattern of offending (e.g., drug trafficking, violent offenders), supporting the hypothesis that the pattern of offending is important in determining the particular factors associated with firearm injuries in juvenile offenders.

Individual Variables Associated with Firearm Injuries

When the aggregate data were analyzed only two variables, self-reported promiscuity and familial dysfunction, correlated with the prevalence of a prior firearm injury. The percentage of the overall variance accounted for by these two variables was small, however. Consistent with recent reports (May et al 1995;

McLaughlin, Reiner et al 1996), weapon possession did not correlate with the prevalence of firearm injuries in the aggregate sample, though the diametrically opposed correlations noted in the drug traffickers and violent offenders would have confounded the observation of any overall relationship. Similarly, few variables were associated with an increased prevalence of a prior firearm injury in the demographic comparison group. Again, this group was not generated based upon a specific pattern of offending and, like the aggregate data, was collapsed across offender categories.

The only variable to reliably correlate with an increased prevalence of firearm injury across all groups was self-reported promiscuity. This was consistent with earlier reports which noted an association between firearm injuries, promiscuity, sexually transmitted disease, and becoming an adolescent parent (May et al 1995; Schubiner, Scott, Tzelepis 1993; McLaughlin, Reiner et al 1996; McLaughlin, Reiner, under review). Subsequent grouping of the subjects by their pattern of offending revealed additional individual variables which were associated with the prevalence of a prior firearm injury.

The injured juvenile drug traffickers were judged as relatively dysfunctional when compared to their uninjured drug selling peers, presenting as immature and having poor social and interpersonal skills, with deficits in short-term memory. It has been suggested that individuals not functioning efficiently within the drug distribution network may become a poor business risk and are consequently at an increased risk for violent victimization (Goldstein 1985; Goldstein et al 1989). These juveniles also were less likely to have a history of possessing a weapon which may have placed them at greater risk for violence within the drug distribution arena; possibly reflecting poor defensive skills. On the other hand, the injured violent offenders presented as being at the extreme end of the aggression/violence continuum. The injuries sustained by this sample may have been a consequence of the predatory nature of their pattern of offending, however it is also possible that the aggressivity noted in this group may have been a response to violent victimization.

Community Variables Associated With Firearm Injuries

The data from the present study indicated that community factors were strongly associated with firearm injury prevalence. The community variable most related to an increased prevalence of firearm injuries in the aggregate sample was the number of violent offenders in the sample committed to the juvenile correctional centers by that community. This variable was highly related to firearm injury prevalence, accounting for 94 percent of the overall variance, and may be viewed as a crude reflection of the level of community violence. Closer examination of the juvenile drug traffickers, however, revealed that the total number of juveniles in the sample committed by a community and the youth poverty rate, not community violence, were the key variables. The association between youth poverty and firearm injuries in the drug traffickers was anticipated, and is consistent with the suggestion that robbery or other economic gain may be a motivator in some of the violence directed at those involved in drug selling (Goldstein 1985; Goldstein et al 1989). Again, the pattern of offending provided additional insight into risk, further underscoring the complex interaction between juvenile offending and firearm injuries. Finally, the level of community urbanization has been cited as a risk factor for violent victimization (Earls 1994; Fingerhut, Ingram, Feldman 1992a), however youth population was not found to be associated with an increased prevalence of firearm morbidity in the present study ($p>.05$). This variable was not intentionally manipulated, however, and most of the communities evaluated represented the larger urban areas within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

To integrate the individual, community and offender-specific data; the findings in the present study indicate that the pattern of offending must be considered when attempting to elucidate variables associated with a risk for firearm injury. In addition, the results are consistent with the hypothesis that the juvenile drug traffickers may have been injured as a result of a general inability to adequately judge dangerous situations, perhaps a situation where they may be at increased risk for robbery or other victimization, or function effectively within the drug trafficking arena. Conversely, the injured violent offenders may have precipitated a violent attack through their violent interactional style, or the predatory nature of their offending; concomitantly increasing the overall prevalence of juvenile offender firearm injuries in a community.

Comment

Due to the nature of the present data, it was not possible to distinguish among the causes, consequences, and correlates of firearm injuries. The behaviors associated with firearm injuries may have increased the risk of victimization, or, conversely, these variables may have been the result of the violent victimization. It is also possible that the associated behaviors may have been related to a common underlying factor and, consequently, merely correlated with the injury. For example, it is unlikely that a lack of employment skills was either causally or consequentially related to a violent offender's risk of firearm injury. Rather, this deficit probably reflected other risk factors present in the juvenile, including a history of multiple felonious assaults, incarceration and involvement with weapons; both of which would be expected to impact upon the juvenile's ability to secure and maintain employment. Consequently, the rated lack of employment skills may have been simply correlated with a prior firearm injury. Although the data from the present study were correlative, they were consistent with two of the hypothesized outcomes; illuminating different profiles of variables associated with firearm injuries in juvenile offenders, and supporting the idea of a constellation of individual and community risk factors which are directly related to the specific pattern of offending.

It is also important to remember that all of the relationships described above are relative. For example, although the injured drug traffickers presented as more dysfunctional than the uninjured drug traffickers, they were still rated as higher functioning in several domains than either the demographic or violent comparison groups (data not shown). Again, this exemplifies the role that the pattern of offending may play in characterizing these juveniles. In addition, the subjects in the present study were all incarcerated juvenile offenders, possibly representing the "unsuccessful" offenders. We have recently reported that increased penetration into the juvenile justice system is directly related to an increased prevalence of firearm injuries. Consequently it is possible that this "unsuccessful" attribute may be related to incarceration as well as the high prevalence of firearm injuries observed in all three groups. This point also serves to highlight the importance of using delinquent comparison groups in research of this type. For example, a firearm injury prevalence of 13 percent for juvenile drug traffickers is relatively high when compared to national data for adolescents (Reiss, Roth 1993), but was not found to significantly diverge from the rate documented in the other samples of juvenile offenders (McLaughlin, Reiner et al 1996). Finally, all of the juveniles examined in the present study were African American male adolescents, a group noteworthy for their risk of firearm mortality and morbidity (Bastian, Taylor 1994; Fingerhut, Ingram, Feldman, 1992a, 1992b; Fingerhut, Kleinman 1990; Tardiff, Marzuk, Leon, Hirsch, Stajic, Portera, Hartwell 1994; US Department of Justice 1994). This point should not serve to diminish the fact, however, that we have identified a category of adolescents at extreme risk for firearm injuries, far exceeding the elevated baseline already noted for this population, and that involvement in juvenile offending appears to substantially escalate this increased risk for violent victimization.

Finally, the explanations for the data described above are hypotheses which should be tested empirically with future samples such that models for specific, causal risk factors and the resulting sequelae can be developed. Data indicating a high rate of recurrence and ultimate mortality for victims of violent crime (Sims, Bivins, Obeid, Horst, Sorensen, Fath 1989) predict that injured juvenile offenders are at even greater risk for future injuries and/or firearm mortality; serving to highlight the importance of identifying potential risk factors. The results from the present study may represent an empirically-generated "short list" of risk factors to be evaluated further with future samples of juvenile offenders. The results indicate that the key risk factors and associated sequelae may be dependent upon the pattern of offending; possibly yielding a mechanism by which the underlying causes may be elucidated and defined. The causal determinants and resulting consequences of violent victimization identified could then be employed in the development of more effective and specifically-targeted violence prevention programming, as well as support services for the victims of violent crime. In conclusion, the results from the present study have significant implications for any prevention effort; suggesting that a complex interaction between the pattern of offending, and individual as well as community variables all serve to define the overall risk for firearm injuries in juvenile offenders.

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INVOLVEMENT OF AMERICAN INDIAN YOUTH IN GANGS

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ABSTRACT

Virtually nothing is known about the involvement of American Indian youth in gangs. However, recent evidence suggests that a gang culture and gang membership have diffused to many Native American Indian communities. The purpose of this article is to examine the results of a self-report study among American Indian youth from several western states. The results indicate that about 5 percent of males, but less than 1 percent of females reported actual gang membership. In addition, about 10 percent of male and female respondents reported hanging around with gangs. When compared to non-gang Indian youth, level of drug involvement and involvement in delinquent activities was higher for in-gang youth and those who hang around with gangs. Youth who reported hanging around with gangs also reported higher drug use and involvement in delinquent activities than non-gang youth, but lower than those who reported actual membership in gangs. Conditions of poverty, lack of economic opportunities, discrimination, and the erosion of cultural identity provide the structural conditions for the attractiveness of gangs to Indian youth. The actual diffusion of gang culture is dependent on contact between Indian youth and non-Indian youth with knowledge about gangs. The article considers several important areas for research on gang emergence in Native American Indian communities.

INTRODUCTION

Little has been published about gang membership and gang-related behavior among American Indian youth. One reason may simply be that research on youth gangs has focused almost exclusively on the urban scene, ignoring rural youth in general and in particular specific subgroups who have a sizable proportion of their population living in rural areas. This focus has not been without some justification. Research on gang involvement has found a decided concentration of gangs in America's largest cities (Fagan 1989; Goldstein, Soriano 1994; Miller 1992), although a few researchers have noted the diffusion of youth gangs and gang culture into moderate sized and even small, rural communities (Donnermeyer 1994; Maxson, Woods, Klein 1996; Miller 1992; Spergel 1990; Takata 1994). The purpose of this article is to explore the issue of gang membership and involvement in drug use and delinquency among American Indian youth, based on self-report data collected from in-school youth in several western states.

GANGS AND INDIAN YOUTH

Another possible reason there is so little in the literature about American Indian youth involvement in gangs is that gangs have only recently emerged in American Indian communities. There is some evidence which supports this explanation. Accounts from the *Albuquerque Journal* (Associated Press 1996; Linthicum 1996a, 1996b) highlight a growing concern among Navajo reservation leaders and local law enforcement officials in several western New Mexico counties and towns over incidents of gang-related graffiti and violence. A recent University of Minnesota study of 13,000 American Indian youth (State of American Indian Youth Health) indicated that one in every six youth reported membership in a gang (Blum, Harmon, Harris, Bergeisen, Resnick 1992). That study found that these American Indian youth were more likely to be involved in incidents of assault and other violent behavior than other youth in their communities who did not identify themselves as gang members.

Previous gang research has found a clear and consistent relationship between gang affiliation and involvement in substance use, delinquency and violence (Curry, Spergel 1988; Miller 1992; Spergel 1990; Thornberry, Krohn, Licotte, Chard-Wierschem 1993; Winfree, Mays, Vigil-Bockstrom 1994). Existing research on problem behaviors of American Indian youth has focused largely on the issues of alcohol and drug use (Beauvais 1992a, 1992b; Beauvais, Segal 1992; May 1994; Winfree, Griffiths 1983). These researchers consistently find that alcohol abuse and deaths related to alcohol use are major problems for adolescents as well as adults in many Indian communities. When drug use among Indian youth is compared to national rates and rates of prevalence among other minority populations, the overall rates for American Indian youth are higher (Beauvais 1992a). Further, Beauvais (1992a) found that Indian youth on reservations have higher rates of drug use than those living off reservations.

Relatively neglected in the literature is a focus on issues affecting Indian youth other than drug abuse, such as family violence and the perpetration of violence against others, both of which are associated characteristics of youth who join gangs (Fischler 1985; Shafer, McIlwaine 1992; Yung, Hammond 1994). Shafer and McIlwaine (1992) note that it is difficult to estimate child sexual abuse due to cultural variations among tribes as well as between tribes and the majority culture that complicate definitions of abuse and also create barriers between victims and investigators. However, some evidence indicates that rates of spousal abuse may be twice the national average among American Indians (DeBruyn, Hymbaugh, Valdez 1988; DeBruyn, Lujan, May 1992). In addition, the majority of child abuse and neglect cases reported among Navajo are related to alcohol abuse (Shafer, McIlwaine 1992). The levels of victimization to violence as well as the perpetration of violence among Indian youth reported in the University of Minnesota study are substantially higher for American Indian youth than in a comparable sample of white youth (Blum et al 1992). Beauvais' (1992b) research found a stronger association between under-age drinking and drug use and a host of other risky behaviors, including getting into fights and vandalism, among Indian youth than among a comparative group of white youth.

Research on gang emergence among urban and minority youth suggests a complex set of factors that may have relevancy for examining gang involvement among Indian youth. For example, researchers frequently cite a combination of factors that together make up the structural context in which youth become attractive to and involved in gangs. These factors include poverty and lack of economic opportunities; discrimination; difficulties of acculturation into the majority culture; a weakening of identity with one's own culture; the social disorganization and breakdown of community life; and family disorganization (Goldstein, Soriano 1994; Jankowski 1991; Moore 1985; Oetting, Beauvais 1987; Spergel 1990; Vigil, Long 1990). Youth may be attracted to gangs as a way of acquiring money, self-esteem and a sense of family (Conly, Kelly, Mahanna, Warner 1993). Added to this mix are individual behaviors associated with gang involvement, such as high prevalence rates of alcohol and drug use; poor academic adjustment and school achievement; high rates of dropping out of school; and living in communities with a history and tolerance of family and interpersonal violence (Hagedorn 1988; Huff 1990). Many of these factors are already frequently present for American Indian youth.

One additional factor is the way knowledge about gangs and gang organization is diffused to groups of vulnerable youth (Donnermeyer 1994; Zevitz 1993; Zevitz, Takata 1992). Warr (1996) notes that some juvenile offenders are transitory in the sense of multiple membership in multiple groups prone to delinquency. From this larger network of delinquent peers comes the mechanism for the diffusion of gang culture. Researchers have noted several ways this diffusion process has occurred among youth who join gangs in smaller towns and suburban communities (Donnermeyer 1994; Maxson et al 1996; Zevitz, Takata 1992). Carriers of gang culture can include incarcerated youth who learn from their large city peers while serving time in a detention center or prison, troubled urban youth who are sent by their parents to live with relatives in rural communities, small clusters of mobile peers who travel to shopping malls and places of entertainment in cities for diversion and excitement and meet up with urban gang members, and families who move from the city to more rural locales in order to remove their sons and daughters from the perceived negative influences of urban life (Donnermeyer 1994). In addition, mass media depictions of gangs can contribute by enhancing the notoriety of gang life, and encouraging a "wannabe" attitude (Vigil 1990). These ways for the spreading of gang culture may also be relevant in American Indian communities.

All gangs have structure and, to at least some extent, exert control over the behavior of their members. Joining a gang thus symbolizes an act of commitment on the part of the individual (Conly et al 1993; Spergel 1990; Taylor 1990). Obviously, for this commitment to occur, there must be opportunitirs to join a gang near where the young person lives (Zevitz, Takata 1992; Maxson et al 1996). Although many American Indian communities are far removed geographically from urban areas where gangs flourish, often youth move back and forth between cities such as Albuquerque, Detroit, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Phoenix, etc. and their home reservations (Weibel-Orlando 1985; Beauvais 1992c). This movement may be more frequent for youth who have had trouble in their home communities and have been sent to live with extended family. While living in urban areas some American Indian youth would have the opportunity to

Table 1: Gender and Gang Involvement Among Indian Youth (in percentages)

	Males (n=393)	Females (n=465)
No gang involvement	84	89
Hangout with a gang	10	10
In gang now	6	1

become affiliated with gangs, and movement back and forth between the city and the reservation could be the primary avenue through which gang activity has spread to more remote American Indian communities.

METHODOLOGY

The data included in this article were collected between 1989 and 1993 and are derived from self-report surveys of 393 male and 465 female 7th through 12th grade American Indian youth living in and attending school in communities of several western states, including Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and South Dakota. The study sites included a metropolitan area, smaller communities with large Indian populations, as well as five reservations. Participation in the survey was voluntary and surveys were administered in a group setting during school hours at their schools. The survey instrument was a version of The American Drug and Alcohol Survey with an insert which included a number of questions about involvement in gangs, delinquency and violence. Gang involvement was determined by responses to the question "Have you ever been in a 'street gang?'" Possible responses were: "Never been in a gang;" "I will never join a gang;" "Used to be in a gang, but not now;" "I will join a gang later;" "Not a member, but hang out with a gang;" and "In a gang now." Very few youth responded that either they had been in a gang and were not now or that they would join a gang later. These categories were dropped from the analysis. The first two categories, indicating no present involvement in a gang were combined, leaving three categories: no gang involvement, hanging out or associating with a gang, and current gang involvement. Although the validity of self-report youth surveys of gang membership could be questioned, previous research by Fagan (1989, 1990), Horowitz (1990), Curry and Spergel (1992) and Esbensen and Huizinga (1993) indicates that self-identification is a satisfactory method for assessing gang involvement. The incidence of delinquent and violent behavior was also derived from self-report, with response categories of "none," "1-2 times," "3-9 times," and "10 or more times." In various cross-tabulations, these response categories were collapsed in order to yield sufficient cell size for meaningful interpretation.

Analyses of The American Drug and Alcohol Survey include development of a 32-point drug involvement scale ranging from dependence to no current use of drugs and/or alcohol. For the purposes of reporting, this scale was collapsed into three levels of drug involvement. Subjects classified as low involvement included negligible or no use, light alcohol users, and drug experimenters. Moderate drug involvement included subjects classified as light marijuana users and occasional drug users. High drug involvement included heavy alcohol users, heavy marijuana users, stimulant users and multi-drug users. Evidence for the reliability and validity of The American Drug and Alcohol Survey are presented by Oetting and Beauvais (1987). Subscales for individual drugs used in deriving the drug involvement scale demonstrate high reliability (i.e., alpha coefficients ranging from .79 to .96) across various adolescent groups by both age and ethnicity (Oetting, Beauvais 1987). Analyses also include 34 checks for exaggerated and inconsistent answers which result in elimination of invalid surveys from further analyses. Less than 3 percent of surveys were eliminated as invalid.

FINDINGS

The level of self-reported involvement in gangs in this study (see Table 1) was similar to the results from the University of Minnesota study (Blum et al 1992). About 16 percent of male subjects and 11 percent of female subjects report some gang involvement. However, almost two-thirds of the males and nearly all of the females reporting gang involvement described their association as hanging out with a gang. Only 6 percent of the males and less than 1 percent of females reported actual gang membership. This figure is also close to the 5 percent estimate from the University of Minnesota study of Indian youth who reported that they spend a lot of time in gangs (Blum et al 1992). This level of reported gang involvement also is similar to a study of mostly high risk African-American and Hispanic youth in Denver (Esbensen, Huizinga 1993).

The gender difference in gang

Table 2: Gang Involvement and Drug Involvement (in percentages)

Level of Drug Involvement	Males No Gang Involvement (n=329)	Males Hang Out With Gang (n=41)	Males In Gang (n=23)	Females No Gang Involvement (n=416)	Females Hang Out With Gang (n=45)	Females In Gang (n=4)
Low	73	51	39	67	40	25
Moderate	19	42	26	26	31	75
High	8	7	35	7	29	--

membership is consistent with research on predominately African-American, Hispanic, Asian and white gangs (Conly et al 1993; Miller 1992; Spergel 1990). Membership in gangs is largely male, and females are considered auxiliary members, "wannabes and floaters" (Goldstein, Soriano 1994; Miller 1992). However, as Esbensen and Huizinga (1993) note, based on results from the Denver Youth Survey, female participation in gang activities is probably higher than previously suspected, and is an issue that has been largely ignored by researchers.

Table 2 shows level of drug involvement broken down by gang involvement and gender. More American Indian youth who indicated they had some involvement with gangs had higher drug involvement than youth who were not involved with gangs. This is consistent with findings by Edwards (1994) in Mexican-American and white populations. Results presented in Tables 2 and 3 should be interpreted with caution, particularly with respect to female gang involvement, due to the low number of females in this category.

Among male subjects, level of drug involvement increased by level of gang affiliation. Three fourths of American Indian males reporting no gang involvement were classified as having low drug involvement; while over 40 percent of male subjects who reported they hang out with gangs scored at the moderate level and over one third of male subjects in gangs were in the high drug involvement group. A similar but more modest difference in drug involvement can also be found between female subjects reporting no gang involvement versus those who hang out with a gang.

Table 3 demonstrates that there was also a relationship between gang involvement and delinquency among these American Indian youth. Among male subjects, those reporting gang membership were several times higher for all seven self-report indicators of involvement in delinquent activities. For example, 19 percent of males in gangs reported having stolen something expensive (>$50) three or more times in the past 12 months, compared with only 3 percent of males not in gangs. Stealing less expensive items was also more frequently reported by youth who were gang members than non-gang youth (38% versus 12% for 3+ times during the past 12 months), and an even greater differential was exhibited for buying/selling stolen property (38% versus 6%). Involvement in a gang fight (45% versus 2%), for selling marijuana (37% versus 6%), and for breaking into a building or car (29% versus 5%) were much higher for male gang members than non-gang youth. Finally, a greater proportion of males who identified themselves as gang members reported being arrested three or more times in a 12 month period than non-gang members (27% versus 8%). Those who reported hanging around with a gang likewise exhibited higher levels of involvement in delinquent behavior than non-gang youth, but lower involvement than gang members. Again, these results are consistent with the Edwards (1994) finding about the co-occurrence of delinquent activities and gang membership among Mexican-American and white youth in the southwest.

Since there were only four American Indian females who reported actual gang membership, the results may not be generalizable, although involvement in other delinquent behaviors was evident among these four females. Females who reported hanging around with a gang did report substantially higher involvement in three of the seven indicators of delinquent activities. These included stealing something inexpensive, having broken into a house or car and having been in a gang fight. They were also more likely to report involvement in selling marijuana and having been arrested, but the differences were less pronounced. Females who hang out with a gang were less likely than their male counterparts to

Table 3: Gang Involvement and Self-Reported Delinquent Behavior Among American Indian Youth (past 12 months) (in percentages)

	Males			Females		
	No Gang Involvement (n=329)	Hang Out With Gang (n=41)	In Gang (n=23)	No Gang Involvement (n=416)	Hang Out With Gang (n=45)	In Gang (n=4)
Stole Something Expensive (>$50)						
None	88	71	43	95	93	75
1-2 times	9	15	38	5	7	25
3+ times	3	15	19	1		
Stole Something Cheaper (<$50)						
None	67	43	33	70	60	25
1-2 times	21	30	29	23	24	25
3+ times	12	28	38	7	16	50
Bought or Sold Stolen Property						
None	80	60	33	95	98	75
1-2 times	15	23	29	4	2	25
3+ times	6	18	38	2		
Broken into a Building or Car						
None	87	65	29	96	84	75
1-2 times	8	25	43	4	16	25
3+ times	5	10	29	1		
Been in a Gang Related Fight						
None	94	53	25	98	68	50
1-2 times	4	35	30	2	26	
3+ times	2	13	45	1	6	50
Sold Marijuana						
None	88	75	53	94	87	75
1-2 times	6	13	11	4	9	25
3+ times	6	13	37	2	4	
Been Arrested						
None	76	61	23	84	75	50
1-2 times	16	27	50	12	26	50
3+ times	8	12	27	4		

engage in each of these delinquent behaviors. These results are consistent with the findings of Esbensen and Huizinga (1993) who found that the relationship between gang involvement and delinquent activity was much stronger for males than females. Overall, these results suggest that for both male and female American Indian youth, gang association and membership co-varied with a higher level of involvement in delinquent activities.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

It is clear from this and the University of Minnesota study (Blum et al 1992), as well as the anecdotal evidence provided by recent newspaper articles in the *Albuquerque Journal*, that some Indian youth are actively involved as members of gangs, and even more associate with gangs to some degree. In addition, it appears, based on the authors' personal communications with individuals who conduct research and are concerned about the problem behaviors of American Indian youth, that gangs have only recently emerged in American Indian communities (May, Griffiths, Winfree, Hutchinson, personal communications, 1996). In comparison with urban areas, the relative lag in development of gangs among American Indian youth is similar to the experiences of moderate size cities; middle-class and suburban areas; and small, rural towns (Donnermeyer 1994; Hutchison, Dalke 1993; Spergel 1990; Zevitz, Takata 1992).

The emergence of gang activity among American Indian youth may foreshadow a serious escalation in levels of drug use and delinquent behavior, especially violence, among Indian youth if the pattern of association between gang membership and other problem behaviors found by researchers among youth of other ethnicities develops similarly among American Indian youth (Esbensen, Huizinga 1993; Thornberry et al 1993). In this study, gang involvement of Indian youth was clearly linked to increased drug use and delinquency.

The evidence of a significant presence of gangs in American Indian communities and for the increased likelihood of drug use and delinquent behavior among Indian youth is far from conclusively established. The potential, however, is high and researchers have already established that various problem behaviors, such as alcohol abuse, must consider the mobility of American Indians back and forth between reservations and urban centers (Beauvais 1992c; Weibel-Orlando 1985; Yung, Hammond 1994). Ominously, the factors that have traditionally been recognized as giving rise to youth gangs (Hagedorn 1988; Miller 1992; Spergel 1990) have long been present in many American Indian communities. Most American Indians live in families whose income is below the poverty level, and those living on reservations have household incomes which are even lower than those of non-reservation American Indian families (Ho 1992; Young 1991). Research has already established a link between poverty and various forms of family and interpersonal violence (Rosenberg, Mercy 1991; Vigil, Long 1990), both of which are associated with youth who engage in a number of other high-risk behaviors, including high drug involvement and gang membership (Spergel 1990; Thornberry et al 1993; Yung, Hammond 1994). Problems of discrimination and cultural identification are coupled with poverty for many minority youth, including Indians (Woods, Griffiths 1995; Yung, Hammond 1994). These conditions not only reduce economic opportunities, but also limit opportunities for participation in the majority culture and increase alienation from society in general (Jankowski 1991; Moore 1985; Oetting, Beauvais 1990-91; Vigil 1990), conditions which are in turn associated with drug use (Edwards 1994) and gang membership (Huff 1990). An added dimension is the erosion of cultural identity among Indian youth in some communities, and the geographic isolation of many Indian communities (Wood, Griffiths 1995; Yung, Hammond 1994).

Conditions of poverty, discrimination, lack of cultural identity and cultural anomie provide the conditions for Indian youth to view gangs as attractive. The relative isolation of many American Indian communities might provide some protection from the diffusion of gang culture if it were not for the fact that many Indian youth, particularly those who have encountered difficulties in their home communities may move among households of relatives, and back and forth between the reservations and urban areas where gang activity flourishes.

Research on gang membership and associated behaviors among American Indian youth needs to proceed at several levels. First, basic descriptive data on the demographic, family and socio-economic status of Indian gang members should be compiled. Variations in prevalence of gang membership and variations in characteristics of American Indian gang members should be examined relative to differences among various American Indian communities, both reservation and non-reservation. Second, does gang membership facilitate involvement in drug use and other serious behaviors among Indian youth to the same extent as it does among youth of other cultures (Thornberry et al 1993)? Results presented in this article suggest that this may be true. Related to this is the issue of how gambling establishments on reservations may influence gang emergence and gang-related activities as traditional economic structures change, the possibility of organized crime becomes greater, and there is increased influx of "outsiders" on reservations. Third, what is the extent to which Indian youth imitate or modify the structure or organization of gangs based on unique features of American Indian societies? In addition, how have the ritualistic and symbolic aspects of gang culture been modified? Is there a synergy or hybridization of aspects of American Indian and urban gang cultures that provide new and attractive and more risky avenues for establishing ethnic identity for Indian youth? A fourth line of inquiry is to determine the ways in which knowledge about gang organization and rituals, graffiti and other gang symbols, diffuse or spread among Indian youth as suggested by the ways in which this has already occurred to majority and minority youth in urban, suburban and rural areas. Related to this issue is whether or not the gang involvement of Indian youth is actually maintained when they return to reservations or if involvement is primarily while they are in more urban areas. Fifth, at a broader, structural level, how do poverty, social and economic change, and the erosion of traditional cultural values contribute to the emergence and growth of Indian gangs?

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, research devoted to the development of gang prevention strategies for American Indian youth should be initiated. Experiences from other prevention efforts clearly indicate that even subtle variations in the demographic, socio-economic and cultural make-up of individual communities can influence the relative effectiveness of programs (Hawkins, Catalano, and Associates 1992; Oetting, Donnermeyer, Plested, Edwards, Kelly, Beauvais 1995). Traditional approaches to preventing gang involvement may or may not work with Indian youth susceptible to or currently involved with gangs, both on and off reservations. Aspects of American Indian culture may serve as protective factors that, when combined with active prevention efforts, may reduce the detrimental effects of what appears to be the growing cultural phenomenon of gang activity in American Indian communities.

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MACHISMO AND CHICANO/A GANGS: SYMBOLIC RESISTANCE OR OPPRESSION?

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ABSTRACT

Both machismo and gang violence have been widely discussed in the popular and social science literature. Scholars have not systematically addressed the meanings of machismo held by gang members. We interviewed 25 Chicano/a and Mejicano/a gang members and 20 adult youth service workers and neighborhood providers, explicitly asking for their definitions of machismo. We find both similarities and variations across generational and gender groups in our sample. Using the both/and approach of Patricia Hill Collins (1991), we analyzed the simultaneously oppositional and oppressive nature of machismo in the lives of these young men and women. Our study reveals the complexity and contradictions inherent in machismo and related characteristics, and their implications for positive social change.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of machismo has been widely discussed in both popular media and social science literature. In the United States, popular media have associated machismo with masculinity, physical prowess, and male chauvinism. In social science literature, machismo often has been linked to irresponsibility, inferiority, and ineptitude. In this vein, the male dominance and oppression of women associated with machismo are seen as outgrowths of a history of economic, political, and psychological colonization of Latino/a, and perhaps especially Chicano/a, peoples. These conditions lead to internalized feelings of inferiority by members of the colonized group (Gutiérrez-Jones 1995; Mirandé 1982). Dominating and degrading women then offers men a way to compensate for a sense of inferiority and loss of control (Rowbotham 1971). That is, they may displace difficult issues of class conflict in public life onto gender conflicts in the domestic sphere (Peña1991).

Many scholars have argued that the cult of machismo has produced male-dominated Chicano/a families (Baca Zinn 1975). Machismo is also credited with causing aggressive and violent behavior outside the family. Adolescent peer groups provide an avenue for young Chicanos to prove their masculinity through drinking, fighting, demonstrating sexual prowess, and protecting younger relatives (Horowitz 1983; Moore 1991; Vigil 1988). Chicano criminality and youth gangs have been described as natural by-products of a cultural emphasis on aggressive and violent behavior among males.[1]

Other scholars argue that these images of machismo are overgeneralizations and cultural stereotypes. Such stereotypes ignore the larger societal conditions (e.g., poverty, racism, and sexism) that produce cultural attitudes and behavior. They also ignore the diversity and ever-changing nature of Latino/a cultures (Baca Zinn 1992; Moore, Pinderhughes 1993).

Still others argue that machismo has important revolutionary implications. It can represent the strength to resist and rebel against the societal racism and economic oppression confronted by Latino/as (Mirandé 1982; Rendón 1971).

Our research examines the meanings of machismo in the lives of male and female Mejicano/a and Chicano/a gang members. We interviewed 25 gang members and 20 youth service providers or neighborhood leaders in gang communities to ask: 1) how they defined machismo, 2) how they viewed other characteristics commonly associated with machismo in popular and social science literature, and 3) how machismo and associated characteristics play out in gang activities. The activities discussed ranged from drive-by shootings and other clearly violent incidents to more subtle aspects of gender relations in gangs. We asked adult service providers to reflect on the meanings of machismo in their own pasts and in contemporary gang life. We focus on both commonalities and variations in perceptions of machismo in gangs. Finally, we consider the degree to which machismo can simultaneously take on self-affirming, oppositional, and oppressive meanings in the lives of gang members and their communities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The portrayal of machismo in much social science literature has been very pejorative. Machismo has functioned as an all purpose explanation for anything that is wrong with Mejicano/a and Chicano/a culture (Montiel 1970). More broadly, all Latino males are assumed to display machismo unless they have been fully assimilated into the U.S. society. Their attitudes and behaviors toward women are presumed to be invariant across age, class, and educational strata. Yet, characterizations of all Latino/a families as totally male-dominated, or even as more male dominated than Anglo families, are simply not supported by the data (Baca Zinn 1980; Montiel 1970; O'Guinn, Imperia, Mac-Adams 1987). When controls for these factors are included, chauvinistic attitudes toward women and absolute male dominance in the family are similar among Anglos, Mejicanos, and Chicanos. The internalized inferiority explanation of machismo and its corresponding female submissiveness have the effect of blaming Chicano/as and their "dysfunctional" cultural response, for their subordination.

Machismo also has been described as an obstacle to women's fuller contribution to the Chicano/a movement (Baca Zinn 1975; Chavez 1972). Lionela López Saenz (1972) denounces machismo as a syndrome that advocates absolute power and authority over women.

Some social scientists have attempted to articulate a perspective on machismo that is consistent both with the equality of men and women, and with the liberation of all Chicanos/as from colonial oppression (Mirandé 1982; Rendón 1971). For example, the Black Berets of Albuquerque have redefined machismo in terms of a revolutionary struggle in which men and women operate as equals (Baca Zinn 1975). Armando Rendón offers a politicized definition of machismo:

> The Chicano revolt is a manifestation of Mexican Americans exerting their manhood and womanhood against the Anglo society. Macho, in other words, can no longer relate merely to manhood, but must relate to nationhood as well. (1971)

The macho behaviors and attitudes that are often condemned in Chicano gangs today--the violence, aggression, and sometimes overbearing protection of the neighborhood and of family honor--can also be seen as having roots in the historical role of young men as guardians of besieged communities surrounded by hostile Anglos (Mirandé 1987). Neighborhood-based gangs are integral, quasi-institutional features of barrio life (Moore 1978, 1991; Vigil 1988; Zatz 1987).

In the past, most gang members were male, and it was considered quite improper for Chicanas to join in the rowdy, crazy gang life (Horowitz 1983; Vigil 1988). While older members of the community may still hold these views, the reality today is that many Chicanas are very active in gang life, including its most violent and sexually-charged facets (Harris 1988; Moore 1991; Portillos 1996). This history and the tensions associated with barrio life suggest the importance of further considering the meanings of machismo and other characteristics commonly associated with it. Is machismo always and necessarily oppressive? Or are there ways in which it can also be seen as affirming an oppositional stance toward the dominant society and its expectations of Mexican and Chicano men and, perhaps especially, women?

Table 1: Youth Ethnic Self-Identification

Mejicano/a	9
Chicano/a and American Indian	2
Chicano and White	1
Chicano	6
Hispanic	3
Wetback	2
None	2

In response to the conflict over continuing use of the term "machismo," Maxine Baca Zinn suggests that rather than relying exclusively on social scientific categories, the most viable approach is to examine the ways in which machismo is defined and perceived by Chicanos/as themselves.

> This approach may enable us to ask questions which would lead to an understanding of male dominance and aggression of the oppressed as a calculated response to hostility, exclusion, and racial domination in a colonized society. It is possible that aggressive behavior of Chicano males has been both an affirmation of Mexican cultural identity and an expression of their conscious rejection of the dominant society's definition of Mexicans as passive, lazy, and indifferent. (1975)

Following Baca Zinn's suggestions, we have interviewed Mejicano/a and Chicano/a gang members, as well as the service providers and neighborhood leaders who work in the neighborhoods where these gangs are most prominent. Although there are common themes, we also find a diversity of views across respondents. In analyzing responses, we utilize a *both/and* perspective as outlined by Patricia Hill Collins (1991). Collins rejects the common tendency to analyze complex social issues as simple either/or dichotomies. In this vein, we do not attempt to conclude whether machismo and associated traits are *either* oppressive *or* oppositional. Instead we attempt to describe the myriad of often contradictory meanings and behavioral implications that this concept holds for gang members and adults.

METHODOLOGY

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the summer and fall of 1995 with 25 self-identified current and former gang members, and 20 youth service providers and neighborhood leaders. Access for the interviews was obtained as part of the evaluation of a youth corrections community treatment center. Of the 25 youths interviewed, 17 were young men and 8 were young women. Youths ranged in age from 14 to 18 years. Four of the 25 youths are Mejicano/a immigrants; the remainder are of Mexican descent but were born in the U.S. (see Table 1 for youths' ethnic self identification). Youths were interviewed in restaurants, in the barrio, in homes, in a Department of Juvenile Corrections community treatment center, and in locked institutions.

Very few of our gang respondents had managed to avoid entanglement with the juvenile justice system, and most of them were under parole supervision, or were incarcerated at the time of their interview. Some bias may have resulted from respondents' concerns that their comments would be relayed to parole officers or case workers. They might have exaggerated the extent to which they have reduced their gang activities or other changes that might make caseworkers view them more positively. However, the first author, who conducted all youth interviews, made every attempt to reassure respondents that he was not a part of the correctional treatment staff and that interviews would be confidential. He also spent several months getting to know some of the youth prior to interviewing them. He was able to establish rapport with the youth because of his knowledge of Spanish and of *calo* (Chicano gang slang), because he is himself Chicano, and because of his ongoing contacts with their homeboys and homegirls. In some cases, he was able to update them on life in the neighborhood and on events in their friends' lives.

Of the 20 adults interviewed, 14 were men and 6 were women. They include youth service providers active in the Chicano/a and Mejicano/a communities, neighborhood association leaders, other neighborhood activists, city neighborhood services representatives, and a parish priest who was actively involved with gang youths and their families. One representative each from the Phoenix Police Department and from the Governor's office whose responsibilities include gang and neighborhood affairs were also interviewed. Six of the adults are Chicano or Chicana, two were born in Mexico, two are Puerto Rican, one self-identified as Hispanic, one as mixed African American-Hispanic, four are African American, and four are white. All but one adult spoke at least some Spanish. Three of the adult respondents had children who had died in gang-related incidents. One of the adults was active in the anti-gang association Mothers Against Gangs. All of the adults were interviewed by the third author.

The presentation of findings begins with gang member perceptions of machismo. Then, we turn to the adult service provider/activists' perceptions. This is followed by a discussion of similarities and differences across generational and gender groups. We sought to be sensitive to the complexities, contradictions, and changing meanings of machismo and related characteristics in gang life.

FINDINGS

Description of Youth Lives and Neighborhoods

Interpreting the meaning and significance of youth and adult comments about machismo would be difficult without some description of the lives and community in which these gangs were located. Some youths described themselves as poor. They lived in the projects, wore second-hand clothes, and their families did not have enough money to pay for rent. Occasionally, they went without food. Other youths described themselves as lower middle class with money for housing, food and some amenities. Some of their parents had extensive criminal histories; some of their parents were heavy drug users themselves; some youths were abused by their parents. However, many youths also report that their parents were hard working, loving, and had high hopes that their children would further their education and have a better life.

The majority of youths described themselves as growing up in the "barrio" or in the "hood." In this environment there were drugs, shootings, and older gang members who were admired. Peer groups often centered on their neighborhood gangs ("homeboys" and "homegirls"). Youths in gangs spent a lot of time in what they called "kicking it" (e.g., hanging out, drinking, getting high, talking). The most popular drugs used were "bud" (marijuana), "crystal" (metha-amphetamine), and "huffing" (sniffing paint).

These young adults also recounted experiences of racism and discrimination in job hunting, educational pursuits, and contacts with the police. They viewed racism and discrimination to be pervasive features of their lives. This sense of social injustice, combined with the effects of poverty, led many youths to feel frustrated, angry, and hopeless about their future.

Youth Perceptions

When asked the meaning of machismo, only four of the youth were able to define the concept. There was considerable overlap among their definitions, which focused on "not being a punk," "trying to be brave," "a way of showing off too much, like they are conceited," "it is like being chingon (tough fucker)", "it is like acting bad," and "a load of bullshit."

The four youths who could define machismo all spoke Spanish. While some of the twenty-one youths who did not know what machismo meant also spoke Spanish, others did not. This finding suggests that non-Spanish-speaking gang members were not as cognizant of the term and were less likely to have reflected upon its significance in their lives. For example:

> [What is your definition of machismo?]
>
> Machismo, I don't know. Machismo, what is that? Do you mean like, I don't have no idea really.
>
> [Have you heard of machismo before?]
>
> Yeah, I think I heard of it before but I never really thought about what it meant.

Youths who could not define machismo were asked to describe the importance in their lives of other qualities commonly associated with machismo in the literature. These qualities included: being protectors, being honorable, being reliable, treating women with respect, hurting women and others, and making others fear them. The youths were also asked to distinguish which qualities they viewed more positively and which they viewed more negatively. Some youths also named additional qualities that they thought were related to those mentioned by the interviewer. Qualities that youth viewed as positive or affirming included respecting and protecting others, being honorable and reliable, not backing down or "punking out," having pride in yourself, and treating women with respect. Most youths defined the following traits as negative or oppressive: having others fear you, violence, treating women poorly, acting crazy, and drinking too much (Mirandé 1982; Peña 1991; Urrabazo 1986). However, these designations were not accepted by all youth. Some viewed the oppression of others to be self-affirming: they viewed having others fear them and acting crazy in the gang (e.g., being involved in fights, shootings, and other criminal behavior) positively:

> That's what the whole thing is about aay, making others fear you. That's the whole thing about a gang. Like letting them know what's up. You shoot us, we take out all of you. One person shoots us, we going to take the whole thing out. Make them scared, you know, because, comes deep, you know. You come three deep, we come four deep [You kill three of us, we kill four of you].

Other gang members defined oppressive aspects of machismo, such as disrespecting and abusing women verbally and physically, in a very negative light. One young woman relates this type of abuse in one of her personal relationships:

> [T]here ain't no woman who is going to live with it. I lived with it for 2-3 years and fuck, man, I almost got killed.

Some male gang members justified the abuse of females based on the behavior displayed by young women:

> It depends on how the girl is acting or how they present themselves. The only girls that I respect is my family or people that I know for a long time. The other girls that I meet on the street, they'll act all scanless (shameless). I'm like, whatever then. I won't disrespect them, I'll talk to them like okay, whatever. She starts telling me something, I'm going to start telling her something right back.

> [Did the gangs treat girls bad?]
>
> Well, it depends, like, well, they would do it to anybody. Like if they wouldn't listen or like if they were trying to get out, they would hit them. To check them, to get them back in their place.

While the bonds implicit in gang membership are very strong, the everyday violence also bred distrust. Machismo also meant remaining strong in the face of doubt and mistrust:

> Yeah, man, because you can't have friends. You don't know who is your friend, you don't know if they are out to get their prestige or their respect because they are with you. You don't really know who is your friend until the shit hits the fan, and then, like you can't really be close to anyone.

Many Chicano/a and Mexican gang members were able to list positive aspects of machismo in their lives. They believe machismo was "being the protector of your family," specifically their mothers and sisters. Machismo also meant being a provider for their family:

> Like you work and everything and being a man from the house. That's like macho. Like being a man from the house, doing all you can to feed your family and stuff. That's like being macho.

Many young Chicanos and Mejicanos perceived that they and their friends showed respect to women:

> Being respectful to other people and stuff, just respecting even if you have problems with them. Respectful to girls, not all my homeboys are disrespectful to girls.

Others focused more on machismo as a way of being strong, continuing to fight even when there is no hope of winning, and not giving up:

> That you are going to keep fighting and not give up....Not punking out, you know, a *vato* can be ten feet tall and I would still not back down. Being honorable, *ese*.

Many characteristics viewed positively by gang members were forms of aggressive behavior, which may not necessarily be desirable in the eyes of other members of society. For many gang members, not backing down was a means of showing other gang members that they were dedicated to the gang:

> When you box (fight) somebody or something, you know, your homeboys know you are down and you got respect, it makes you feel good inside.

Gang members believed that they protected their neighborhood from other gangs. Reliability was an integral part of being a protector. Being reliable meant that others could count on the individual when the gang's integrity was threatened. A Chicana explains how she possessed qualities of being reliable:

> Because I had their back. They could call me and I'd go fight. If they were going to get jumped or if they were going to fight with somebody, I'll go fight with them. Or if they needed, if I had some stash on me or whatever, if they wanted to get high.

Some youths' comments made it clear that affirming, oppositional, and oppressive dimensions of machismo were closely intertwined in their lives:

> [Is that (machismo) a bad thing or is it a good thing?]
>
> In a way it is and in a way it ain't. You don't want all your homeboys thinking you're a *chava* (little girl) you know. In another way it's not good but your best friend hooks up with your sister and starts getting that way, and starts disrespecting you.

In comparing youths' responses across gender and national origins, we were surprised to find few sharp differences. We are wary of generalizing based on a sample with only eight female respondents. However, it appears that Mejicano/a and Chicano/a gang members' views about machismo were similar to those of the males. The females' views were also similar to each other, despite differences in their fluency with Spanish and their nation of origin.

Young men and women gang members also exhibited striking similarities in their definitions and perceptions of machismo in their own lives. In contrast to popular expectations that young women in gangs serve as auxiliary members, our female respondents felt that they played a very important role in the gang. Some Chicanas and Mejicanas believed that they displayed more loyalty and other machismo-like qualities in the gang than did the males:

> I feel like female gang members are more down than guys.
>
> [Why do you say that?]
>
> Because we don't hesitate and I think some of my homeboys do. Me and Precious, we were walking and some guys pulled a gun out on us and all our homeboys started running. We started laughing. Shoot us, shoot us. We don't show fear.

However, young men did not share their female counterparts views on women's importance in gangs. They did not respect young women as gang members. They view girls with machismo-like characteristics to be to unpredictable, crazy (*loca*) and unnecessarily dangerous to others in the gang:

> [Do you think girls in your gang have machisma?]
>
> They probably think they are down ayy. They are down ayy, all the ones that I know. Like they are ayy, shit they're too much down, they're too bad.
>
> I don't think so because they are always causing trouble not getting along with another hood, always getting into another fight. They start mouthing, they start fighting too, and so we will be fighting again. That happened a couple of times, always the girls got to mess it up.

Young men believed that women's place was at home and that they did not really belong in gangs. Many men felt that although their homegirls displayed characteristics of machismo, they could not be relied upon because, eventually, "they get pregnant" and leave the gang. Their comments in this regard suggest that woman should be at home caring for children.

One area in which females most deferred to males was in the realm of heterosexual dating and coupling. The young men attempted to control the behaviors of the Chicanas and Mejicanas with whom they were romantically involved, and physical abuse was one means of control. Some gang members stated that they beat their girlfriends for talking to other men, not listening to them, or not doing what they were told. Even though some gang members said that they never physically abused their partners, they did control them by limiting what they wore, where and when they could go out, and other aspects of their behavior. In personal relationships, young Chicanas and Mejicanas were subservient to males:

> When I had an old man, that was my first love, my real love. I treated him like a fucking king. I treated him like a king, there was nothing that I wouldn't do for him... I would wake up at two in the morning. Cook his breakfast, make his lunch, take out his clothes and iron them, and then send him on his way. I would wake up at 9:00, clean the house and cook breakfast for myself. Take a shower, get ready, then start cooking lunch, and he'd eat lunch. I would lay more clothes out for him, then back to work. Then he would come home around six. He'd come home and I would rub his back, his legs, his feet, and everything. He would take a shower and watch t.v. all day and I would cook dinner. He would eat dinner and go to sleep. I did everything for the man. It was just like I was the slave and I did it just because I thought he loved me.

This young woman later left the relationship. She was the only female gang member to offer a critical assessment of machismo as promoting gender inequality.

Adults' Perceptions of Machismo

Adult perspectives on machismo in some ways mirror those of the young people with whom they work, but also differ in important ways. Overall, the adults tend to be more critical of the concept; several explicitly analyzed it in terms of gender subordination. A Mejicano responded to the question, "What are the positive parts of machismo?" with his own question: "(What are) the positive parts of male domination?"

There are also substantial differences among the adults. The adults described machismo in terms of "taking responsibility," "protecting your family," "being in touch with yourself and your environment," "being assertive," "pride," "sexist," "male chauvinism," and "male domination." There are many reasons for these differences in perspective. Some of the adults grew up in the Phoenix barrios, others grew up in other cities within the U.S., Mexico, or Puerto Rico. There are also differences in age, class, and race/ethnicity which may explain some of the variations found.

A Chicano who grew up in the Phoenix barrios distinguished between old and new styles of machismo, depending on one's occupational and educational achievements:

> Today, for high school drop outs, you would probably have the old style, with the male still having that decision making power, but if you make it occupationally, everything changes, the relationship is more balanced, with less power going to the men. The emphasis is on decision making power.

This nostalgia about what machismo once meant was also reflected in the following comment by a Latina:

> At one time it was a beautiful pride in a man, now they have no problem hitting a woman.

For many adult women, however, and particularly for the two African American women in our sample, it was hard to find anything good to say about machismo. An African American woman described machismo in the gangs:

> In the Hispanic community the real man was the person who was supportive of his family and the community, the gentleman, the scholar. It is sexist. the part about having to support the woman, but I'll agree with some of it being positive. I don't see why being a responsible human being has to be called machismo. I see no signs of any of the positive among gang kids, there is no longer anything positive without the sexism, so why not remove it...The kids are extremely sexist. They live out their ideals, their fantasies of what a real man is—violent, ruthless, controlling.

Another African American woman working in a primarily Chicano/a neighborhood defined machismo as:

> [T]he little woman, she belongs in the kitchen, home raising the babies. Battering of women, total control over women.

When asked about machismo and how it plays out in gangs, she responded:

> The gang kids are very protective of their families, just as protective of their families as of the 'hoods, especially their mothers.
>
> [Do gang kids show these negative parts of machismo?]
>
> The control over women, beating women, keeping women submissive, not allowing them to grow, to venture out on their own, trying to keep women without options. Yes, the gang kids show these parts of machismo.

Some of the adults, while criticizing macho behavior, explained it in terms of racial oppression. A white woman defined machismo as:

> Macho-ism...Within black and Hispanic cultures they have to be rough and tough because they're nothing in the real world because of racism.

She went on to discuss machismo in gangs as a reflection of racism and poverty:

> They're trying to be somebody but we as a community don't work with them to build self-esteem. How can you have self-esteem if you have nothing? If you have talent but no one works with you to develop it?

The two Puerto Rican men interviewed differed in age by 15-20 years. The younger said of machismo that it is:

> antiquated, outdated...Refine the term or strike it from the Spanish language.

From his perspective, gang youths:

> try to emulate the machismo of their predecessors, if *chingon*, try to be *chingon* too...The ultimate responsibility of a gang member is to be shot for your homies. I see it as negative, but gang members wouldn't—a martyr if you die in the line of battle. In family relations, it is no longer good for the macho man to work, get a pay check, expect food on the table and kids to be fed—need to redefine machismo as her helping, need to change machismo.

The martyr aspect of machismo which he raised was also mentioned by the other Puerto Rican man in the sample:

> Dying is not a problem, it's how you die. Could be a martyr, or a fuck-it syndrome. Fuck it, let's do it, ain't nothing gonna happen to me. They don't want to live anyway....[Machismo] is a word Americans have totally fucked up and took

> out of context. As explained by my dad, you were the first male born, your role was to protect your family when your father wasn't there. It meant responsibility, watching out for brothers and sisters. Now it has been distorted to imply a cultural deformity—every Hispanic is this macho guy, "don't fuck with me,' it connotes a violent person.

Thus, this respondent was highly critical of machismo. Yet, like other adult males, he hoped to revitalize and update the concept, making it more compatible with a middle class way of life.

Overall, the youth workers had more varied definitions of machismo and had given far more thought to the concept, its meanings, and its implications than had the gang members. This is not surprising, since youth does not have the degree of detachment and hindsight that characterized the adults. The adults were selected for interviews precisely because they work closely with the youths on a daily basis and must give substanial thought to those factors which will facilitate or hinder their work.

Physical and psychological abuse of women and girls was one factor that emerged very strongly whenever adult women were asked about machismo. In contrast, in reflecting back on their earlier experiences, only a few of the young women recognized that they had become less willing to accept male violence directed against them, whether by their fathers or their boyfriends. Finally, while all of the youths were of Mexican heritage, some of the adults were African American, Puerto Rican, and white. Cultural and racial factors also may generate differences in how they understand the concept and see it playing out in the lives of the youths with whom they work.

CONCLUSION

We have considered the differences and similarities in views of machismo among gang members and gang workers, including differences across gender groups. Our findings suggest that the youths resonate most to issues of respect. They gain respect by evidencing a willingness to fight for, and in other ways protect, their families, barrios, and fellow gang members. Whether or not the youths defined their efforts to gain respect in terms of machismo, the activities they described are typically associated with machismo in the literature.

We find that the adults were more likely than were gang members to both recognize the term machismo, and to have a more critical and nuanced view of its implications. Adults reflect back on their own lives as they look at the lives of the young men and women with whom they are working. In so doing, they identify affirming, oppositional, and oppressive consequences of machismo for youths and communities. The adult women were most cognizant of the oppressive aspects of machismo and of its implications for gender subordination. However, this critique was almost totally lacking among the young women.

With reference to our initial research question about the significance of machismo for gang youths, we must conclude that machismo is both oppositional and oppressive. It offers moments of resistance to class and ethnic-based oppressions. Youth are conscious of their resistance to varying degrees, depending on the youth and his/her particular situation. Machismo also represents the manifestation of structures of gender, racial/ethnic, and economic oppression. For example, gang members speak of protecting families and neighborhoods, all of which face declining job opportunities, economic resources, and social services. At the same time, their drive to demonstrate machismo becomes an incentive for violence against rival gangs and, on occasion, innocent bystanders. Moreover, even though machismo also dictates the protection of women, this "protection" has oppressive connotations. One must ask, from whom are men protecting women? The comments of youths and adults indicate that, at least sometimes, protection is needed from men who are themselves supposed to be the protectors—husbands, fathers, boyfriends. It is important to recognize that such danger from intimates confronts women of all race-ethnic groups, and from all social classes (Baca Zinn 1975; Stanko 1990). In this way, the ethos of machismo is shared by many races and cultures. Thus, machismo has a varied, often contradictory, and ever-changing meaning in youth gangs. Our study reveals the importance of analyzing abstract concepts like machismo within the context of concrete persons, structural circumstances, and situations.

The first author (Portillos 1996) describes the dilemma facing many modern men in their struggles for an oppositional definition of machismo:

> I was reared in a traditional Mexican home where there were certain duties for men and certain duties for women. As a child, I rarely made my bed, never ironed my clothes, never cleaned the house, and had the total liberty to come and go as I pleased. My sisters' behaviors, on the other hand, were strictly monitored, and they were expected to assist my mother with cleaning duties. I began to question these types of gender roles not only because of the problems that they created in my personal relationship with my partner, but also because of the birth of my daughter. Upon her birth, I could be a macho man and allow my partner to care for our daughter, which would not have pleased her. Why not, all my life I observed females rearing children? Or, I could take a meaningful part of my daughter's life. I chose the latter, and quickly learned what it was to be a father. I learned how to delicately give our newborn a bath, how to change diapers, burp a baby, how to make funny little noises, etc. This process has taught me how to relate to our daughter not as a macho man, but as a person who helped raise our daughter in every possible way...I still struggle with patriarchal values in my personal relationships, but this project is the result of trying to understand how I have oppressed. I knew that as a person of color this society has oppressed me. I did not realize how even using positive characteristics of being a man continued the oppression of women very dear to me.

Despite the importance of individual struggle, the oppressive aspects of machismo are also part of a larger social structure that also must be challenged on a collective level. Because race, class, and gender are decisive factors in our lives, these individual and collective struggles must address all three.

NOTES

[1] All respondents live in the United States. As we are using the terms, "Mejicano/a" refers to men (Mejicano) and women (Mejicana) born in Mexico who may or may not now be U.S. citizens or permanent residents. These persons all self-identified as Mexican. "Chicano/a" refers to men (Chicano) and women (Chicana) of Mexican ancestry who were born in the U.S. Also, Chicano or Mejicano refers solely to males; Chicana or Mejicana references only women.

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A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF DRUG INVOLVEMENT IN MEXICAN AMERICAN AND WHITE NON-HISPANIC HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS, ACADEMICALLY AT RISK STUDENTS, AND CONTROL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Explored drug involvement in a longitudinal sample of Mexican American and White non-Hispanic school dropouts, students in school with serious academic problems (academically at risk), and matched general sample of students (controls). Academic status was related to drug involvement at initial and four year follow-up assessments; dropouts and at risk youth were more drug involved than controls. At follow-up, gender differences were noted with males being more drug involved than females. At neither point was ethnicity related to drug involvement. Although general distributions of drug use remained reasonably stable across groups, considerable change into and out of high drug involvement was found. Consistent with peer cluster theory (Oetting, Beauvais 1987), this change was predicted by peer drug use and peer requests of the participant to use drugs and to a lesser extent by the individual's willingness to ask others to not use drugs. This suggests the importance of peer group processes on the naturalistic development and reduction of high drug involvement and of studying changing peer processes in order to better understand change in drug involvement over time.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent drug use has been monitored nationally since the 70's via large epidemiological studies such as the Monitoring the Futures Survey (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman 1996), which generally have shown drug use to decrease in the 80's, although recent reports have shown increases for some substances. These surveys provide a general, national picture of adolescent drug use but are limited in at least three significant ways.

First, they do not include sufficient numbers of minority youth to adequately assess drug trends within these minority communities. In one study based on aggregated data from minority groups over several years of the Monitoring the Futures Survey (Bachman, Wallace, O'Malley, Johnston, Kurth, Neighbors 1991), it was reported that Hispanics had higher drug use rates than Blacks and slightly lower rates than White youth. However, such aggregated data collapse across possible trends within groups over time and yield a less than clear understanding of trends within specific minority groups over time or between ethnic groups at a given point in time.

Second, most surveys are completed by students in-school and, therefore, do not include high school dropouts. In turn, this leads to at least three problems. For one, the overall adolescent drug use rates may be miss-estimated due to the missing data from dropouts, who as a group tend to show greater drug involvement (Beauvais, Chavez, Oetting, Deffenbacher, Cornell, 1996; Fagan, Pabon 1990; Mensch, Kandel 1988; Swaim, Beauvais, Chavez, Oetting Forthcoming). This problem is compounded for estimates of drug use in minority groups if dropout rates differ by ethnic group and if drug use within those groups is related to dropping out of school. For example, if dropout rates are 10-15 percent for White non-Hispanic (White American) youth and approaching 50 percent for Mexican American youth (McMillen, Kaufman, Whitener 1994; Rumberger 1991), then estimates of drug use for the two groups based on in-school samples will be skewed differently. For example, in a study of 8th and 12th graders (Chavez, Swaim 1992), Mexican American 8th graders had higher drug use rates than White 8th graders, whereas Mexican American 12th graders had lower rates than Whites. This difference appeared attributable to the differential dropout rates for the two groups (i.e., more drug involved Mexican American youth had dropped out by 12th grade leaving a less drug-using group of Mexican American students to be sampled in 12th grade). Moreover, both Mexican American and White dropouts appear to have higher levels of alcohol, cigarette, marijuana and other drug use as well as higher levels of violence, victimization, crime, and delinquency (Beauvais et al 1996; Bruno, Doscher 1979; Chavez, Edwards, Oetting 1986; Chavez, Oetting, Swaim 1994; Edwards 1990). Thus, estimates of drug use and other behavior can be influenced significantly by dropout rates generally or differential dropout rates within groups to be compared, such as ethnic groups. Finally, dropouts appear to be an at risk group in their own right, but data on them are not being gathered. Such information is needed in order to understand their drug use patterns and from which to design prevention and intervention plans.

Third, the large surveys are cross sectional rather than longitudinal in design. While they allow for the association of risk and protective factors with drug use at a given point in time, they do not provide a clear view of the progression of drug use as youth move through adolescence into adulthood or of variables that might predict changes over time. Kandel's longitudinal work (Kandel 1978, 1985; Kandel, Raveis 1989; Yamaguchi, Kandel 1984a, 1984b) on a large sample of high school students in New York suggested that both family and peer processes are correlated with drug use over time. However, the ethnic composition of this sample is difficult to ascertain, and follow-up does not include dropouts. Maddahian, Newcomb and Bentler's (1986) longitudinal study included several minority groups and revealed significant ethnic differences in substance use, except for "hard drugs," and the authors suggested that there was a larger correlation between risk factors and a composite drug use score for Whites than for Hispanics or Asians. Another longitudinal study of Latino youth (Apospori, Vega, Zimmerman, Warheit, Gil 1995; Vega, Zimmerman, Warhert, Apospori-Zogratos, Jackson 1993) suggested that there were differential effects of risk factors on substance use for different ethnic/racial groups. Findings from this study are, however, related to Latinos in the 6th and 7th grades, and the extent of school dropouts surveyed is not elaborated upon. In general, such longitudinal studies provide some tracking of change in drug use over time and suggest possible contributors to such change; however, few provide extensive data on minority youth and school dropouts, both of which are important for reasons established previously.

The present paper addresses these issues. It provides data on a large, four-year longitudinal study of dropouts, academically at risk students, and a general school sample of Mexican American and White American youth. This project attempts to assess the relationship between substance use and dropping out of school. The longitudinal component is meant to consider the long term consequences related to various educational choices made during high school. Samples in both wave 1 and wave 2 were of sufficient size to allow for analysis of changes in drug use and to assess the predictors of change via logistic regression procedures. Data are from an ongoing project in three communities in the Southwestern US, one of 30,000, another of 90,000, and the other of 350,000, selected to represent different types of communities in which Mexican American youth live. Due to reductions in funding, follow-up data were not collected in the community of 30,000, so data reported in this study are from the two larger communities. Since this study did not involve stratified random sampling over wide geographic area, findings are potentially confounded by the socio-economic, cultural, and educational characteristics of these communities. However, within this limitation, comparisons between groups are reasonably unconfounded as groups were matched and drawn from the same schools.

METHOD

Participants

At the first assessment, the sample consisted of 2103 (900 male and 633 female Mexican American and 321 male and 249 female White American) adolescents. Because of potential differential return at follow-up, dropouts were also oversampled initially by 20 percent. Of remaining participants (see procedure section), one third were school dropouts, one third were a sample of students matched to dropouts on age, gender, ethnicity, grade level, school, and grades (i.e., a group still in school but with serious academic problems or academically at risk students), and another third consisted of a random sample of students who matched dropouts on gender, age, ethnicity, grade level, and school (i.e., a general comparison or control group). The follow-up return was 48 percent (n = 1018). Of the 52 percent of those who were not retained at follow-up, 97 percent had not been contacted, with only 3 percent who were contacted but refused to participate; that is, the vast majority of those not returning data were due to the inability to locate them rather than their declining to participate. Percent return by group was as follows: 1) Mexican American male dropouts (37%), at risk (42%), and control (56%); 2) Mexican American female dropouts (42%), at risk (55%), and control (63%); 3) White American male dropouts (39%), at risk (38%), and control (52%); and 4) White American female dropouts (53%), at risk (64%), and control (78%). Differential return was found across groups, $\chi^2(11, N=1018) = 47.70$, $p<.001$, due primarily to greater return by controls and females. However, return rates in this sample are as high or higher than those typically found in this type of research, and greater returns for both females and controls are often reported (Newcomb, Bentler 1988). Occasionally, a participant would opt out of or be deleted from the project (e.g., due to incomplete responding) after the participant's matched cohort had been surveyed. In these cases, incomplete matches were retained in the sample only if the dropout remained in the cohort; otherwise, incomplete matches were deleted. Participants received $10-25 for completion of the survey with higher amounts reflecting the greater travel and difficulty in arranging for the survey.

Instruments

Demographic, drug use, and peer cluster theory variables were embedded in a larger survey which took approximately one and a half hours to complete. Nearly all surveys were completed in English with less than 1 percent completed in Spanish.

Demographic Information. Gender, age, graduation from high school or acquisition of a GED, involvement in a steady relationship, and employment status were based on self-reports on a demographic section of the survey. Ethnicity, grades, and academic status (see procedure section) were determined from school records.

Drug Use. Current drug use was assessed by the Clinical Drug Assessment Scale from The American Drug and Alcohol Survey^{TM} (Oetting, Beauvais, Edwards 1990). This scale assesses involvement with alcohol, marijuana, inhalants, cocaine, heroin, uppers, downers, and hallucinogens and alcohol intoxication. Current drug involvement was assessed by the following questions regarding each drug: a) frequency of recent use—How often in the past month have you used ___ ? (ratings of 0, 1-2 times, 3-9 times, 10-19 times, 20 or more times); b) intensity of use—In using ___ are you a... (ratings of nonuser, very light user, light user, moderate user, heavy user, very heavy user); and c) method/style of use, which varied somewhat by type of drug due to the different ways in which drugs are ingested (e.g., for marijuana—How do you use marijuana? (options of "I do not use it," "Just take a few puffs," "Smoke a joint or two," "Eat it in something," "Use a 'bong' or other equipment," "Use sensimilla or hashish," "Stay high nearly all the time")). Ratings for each drug are reliable (Oetting, Beauvais 1983, 1990), and self-report drug measures involving questions in this study and questionnaires similar to them have been shown to be reliable (Barnea, Rahav, Teichman 1987; Marquis, Duan, Marquis, Polich 1981; Oetting, Beauvais 1990). Scale scores are then used to identify "cut scores" which are combined to derive three classifications of current drug involvement—*Low/No Drug Involvement*, *Moderate Drug Involvement*, and *Heavy Drug Involvement* (Oetting, Beauvais 1983, 1990). The *Low/No Drug Involvement* category describes youth who are not currently using any drug and have not been drunk within the last 30 days; that is, they may have consumed alcohol, but not to the point of intoxication, and may have experimented with drugs in the past, but are not currently using any drug. The *Moderate Drug Involvement* group includes youth not meeting the criteria for heavy drug involvement but who have used drugs within the last month or are becoming intoxicated on alcohol at least once monthly. These youth rate themselves as drug users, which suggests that they are likely to continue to use drugs, but they typically use drugs and abuse alcohol at parties or occasionally with friends rather than involving themselves in a substance use lifestyle. The *Heavy Drug Involvement* group is much more involved in a substance use lifestyle in which drugs are an important part of most social interactions with peers. They are using multiple drugs, are using one drug several times a week, or are drunk nearly every weekend and often during the week. These drug use involvement classifications are highly reliable because they are generated by computer algorithms rather than judges or raters. Supporting validity evidence is found in group differences on major drug use risk factors such as school and family problems, delinquency, peer deviance, anger, and sensation seeking (Oetting, Beauvais 1983, 1990; Oetting, Edwards, Kelly, Beauvais Forthcoming).

Variables Derived From Peer Cluster Theory. Peer cluster theory (Oetting, Beauvais 1987) posits that small clusters of peers play a significant role in determining and shaping attitudes and behaviors that lead to and away from drug use. For the purposes of this study, four such variables were defined. *Peer drug use* is a 4-item scale inquiring about how many of their friends drink alcohol, get drunk, use marijuana, and use drugs other than marijuana (ratings of none, 1 or 2, several, most of them). Alpha reliabilities at initial and follow-up assessments in this study were .88

and .87, respectively. *Peer requests to use* is a 9-item scale assessing how often the respondents' friends have asked them to use marijuana, glue or other "sniffing drugs," uppers, downers, cocaine, heroin, LSD or other hallucinogens, drink alcohol, and get drunk. Responses were rated on a 3-point scale (never, some, a lot), and alpha reliabilities were .86 and .84. *Peer request to stop* is a 5-item scale assessing peer barriers to or inhibition of drug use. It asked respondents how much their friends would try to stop him/her from drinking alcohol, getting drunk, using marijuana, using cocaine, and using PCP. Responses were made on a 4-point scale (a lot, some, not much, no), and alpha reliabilities were .89 and .86. *Your request to stop* involved the same five items and ratings as *peer request to stop* but inquires as to how much the participant would try to stop his/her friends from using those drugs. This scale was developed to assess the participant's role in inhibition of drug use in peer clusters and had alpha reliabilities of .88 and .87. These variables were significantly correlated, with peer use being positively related to peers asking the participant to use drugs (r=.62 and .65) and negatively related to the peers asking others to stop (r=-.54 and -.53) and the participant asking peers to stop (r=-.50 and -.51). In turn, peers asking the participant to use drugs was negatively correlated with peers asking others to stop (r=-.44 and -.45) and with the participant asking others to stop (r=-.42 and -.43), whereas the latter two variables were positively related to each other (r=.77 and .73). Although these scales were correlated, they were retained as separate scales because they reflected conceptually different, although correlated, theoretically derived variables that may have differential predictive power.

Procedure

Dropouts were defined by school staff as students in grades 7-12 who had not attended school for at least 30 days, had not transferred to another school, and had not contacted the school system about re-admission (Morrow 1986). Each month, a random sample of dropouts was drawn from all available dropouts. At risk students were drawn from the same school, grade, gender, ethnicity, and age as the dropout and were matched as closely as possible for to the dropout on grade point average. Grade matches were not always possible because many dropouts had grade averages close to zero. At risk students thus were still in school but generally were in poor academic standing. Control students were randomly selected from a group of students who matched the dropout for school, grade, gender, ethnicity, and age. Control students thus were generally in good academic standing. Ethnicity was first based on ethnicity status in school records. If a student failed to self-identify as a member of that ethnic group on the survey, that student was replaced in the sampling frame.

Local professionals fluent in English and Spanish contacted youth and their parents. They first contacted potential participants. After the project was described, potential participants were asked if they wished to be involved. If they expressed interest and were over 18, they completed consent forms. If they were under 18, parents were contacted, the project was fully explained, and written parental consent was obtained. Only then was written consent of those under 18 obtained. These procedures led to low rates of refusal as only 4-6 percent of dropout groups and 5-8 percent of student groups had either parent or child refusal. Those who refused were replaced in the sampling frame by others matching their characteristics.

Following informed consent, arrangements were then made for an individual administration of the survey. Students completed the survey in a secure room at school during school hours, and dropouts either completed the survey in the same room at school or at another public building such as a library. The survey administrator gave participants the survey and answered general questions but did not see participant responses. When the survey was complete, the participant put it in a large envelope and sealed it personally. Based on the participant's choice, the survey was mailed to the research office either by the survey administrator or by the participant. These steps assured confidentiality as the administrator did not have access to the completed survey.

Accuracy and reliability of data were assured as surveys were subjected to 40 computer checks for inconsistency or exaggeration (e.g., endorsing a fake drug, claiming daily use of three or four drugs). Only 2 percent of initial surveys failed either review and were not replaced.

Four years after the first assessment, follow-up began with an average time to

Table 1: Percent Substance Involvement at Initial and Follow-up Assessments

Level of Drug Use	Assessment	Gender	Dropout		At Risk		Control	
			Mexican American	White American	Mexican American	White American	Mexican American	White American
No/minimal	1st	Male	25	38	44	46	70	69
		Female	36	30	51	38	66	76
	2nd	Male	31	33	44	46	57	67
		Female	51	57	58	53	67	65
Moderate	1st	Male	42	35	33	33	21	27
		Female	42	39	29	50	26	19
	2nd	Male	30	29	29	21	28	23
		Female	32	29	33	30	22	29
High	1st	Male	33	27	23	21	9	4
		Female	21	30	20	13	7	5
	2nd	Male	38	38	27	33	15	10
		Female	17	14	9	18	11	7

Note: 1st Assessment = Initial Assessment, 2nd Assessment = Follow-up Assessment.

completion of the follow-up survey of 4.34 years. Follow-up contact was first attempted through the address given at the first assessment. If this failed, staff contacted three people (e.g., parents, relatives, good friends) whom the participant indicated at the time of informed consent would always know where they were. If these efforts failed, public records such as phone books, motor vehicle records, etc. were checked to locate an address. Once the individual was contacted and gave his/her consent, survey administration was parallel to the first administration.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

A 3 (Academic Status) x 2 (Ethnicity) x 2 (Gender) ANOVA on participant age for the initial sample revealed significant main effects for gender and ethnicity, F (1, 2076) =4.51 and 9.03, p<.05, such that males (M=16.64) were slightly older than females (M=16.51), and White Americans (M=16.67) were slightly older than Mexican Americans (M=16.48). No other main or interactions effects were significant. A similar ANOVA on initial ages of the follow-up sample yielded a single significant effect, the interaction between gender and ethnicity, F (1, 994) =7.21, p<.01), with Mexican American males and females (M=16.43 and 16.54) and White American females (M=16.46) being slightly younger than White American Males (M=16.77). Because the magnitude of the largest age differences among groups was three to four months, age differences were not judged as a meaningful developmental confound.

A 3 (Academic Status) x 2 (Ethnicity) x 2 (Gender) ANOVA on grades revealed, as would be expected, a significant main effect for academic status, F (2, 1962) =410.78, p<.001, with controls (M=2.82) having higher grades than either at risk students (M=1.53) or dropouts (M=1.10), who also differed from one another. Although none of the interactions were significant, gender and ethnicity main effects were F (1, 1962) =14.54 and 36.53, p<.001, respectively, with females having higher grades than males (M=1.91 vs. 1.72) and White American youth having higher grades than Mexican American youth (M=1.97 vs. 1.66). These grade differences were reflective of expected differences in academic status groups and of gender and ethnicity differences often found in high school samples.

Potential bias in the drug use distribution of the follow-up sample was assessed by comparing the initial level of drug use of those retained in the follow-up with those not retained in the follow-up. Of the follow-up sample, 18 percent were heavily drug involved, 32 percent moderately involved, and 50 percent minimally or not drug involved, whereas involvement for those not retained in the follow-up was 21 percent heavy, 32 percent moderate, and 48 percent low involvement. These small differences in distributions were not significant, χ^2 (2, N=2103) =4.90, suggesting that the drug use of those retained in the follow-up was not significantly different from their peers who were not retained and that the follow-up sample is reasonably unbiased with regard to the distribution of initial drug use.

Primary Analyses

The percentage of each group at each level of drug use at the initial (1st) and follow-up (2nd) assessments are summarized in Table 1. A 3 (Academic Status) x 2 (Ethnicity) x 2 (Gender) x 3 (Drug Involvement) log linear analysis was performed at each assessment with similar results. Drug involvement was a significant factor in the initial assessment model only when interacting with academic status. As seen in Table 1, dropouts and academically at risk students had the highest level of involvement; controls had the least. In the follow-up log linear model, drug involvement was a significant factor when interacting with academic status and when interacting with gender. The relationship with academic status was the same as found at the initial assessment, with a slightly less pronounced difference between at risk and control students. Table 1 shows a higher level of drug involvement for males than females at follow-up. Thus, drug involvement was primarily related to academic status with gender differences noted at follow-up.

Inspection of Table 1 also shows considerable stability in the percent of youth at each level of drug use at initial and follow-up assessments. For example, percentage of high involvement at initial and follow-up assessments were identical for dropouts (28%), and were 7 percent and 12 percent for controls and 20 percent and 20 percent for academically at risk students, respectively. As another example, low or minimal use at initial and follow-up assessments reflected reasonable stability for controls (70% vs. 63%), at risk (46% and 50%), and dropouts (31% and 42%). In general, the percentage of youth involved at each level of drug involvement remained reasonably stable over time, with the exceptions of a general increase in the level of drug involvement for males and of a decrease for females, especially those within dropout and at risk groups. These findings do not, however, address the possibility that while group rates may stay generally the same, there may have been change in group membership, with youth moving into a level of drug use being offset by a roughly equal number leaving that level of drug involvement. However, such naturally occurring change could be very important in understanding changes in drug use and perhaps other deviant behavior.

To explore this issue, the movement into and out of the heavy drug use was assessed. Heavy drug use was chosen because it is indicative of the greatest drug use and deviance. Of those heavily drug-involved at the first assessment (n=183), 48 percent remained heavily involved at follow-up, but 52 percent changed, with 31 percent becoming occasional users and 21 percent moving to minimal use. Conversely, of those heavily drug-involved at the follow-up (n=199), 44 percent were heavily involved at the first assessment, but 32 percent moved in from moderate involvement and 24 percent from minimal use. That is, there was over 50 percent turnover into and out of the high drug involvement group over four years, and approximately 40 percent of the change came from movement out of or into the minimal use group, suggesting substantial naturally occurring change in drug use over time.

Two separate forward stepwise logistic regressions were run in order to identify factors which predicted movement into and out of heavy drug use. Predictive power of, or amount of variance explained by, the logistic regression model was assessed by R^2 (Christensen 1990), which is analogous to R^2 in linear regression. Fourteen variables were entered into these regressions. Academic status, ethnicity, gender, attainment of a high school degree or equivalent, employment status, and participation in a steady relationship were entered because prior research suggested their importance. Eight additional variables were generated from peer cluster theory (Oetting, Beauvais 1987); specifically, initial assessment reports of peer drug usage, peer requests of participants to use, whether peers would request them to stop drug use, whether the participant would ask others to stop, and current (follow-up) reports of these same four variables. Sample sizes were not sufficient to consider interactions among these variables. Current peer requests to use drugs ($p<.001$) and current peer use ($p<.01$) contributed to the prediction of movement out of high drug involvement, $R^2=.33$. Reports at the initial assessment of peer drug use ($p<.01$), peer requests to use drugs ($p<.05$), and participant willingness to ask others to stop ($p<.001$) predicted movement into the heavy use category, $R^2=.33$. Relationships in these regressions were elucidated further by assessing the change within groups on the three variables entering into the logistic regressions. Change was defined as the difference between the participant's follow-up score and the initial score for each variable, and significance was evaluated against the null hypothesis of zero order change. Youth who began as heavy users and remained so were essentially unchanged on peer drug use, peers asking them to use, or their willingness to ask others to stop using drugs (M=.11, .00 and -.26, respectively). Youth who moved into heavy drug involvement showed significant increases in peer drug use and peer requests to use drugs, and these youth showed significant reductions in their willingness to ask others to stop using drugs (M=2.82, 2.18, and -3.79), whereas youth who began with heavy involvement but who moved out of heavy involvement showed significant decreases in peer drug use and requests to use and a non significant increase in their willingness to ask others to stop using drugs (M=-1.85, -3.69, and .67). In summary, movement into or out of heavy drug involvement was predicted best by two peer behaviors (drug use and requests to use drugs) and by a third, participant behavior of willingness to ask others to stop drug use, in the case of moving into heavy drug involvement.

DISCUSSION

Although there were general increases in drug involvement for males and decreases for females, the percentage of each group at each level of drug involvement remained generally stable over a four year interval. As other research (Beauvais et al 1996; Fagan, Pabon 1990; Mensch, Kandel 1988) has shown, academic status was related at both initial and follow-up assessments to the percentage of youth at each level of drug involvement. Specifically, dropouts tended to be more highly involved than academically at risk youth, and both groups were more involved than control students. These differences were not only statistically significant but also socially significant, because more than a quarter of dropouts were involved in a high drug use lifestyle, one with serious personal and social consequences over time. Gender was also related at the follow-up assessment, with a higher percentage of males showing greater drug involvement than females. Ethnicity, however, was not related to drug involvement. That is, although Mexican American and White American youth may differ in the use of specific drugs as suggested by Beauvais et al (1996) and Maddahian et al (1986), results suggested similar percentage involvement with drugs for Mexican American and White American youth generally. Although there were no differences as a function of ethnicity, the scope of the public health concern for Mexican American youth must be interpreted in light of the demographics of this group. Approximately 50 percent of Mexican American youth drop out such that the absolute number of Mexican American youth at risk for heavy drug involvement is likely to be elevated by this educationally related risk factor. Moreover, they are one of the youngest, most rapidly growing segments of the population, suggesting that the numbers of heavily drug involved Mexican American youth may be quite high in the near future. Young dropouts are more likely to be unemployed or under employed and are less likely to have health insurance and receive early medical attention, which also suggest a considerable public health concern and the need for early prevention and remediation strategies.

Although general distributions of percentage drug involvement remained fairly constant across groups and time, considerable change (i.e., movement into and out of drug involvement category) was also noted. For example, over 50 percent moved out of the high drug involvement group from the first to second assessment, and over 50 percent new youth moved into this group. The type of movement observed in this sample was not minor. Forty percent of those who reported change moved from the high drug involvement into the low/minimal use category. Thus, change was substantial both quantitatively in terms of the numbers moving and qualitatively in terms of the type of changes made.

In predicting this change, demographic variables such as gender, ethnicity, academic standing, employment status, graduation status, and presence or absence of a consistent, ongoing relationship did not predict this movement into and out of high drug involvement. However, peer variables derived from peer cluster theory (Oetting, Beauvais 1987) contributed significantly to understanding of change, accounting for 33 percent of the variance in change. Peer cluster theory as outlined by Oetting and Beauvais (1986) contends,

> ...that small, identifiable peer clusters determine where, when, and how drugs are used and

that these clusters specifically help shape attitudes and beliefs about drugs. (Oetting, Beauvais 1986)

Specifically in this study, peer drug use and peers asking the participant to use predicted both movement into and out of high drug involvement, with the individual's own willingness to ask peers to stop using drugs adding to the prediction of those who moved out of high drug involvement. Change on these variables closely mirrored change in high drug involvement status. Individuals who remained unchanged in high involvement also remained unchanged on these variables, whereas individuals who moved into high drug involvement reported an increase in peer drug use and peer requests to partake of drugs and a decrease in a tendency to ask others to stop using drugs, and individuals who moved out of high drug involvement experienced a decrease in peer drug use and requests to use. Thus, movement into or out of a high level of drug involvement was best predicted by peer variables, especially peer drug use and peer requests of others to use. From the current data, the sequencing of and processes of this change are not totally clear. That is, it is not clear whether the changers changed peers, had peers change their behavior, or a combination of both. Nonetheless, further longitudinal study of peer behaviors and interactive processes is warranted to understand those processes which naturally influence change in high levels of drug involvement. Such information will clarify the development of drug involvement and other deviant behaviors and inform the design of prevention and remediation efforts (e.g., designing interventions to alter the early stages of drug-involved peer structures and to enhance movement to less drug-involved peer groups or change in peer group norms and behaviors regarding drug use).

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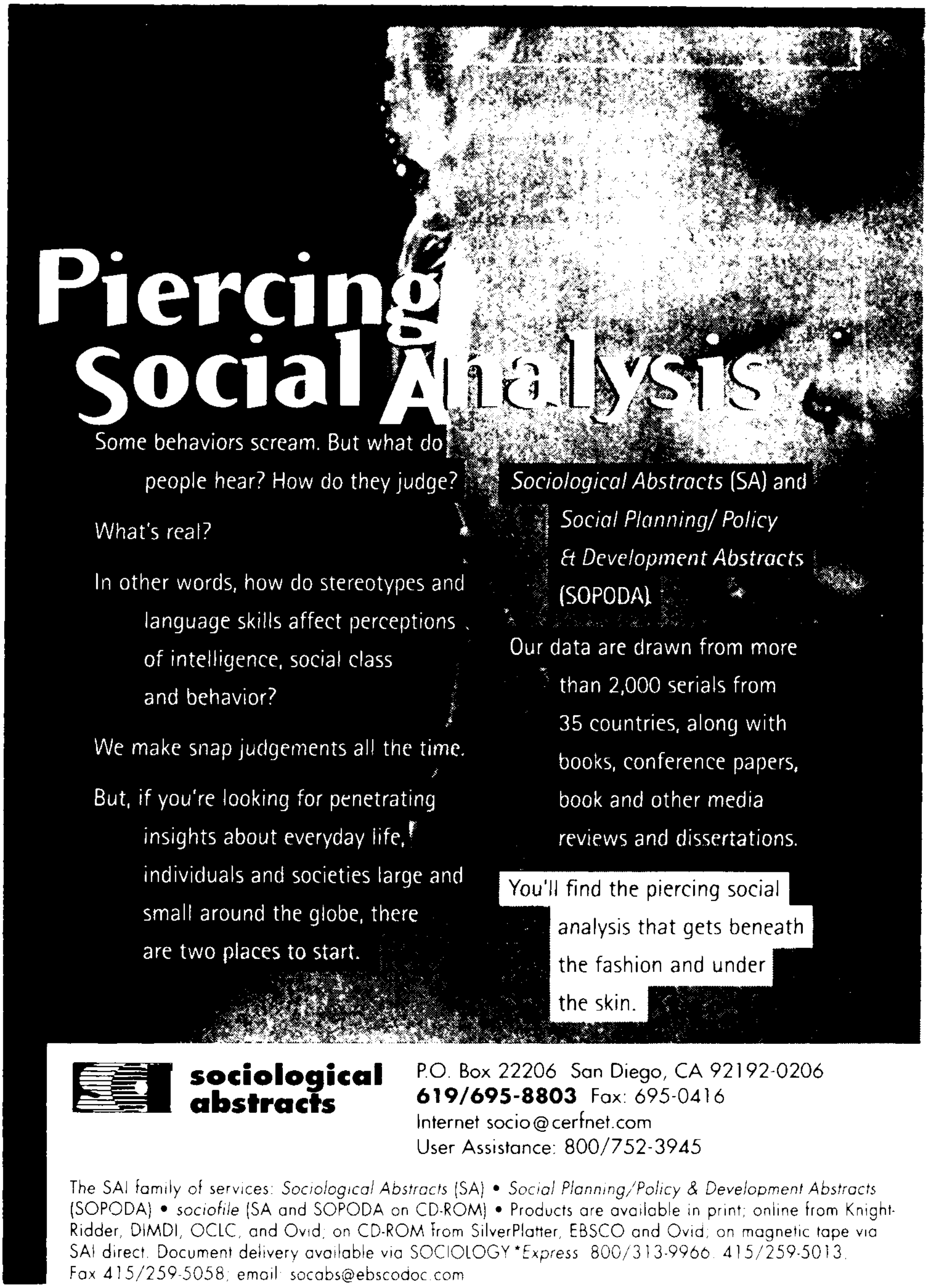

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DEVELOPING A FIELD-INTENSIVE METHODOLOGY FOR GENERATING A RANDOMIZED SAMPLE FOR GANG RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

This paper was stimulated by concerns for methodological issues in gang research. The paper describes the strategies in developing a design for drawing a stratified proportional random sample of gang members and goes beyond limited non-probability quota samples, to compare gang members across communities and gang variations. First, this paper proposes procedures and techniques for drawing a random sample of gang subjects based on probability proportional to size quota. Second, it describes the role of ethnographic field work and social mapping in defining sampling frames. Third, it presents the use of MapInfo in developing and mapping catchment areas. Fourth, it describes the procedures utilized in generating gang rosters and their role in generating interview sample quotas. And finally, it discusses the processes for developing sampling quotas and drawing of the sample.

INTRODUCTION

Mexican-American barrio gangs have consistently drawn social scientists and other policy-makers' attention (Barker 1943; Gonzalez 1980; Heller 1952; Klein 1971; Mazon 1985; McWilliams 1943). In the past decade and a half, a new set of studies has emerged on Mexican-American and Latino gangs (Horowitz 1983; Jankowski 1992; Sanders 1995; Vigil 1979). These studies add important substantive knowledge and perspectives. They employ a range of approaches, issues, and populations. Yet a major concern with these new studies is that their methodology has not advanced issues of generalizability (Ball, Curry 1995; Moore 1977), representativeness (Hagedorn 1996; Moore, Vigil 1987), and comparability (Curry, Spergel 1988; Esbensen, Huizinga 1993). For instance, strategies for overcoming bias in study subject selection that were common in many earlier studies of gangs have yet to be addressed in these new studies (Klein 1996; Short 1990; Spergel, Curry 1993). These methodological problems remain key obstacles in the development of knowledge in this area. This essay seeks to advance gang research methodology particularly as it concerns limitations in subject selection bias.

THE EMERGENT CONTEMPORARY GANG

During the past decade and a half there has been a major growth, spread, and increase in gangs and gang activities (Cummings, Monti 1993; Esbensen, Huizinga 1990; Fagan 1986; Klein 1996; Spergel 1995). There is little disagreement about gangs' growing involvement in narco-trafficking (Bourgois 1989; Curtis 1992; Decker, Van Winkle 1994; Huff 1996) and in the escalation of lethal violence compared to gangs of earlier periods (Erlanger 1979; Fagan 1996; Johnson, Sanabria 1990a; Miller 1966; Moore 1988; Yablonsky 1962). The changing nature of gangs has not been adequately investigated because many studies fail to consider, in a theoretical and systematic manner, changes in the gangs, and their relationship to drugs and violence (Fagan 1993; Hagedorn 1994a; Klein, Maxson, Cunningham 1991; Miller 1974, 1975, 1980; Moore 1988; Moore, Vigil 1993b).

There is also a great deal of debate about the extent, magnitude, and variability between gangs and within gangs (Huff 1996; Klein 1996; Miller 1975; Moore 1988; Spergel 1989). However, few studies focus on gangs' commonalties and differences or how these gangs have or are evolving and changing within a community context (Monti 1993; Sanders 1995). There has been little progress in distinguishing how gang activities differ from individual gang members' activities. The studies are not able to address the influence of community context (Kasarda 1985a; Sampson 1992b), gang variations (Jankowski 1992; Klein 1996; Spergel 1995); the influence of the gang on other youth and adults in the community and vice versa (Huff 1996; Sampson 1992a; Sullivan 1989; Warr 1996). One still finds much debate as to what constitutes a gang (Ball, Curry 1995; Horowitz 1990), and gang social orders (Cummings, Monti 1993; Padilla 1992; Taylor 1990a) or what is gang related activity (Cummings, Monti 1993; Fagan 1989; Klein 1996; Padilla 1990).

The spread and growth of gangs in urban areas have become more closely associated with gang drug enterprises (Padilla 1990; Taylor 1990b), escalating gang violence (Fagan 1996; Klein, Maxson 1987; Vigil 1988b), and increasing involvement with adult criminal organizations (Sullivan 1991) especially for Hispanic (Padilla 1990) and Black (Sampson 1987) gangs. Although there is some evidence that gangs have grown and spread (Block, Block 1994; Needle, Stapleton 1983; Spergel, Curry 1993), the exact nature and magnitude are beyond the scope of most current studies that have relied on institutionally derived (Curry, Spergel 1988) and "in situ" generated data (Jankowski 1992; Sanders 1995; Vigil 1988a). As it pertains to Mexican-American gangs (Horowitz 1983; Moore, Mata 1978; Sanders 1995; Vigil 1988a), the gang and drug violence nexus (Fagan 1996; Goldstein 1987) has yet to be studied systematically or as a key study focus (Moore, Garcia, Garcia, Cerda, & Valencia 1978; Sanders 1995).

Recent studies suggest that the current gang scene is influenced by the growth of an underclass within the minority class structure (Jencks 1991; Kasarda 1985b; Moore 1985; Moore, Vigil 1993a; Vigil 1989; Wilson 1988). This has destabilized inner city neighborhoods, weakened minority institutions (Bursick, Grasmick 1993), and lessened the normalizing influence of the middle and working-class who reside in more affluent neighborhoods (Fagan 1992; Sampson 1987; Spergel 1995). The decline of neighborhood institutions and economies increases welfare dependency and the growth of the informal economy (Bourgois 1995; Fagan 1992, 1993; Kasarda 1985b; Sampson, Groves 1989; Sullivan 1991).

Few studies address what the influence of this underclass is on the persistence or in the emergence of gangs. While some allude to increasing influence of macro-level factors (Reiss 1990), few provide data on its impact or relationship to the gangs' primary activities, leadership, organization, or their connections to adult straight and criminal social worlds (Hagedorn 1994b; Johnson, Sanabria 1990b).

Studies tend to focus on gangs in more traditional and established neighborhoods (Horowitz 1983; Moore, Mata 1978; Moore, Vigil 1993a). Although these provide important rich, in-depth data, they do not adequately address the emergence of gangs in these more non-traditional underclass barrios and ghettos. Thus, most studies do not address the saliency, extensiveness, or variations in gangs, drug use, and violence across different communities (Curry, Spergel 1988; Klein 1996). Given the emergence of gangs within this new social context (Monti 1993), there is a clear need for methodologies that are able to account for these changes in the nature of gangs. The application of new methodological strategies in the study of gangs should allow for assessing and discerning the dynamics of contemporary communities (Reiss 1986), gangs (Decker 1996), and gang member variations (Block, Block 1994; Curry, Spergel 1988; Needle, Stapleton 1983).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Study subject selection bias and nonprobability sampling remain key problems central to most "in situ" (Akins, Beschner 1978; Hagedorn 1996; Moore 1977) and related community field study efforts, especially as they concern representativeness and bias. While rich data and interpretations characterize many of these field studies (Horowitz 1983; Moore, Mata 1978b; Sanders 1995; Vigil 1988a) there are some limitations in the generalizability of studies based on snowball, convenience, or quota samples. In studies of "hard-to-reach" or "hard-to serve" populations (Watters, Bernacki 1983; Weibel 1990), the community field study (Horowitz 1983; Padilla 1992), the ethnographic field-station (Akins, Beschner 1978) and collaborative methodologies (Moore 1977) attend to key problems inherent in these studies particularly as they relate to validity and access. While enhancing access to criminal, delinquent, or deviant behaviors and settings, the problem of a study subject bias (Ss) and representativeness still limits many of these studies (Hagedorn 1996).

Another problem associated with most earlier studies is that they did not take into consideration the diversity of gang status and types in their sampling procedures, therefore limiting their generalizability to the study sample and area. A few of these studies allude to the need to develop robust, reliable measures and the use of research designs that addresses issues of gang members' status (e.g., leader, core and fringe) and organizational type (e.g., criminal gang, territorial/barrio gang, and school gangs) (Fagan 1996; Huff 1996; Sanders 1995). We argue that gang researchers need to enhance and expand random sampling design to improve the scope and implications of research results.

The study upon which this article is based seeks to explore the nature and characteristics of youth gangs in Mexican-American communities by seeking to utilize and extend the community field studies approach suggested in works by Moore (1978a), Horowitz (1983), Decker (1996), Fagan (1989), and Akins and Beschner (1978). Moreover, this study incorporates a multi-level design and probability-based sample to collect extensive life history and gang interview data.

This article describes a sampling methodology that generates a probability-derived quota sample in an investigation of Mexican American gang members. It borrows recent innovations of ethnographic-based targeted sampling approaches (Carlson, Wang, Siegal, Falck, & Guo 1994) which seek to fill in the gaps created by traditional non-prob-ability sampling approaches. This theory-driven sampling strategy assures the implementation of a multilevel research design that incorporates the community context and individual characteristics of gang members.

This paper identifies the required phases in generating a probability sample used in this study. These phases include: 1) establishing parameters and ranges within a community context; 2) identifying gangs and associating them with specific geographical areas; 3) differentiating areas (catchment) by using block level social indicators data; 4) identifying gang types; 5) acquiring gang rosters of all gangs in these catchment areas; and 6) drawing a randomized representative sample of gangs and gang members among the catchment areas.[1]

COMMUNITY CONTEXT: ESTABLISHING PARAMETERS AND RANGES

The delimiting of the study by two large geographical areas (South and West sides) in San Antonio was deemed essential on substantive, theoretical, and pragmatic considerations. These two areas remain major centers of San Antonio's Mexican-American population, encompassing centers of commerce and residency for this group. These areas also have the highest concentration of delinquent behavior and Mexican-American gang activity. This delimitation was based on secondary data such as the U.S. Census, criminal justice data, public housing statistics, and previous published governmental reports and studies.

After identification of these areas, community field workers associated with the project began collecting data about distinct community and neighborhood areas. They also began acquainting themselves with gang members and with community and neighborhood influentials, as well as collecting data on gangs and gang activity. Extensive efforts were made to gain access, entree, and rapport with these persons. Due to the delinquent, deviant, criminal, or déclassé nature of some gang activities, it is often difficult to accurately and reliably identify gang members and gain information. This is similar to problems encountered in social and public health research with "hidden populations."[2] Unstructured individual and group interview data were collected as fieldworkers' schedules and routines permitted on a daily basis.

After gaining entree, trust, and rapport, community researchers began to collect observational data based on field work in gang hangouts such as recreational centers, housing projects, downtown areas, neighborhood businesses, and other public gatherings such as parks. All efforts were made not to rely solely on institutional agencies and agents of social control such as school officials or police. Attention was focused on the primacy to develop and maintain our own networks and presence in these communities and with gangs in these areas. In spite of a limited number of field workers, each community researcher developed his or her own area, contacts, and networks.

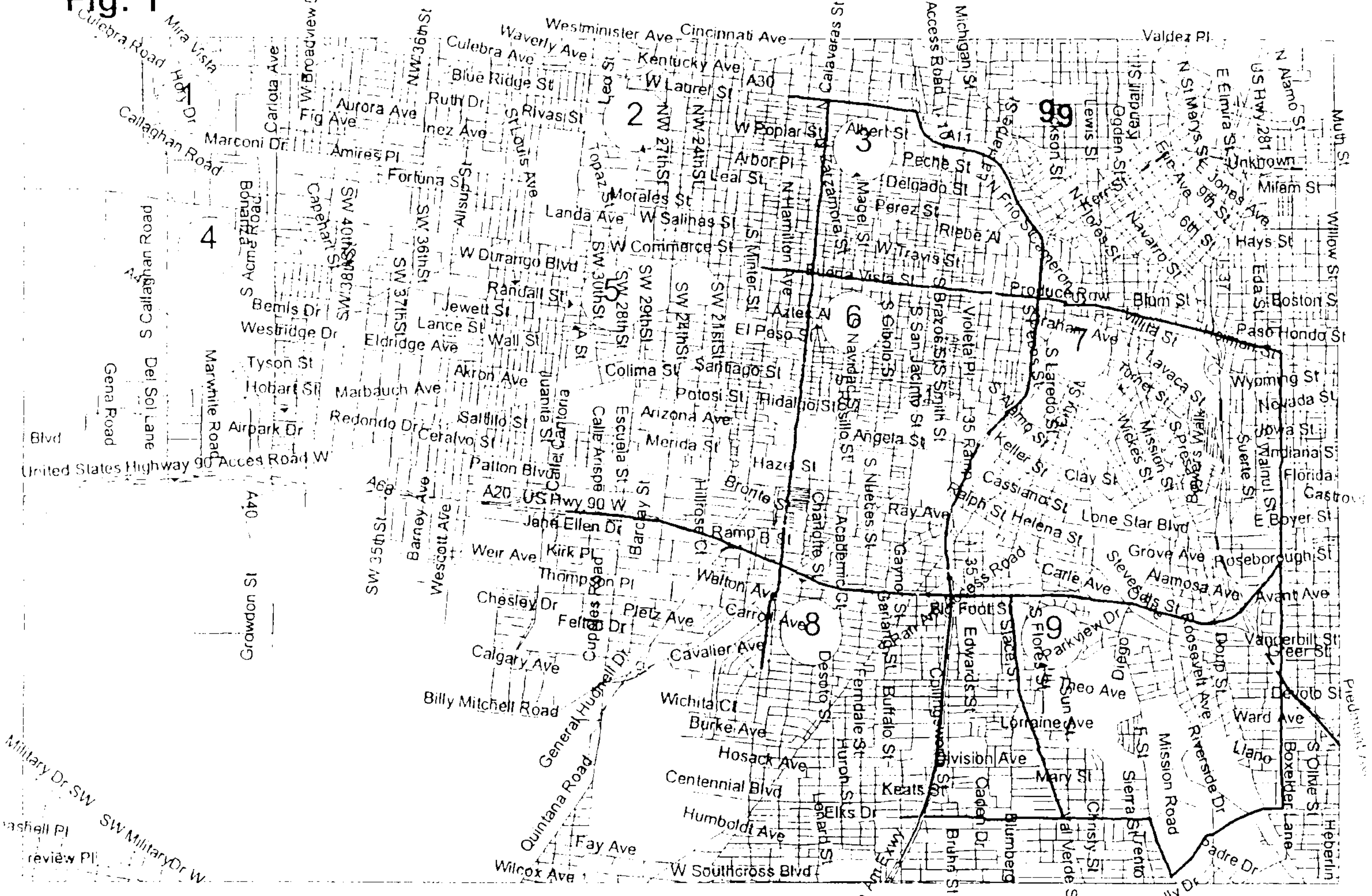
DEVELOPING A SAMPLING FRAME

Social Mapping and Identification of Catchment Areas With Gangs

Our community field researchers then began social mapping of these communities and field observation work as suggested by Block (1993) and Stark (1987). Social mapping assisted us in the identification of gangs and the territories of these gangs along with major legal and illegal gang activities. The mapping was based on community researchers' observations of gangs and contacts with gang members, community gatekeepers, parents of gang members, and small businessmen in the targeted areas. The two broad regions, San Antonio's Westside and Southside, were divided into nine catchment areas. The delimitation of these areas was based on the identification of Mexican American neighborhoods and "natural areas." Most of the catchment areas are separated by major thoroughfares, physical barriers or other distinguishing landmarks or boundaries (See Figure 1).

Each catchment area varied in size and population density. Most of San Antonio's present gang territories and neighborhoods coincided with our nine catchment areas. Nonethe-

Fig: 1


1
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Westminister Ave
Cincinnati Ave
Culebra Ave
Culebra Road
Kentucky Ave
W Laurel St
Callaghan Road
Marconi Dr
W Poplar St
Albert St
W Commerce St
W Durango Blvd
Buena Vista St
Produce Row
Blum St
Colima St
Santiago St
United States Highway 90 Acces Road W
US Hwy 90 W
Patton Blvd
Military Dr SW
SW Military Dr W
Quintana Road
General Hudnell Dr
Billy Mitchell Road
Centennial Blvd
W Southcross Blvd
Mission Road
Roosevelt Ave
S Flores St
I-35
Valdez Pl
N Alamo St
Kelly Dr

San Antonio Gang Project Catchment Areas

Table 1: Characteristics of Catchment Areas Based on Social Indicators (in percentage)

Catchment Area	Unemployed Males	Houses Below Poverty	Teen School Dropout	Female Headed Houses	Houses on Public Assistance	Average Percent
1	42	37	21	31	19	30
2	45	46	18	35	25	34
3	53	44	45	31	23	39
4	41	38	19	30	16	29
5	48	50	22	43	30	39
6	45	50	29	45	32	40
7	48	40	23	39	19	34
8	41	33	11	25	13	25
9	42	38	13	42	22	31
Range	12	16	34	20	18	15

less, each catchment area may have one or more active gangs claiming it or portions of it as their territory. The catchment areas are generally referred to as: 1) Loma Park, 2) Prospect Hill/Rosedale, 3) West End, 4) Las Colonias (Edgewood), 5) Las Palmas, 6) Alazan Apache, 7) Downtown, 8) Palm Heights, and 9) Denver Heights/Highland Park. These areas were then used as sampling frames to stratify by catchment area, gang types, and gang membership status.

Following the establishment of catchment areas, the community researchers then sought to identify all the gangs in each catchment area. For a period of ten months, the community researchers went out daily to establish contact, observe gang activities, and develop gang rosters. Six types of gangs were originally identified. For sampling purposes, we further grouped them into three primary types of gangs: 1) criminal gangs (consisting of criminal-adult connected and criminal-non-adult connected) whose primary goal was to engage in organized, illegal activities such as drug dealing and auto theft; 2) barrio gangs, whose key goals revolved around barrio and school youth networks defending declared gang turf through fighting and related violent activities; and 3) juvenile delinquent gangs (including school gangs, small neighborhood gangs, and delinquent youth) whose primary activities were consisted of disorganized antisocial behaviors and use/abuse of drugs and alcohol. We excluded barrio "palomillas" (Rubel 1966), or neighborhood friendship groups; tagging crews; and social athletic clubs. In addition, we did not include youth who were at risk of becoming gang members, or who had been gang members, but were not currently active. These youth still engaged in antisocial, delinquent, or criminal activities, but not as gang members or gang activity.

Differentiating Catchment Areas and Use of MapInfo

Based on the results of the social mapping, we utilized MapInfo (MapInfo Corporation 1995), a GIS-based computer software to profile the nine catchment areas (see Figure 1). MapInfo allows the user to thematically map data to show representation at various levels including state, county, city, census tract, and street block groups.

Based on this information, we were able to delineate the socioeconomic variables associated with the catchment areas. This was accomplished by utilizing the block group level information generated by MapInfo, even though it did not coincide with traditional mapping units.

Following Kasarda's (1993) lead, we were able to compile the five social indicators of underclass using the 1990 Census at the block group level for each of the nine catchment areas. These include percentage of: 1) individuals below poverty level; 2) unemployed males; 3) teen-age high school dropouts; 4) households receiving public assistance; and 5) female headed households.[3] In addition to its mapping function, information pertaining to the 1990 Census can be compiled and imported into MapInfo to represent any specific area of interest. Table 1 displays the underclass characteristics for all nine catchment areas, which indicate considerable differences among them. These social indicators were supplemented by qualitative data from community researchers. This additional information helped in explaining variations and discerning differences between gangs and across catchment areas.

GENERATING SAMPLING QUOTA

Sampling Frame Parameters

In this study's sampling frame, there are three parameters that are determining factors of sampling: catchment area, gang types, and gang membership status. Catchment areas allowed us to test our research hypotheses across community and neighborhood areas. They were also used as design frames from which a stratified sample was generated. The gang type parameters allowed for a representative sample in the nine catchment areas. We also stratified with the third parameter, gang membership status. While this parameter is considered important, few studies provide clear directions that address study subject selecting (Ss) bias and assure sampling of gang members by status, although most studies refer to Klein's categories of leaders, cores, and peripherals. This study was grounded by empirical descriptions, uniquely suited to the gangs under observation, but not reflected in other gangs. In this manner, we could later describe from survey data the gang members' status in their respective gangs, yet still allow for the range of gang status reflected in their gang's specific organization.[4] In short, we utilized the gang type and status of gang membership as important stratification parameters.

Unlike non-probability samples, this method goes beyond quota or random sampling of small gang rosters. It also seeks to limit Ss bias in the recruitment of who is to be interviewed. It provides community researchers clear guidelines about how to select gang members, and increases confidence in the results of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The result of our field work efforts, and consequently, our social mapping of the research communities, was crucial and mandatory in a sampling design seeking to generate a representative sample (Kalton 1983; Spreen 1993; Timmerick 1994). As a result, it allowed us to generate a probability proportional to size (PPS) sample that takes into consideration all of the related parameters (Kalton 1983).

Gang Rosters

We developed rosters of gangs through different information sources. These rosters included the name and street address of each member of the gangs in our nine catchment areas. Additionally, the rosters provided gang membership status of rank-and-file members and gang leaders.[5] The validity and accuracy of gang rosters were checked using at least three of four sources: gatekeepers, gang member contacts, key informants, and field workers' observations. A gatekeeper provides access to a gang on the behalf of the community researcher. A gang-contact refers to a working relationship with a member of a specific gang. Gang contacts (e.g., gang member, relative, community resident, or social service worker) provide our community researchers detailed information about their gangs, which helps to verify location, gangs' existence, rosters, activities, etc. Third, key informants are individuals who are personally or socially associated with the target population and have first-hand information on gang members. A final source was derived directly from field observation of gang members and their associates' activities in situ. Information gained through this source was always cross checked and verified by other sources.

Generating Proportional Targeted Sampling Quotas

Based on the previous information, the proportional sampling quotas for each catchment area were generated. These quotas provide community researchers with specific numbers and type of gang members to be recruited for a face-to-face interview. These quotas are derived in a two-step process:

1. With a preset total number of gang subjects $(N=150)$[6], the number of gang members (n_i) for each catchment area is calculated as the following:

   $t_i = N_i / N$

   $n_i = t_i Ni$

   where

   ti = proportion of gang members in each catchment area

   N_i = number of gang members in each catchment area

   N = total number of gang members in nine catchment areas to be interviewed

   n_i is number of gang members to be interviewed for each catchment area ($i =$ 1 .9)
2. With information collected by community researchers on types of gangs (barrio, criminal, and school-based/delinquent) and composition of gangs (leader and core members), number of gang members of specific characteristics (n_{ijk}) to be recruited are fur-

ther specified for each catchment area:

$n_{ijk} = n_i g_j p_k$

where

g_j = proportion of gangs in each type of gangs ($j = 1...4$)

p_k = proportion of gangs with different status ($k = 1, 2$)

These quotas will serve as guidelines for our community researchers to plan, arrange their field activities, and collect gang member interviews. The sample of gang members to be interviewed will be drawn using a stratified systematic sampling method (Babbie 1995).

FIELD PROCEDURE TO CONTACT GANG

Once PPS-derived quotas for each catchment area are drawn, community researchers are given specific guidelines and training on how to randomly select gang members from gang rosters for the project's face-to-face interviews. A gang member who is selected may refuse or not be available. There are a number of factors that may affect a community researcher's ability to access the PPS-derived quota: gang member's death; gang member refusing or dropping out; gang member being arrested and incarcerated; and gang members moving out of the area. It was therefore decided that subjects would be randomly selected from available gang rosters for each catchment area until the PPS quota is met. When a gang member is selected from a gang roster, but is not available or refuse s an interview, we require that the next person meeting the selection criteria be designated for interviewing. The refusal rates will be recorded for adjustment in later analysis. In short, the community researchers have a clearer set of guidelines on how to draw Ss for interviews, of recording refusals, and of providing guidelines for Ss replacement.

SUMMARY

This initial effort seeks to develop a verifiable, systematic, rational approach to improve and extend gang research methodology involving sampling and Ss selection bias. The approach suggested herein builds on: 1) the community field work team's ongoing field work — an iterative process of identifying gangs, gang membership, and gang activities in particular catchment areas; 2) social indicator team delimiting areas, connecting these to block level data and PPS quota drawn interviews; and 3) developing sampling parameters and frames for community researchers to interview gang Ss.

The use of community researchers' field study efforts to identify gangs and the process of development of catchment areas as well as final production of sampling quotas are central to this approach. With catchment areas building on block data as the basic unit, this allows development of sampling frames, which are key to improving the precision and representativeness of gang Ss sampling and lessening respondent selection bias. Equally important are the two teams' involvement in efforts to assure meeting the study's overall aims, design and collection and interpretation of data and findings. It is a multi-phase process that is iterative, integrated, and cumulative. The project requires two teams working cooperatively, yet with their own tasks, requisites, and procedures.

DISCUSSION

This paper's objective is to contribute to the advancement of gang research design and methods, specifically in emerging Mexican American underclass communities. Others seeking to test or extend this approach will need to adapt these procedures: 1) to their own study's aims and design; 2) to their community researchers' field study efforts, which are quite intensive, iterative, and challenging; 3) to gang and community realities and contexts which shape their own gang scenes; 4) to "social mapping" requisites that meet study design and data needs; and 5) to existing indicator and related data to profile the community and neighborhood context(s). This approach provides community researchers with clear guidelines about gang member study selection and recruitment; attends to multilevel study design's requisites; and increases confidence in the results of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Consequently, ethnographic data, intensive field work and social mapping of the research communities are crucial and essential in a sampling design to generate a representative sample (Kalton 1983; Kish 1971; Spreen 1993).

In order to advance the persisting and emerging gang research agenda, there is a great need to go beyond limited small random samples or non-probability (quota, convenience, or snowball) samples. There are a number of strategies that could be used to deal with the problem of study sample selection bias, representativeness, and salience of gang attributes, activities, or attitudes. The sampling procedure discussed above will allow us to examine and test our hypothesis about the relationship between a growing underclass in a Mexican-American community and gangs, drugs, and violence. The sampling procedure will also allow us to describe and explore the types, range, and central activities of San Antonio's Mexican-American gangs. While not imposing a pre-established gang type or membership, the design and sampling approach is stratified by catchment area, gang type, and two general levels of membership. It also allows us to compare and contrast community, gang, gang leader, and rank-and-file differences in a range of Mexican-American communities. This study should contribute to methodological strategies seeking to improve the study of gangs in diversified communities, especially those with underclass characteristics (Wilson 1988).

Finally, many early gang studies typically utilized gang samples that relied on snowball sampling techniques or on gang rosters of small gang provided by social service agencies, criminal justice system, or other institutions. We concur with those who argue that institutionally based gang data lacks the precision necessary for probability sampling designs (Klein 1996; Spergel 1995) and have serious limitations (Akins, Beschner 1978; Moore 1977). Given the above concerns, we have developed a sampling approach that others may consider, yet will need to adapt to their study's aims and design, and the realities of their respective gang scene(s) and community context. As many gang studies are exploratory, including those on Mexican-American gangs, and as few are theory-driven and/or hypothesis-testing, this study effort allows for evaluating the need and utility of a multi-level design. It also allows us to test the utility and limits of an approach to study subject bias in recruitment of gangs and gang members. The approach described herein will serve to address the issues of generalizability and the representativeness of gang studies like ours.

END NOTES

[1] Twelve focus group sessions were conducted prior to the development of the sampling plan. Information collected in these focus groups guided us in planning and developing the sampling design and procedures and study questionnaire. See Valdez and Kaplan (in press) for a detailed discussion on using focus groups in gang research.

[2] Hidden populations are defined as "a subset of the general population whose membership is not readily distinguished or enumerated based on existing knowledge and/or sampling capabilities" (Wiebel 1990). Many hidden populations, homeless runaway youth, IDUs, street prostitutes, (Akins, Beschner 1978) etc. are generally viewed as "hard to reach" and/or "hard to serve" (unresponsive). Standard survey sampling methods used in social science are not appropriate or well suited for dealing with these populations, since the research population is not readily available or accessible (Kish 1987).

[3] Formula by Kasarda (1993) was used for calculations of social indicators.

[4] Numerous studies detail the range of gangs and gang members. Ranging from associations based on street corner friendship types to more formal social orders. Gang membership is as complex as it ethnic subculture, its gang structure, and historical antecedents.

[5] Previous studies have not adequately described how their studies have sampled the range of gang members or avoided study subject selection bias. It maybe that these reports only access the more verbal, outgoing, or self-promoting gang members.

[6] It has been previously determined that a sample size of 150 would provide sufficient statistical power based on known effect size to test the hypotheses of the proposed research project.

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