

Assessing the Treatment Needs of Female Juvenile Gang Members

An Exploratory Study

by

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

Approved April 2012 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2012

ABSTRACT

The research on female juvenile gang members is limited in scope and research has not yet examined mental health issues in this population. This study examines the case histories of 127 female juvenile gang members who were arrested by the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. To add to the limited gender-specific research on female juvenile gang members, data are presented regarding this population's mental health problems, childhood maltreatment, substance abuse problems, age of contact with the juvenile justice system, and other factors salient to female juvenile gang members' prevention, treatment, and intervention needs. Female juvenile gang members who had a mental health diagnosis were significantly more likely to report childhood maltreatment. Female juvenile gang members who were younger at their age of first arrest were significantly more likely to report chronic substance use. Clinical levels of anger-irritability and depression-anxiety were found for approximately half of female juvenile gang members and suicide ideation was found for approximately one-fourth. These findings have important implications for practitioners and gender-specific prevention, intervention, and treatment programs targeted specifically for female juvenile gang members.

DEDICATION

To my former students from Aurora Central High School who inspired me to pursue my Masters in Social Work and to achieve my goal of publishing my writing.

To Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Elizabeth Anthony, and Kelly Jackson at ASU, who supported my growth and personal development and challenged me to reach my full potential as a student, a social worker, and a person.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Gang membership is increasing in the United States. In 2009, it was estimated that there were 28,000 gangs in the United States, the highest number since 1997 (National Gang Center, 2010). Between 1996 and 2009, these gangs were comprised of an average of 775,000 gang members annually (National Gang Center, 2010). By 2009, 25 percent of large cities and 17 percent of suburban counties reported having more than 30 gangs, with almost 1 in 4 large cities reporting over 1,000 gang members (National Gang Center, 2010).

Youth gang members comprise a noticeable percentage of these gangs. Nationally-representative samples show that between 4 and 15 percent of youth have belonged to a gang, but in large cities the numbers are higher, reaching over 30 percent of youth in some areas (Howell, 2010). In 2007, 23 percent of a national sample of students reported that gangs were present in their schools (Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum, 2009, as cited in Howell, 2010).

Youth gang membership has sustained the attention of researchers, sociologists, journalists, law enforcement agencies, government agencies, and criminologists for over a century. Members of these groups have attempted to quantify characteristics of gangs and explain the gang member's experience in order to understand, prevent or intervene. National surveys of youth delinquency have described the impact of gangs on society, and in-depth studies have offered insight that has revealed profiles of both male and female gang members. These

measures and profiles indicate that female gang youth are a distinct group, one that warrants specific intervention programming.

Gangs are typically defined as having more than three members; sharing a distinct identity that is often identified by symbols, colors, and a name; members viewing themselves as a gang and being recognized by others as a gang; some level of permanence and organization; and involvement in an elevated level of criminal activity (National Gang Center, 2010). While definitional issues of gangs arise in research, the preceding definition is most commonly accepted by researchers (National Gang Center, 2010).

National interest in adult and youth gangs has increased over time, with a significant increase in research beginning in the 1980's, as gang membership was becoming more widespread. In the 1970's, only nineteen states reported youth gang problems; however, by the late 1990's, all fifty states and the District of Columbia reported youth gang activity (Howell, 2010). The increase in youth gangs during the 1980's correlated with increasing poverty and economic decline in the industrial sector, which most significantly impacted America's inner cities (Curry, 1998; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

These patterns of poverty and economic decline in inner cities are consistent with the historical emergence and growth of gangs, which appears to reflect significant social and economic marginality, particularly of immigrants and ethnic minorities (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). The first gangs in the early 1900's were comprised primarily of Irish immigrants in New York (Campbell, 1991). By the 1980's, the ethnic makeup of gang members was increasingly African

American and Latino, as social and economic changes shifted the marginalization of different ethnic groups (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). For these marginalized groups, gangs have historically provided a community organization or institution where meaning, identity, belonging, and access to financial freedom are attainable (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

Youth gang membership can have a profound impact on society, as gang members contribute significantly and disproportionately to the volume of youth delinquency and crime (Glesmann, Krisberg, & Marchionna, 2009). Research and surveys on youth gangs have demonstrated that female gang members comprise a notable percentage of youth gangs. In 1997, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth showed a male-to-female gang member ratio of 2:1 (Howell, 2010). In 2009, law enforcement agencies in 15 percent of larger cities, 13 percent of suburban counties, 18 percent of smaller cities, and 12 percent of rural counties reported that more than half of their gangs had female members (National Gang Center, 2010). Most of these national surveys and prevalence rate data concerning gang membership are from arrest-related law enforcement reports. Other research methodologies, such as self-report rates, challenge the claims that males comprise a significantly higher percentage of gang members than females (National Gang Center, 2010). Many self-report surveys indicate that the percentage of female gang members ranges from 8 to 46 percent depending on location (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) found in the Rochester Youth Development Study that females constituted a higher percentage of gang members than males.

Gang associations are significantly related to girls' delinquency (Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999; Howell, 2010) and are correlated with higher rates of substance abuse (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993). Research consistently shows that female gang members are more involved in serious delinquent behaviors than nongang males and females (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999; Esbensen & Winfree, 1998; Miller, 1998; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

Most of female gang members' delinquent behaviors are associated with gang membership. For example, Esbensen and Deschenes (1999) conducted a study of eighth graders in 11 cities and found that, among female gang members, 78 percent had participated in gang fights, 82 percent had hit someone with the intention of hurting them, 65 percent said they had carried a hidden weapon, 39 percent said they had attacked someone with a weapon, and 21 percent said they had shot at someone. These numbers are significantly lower than rates for nongang males and females (Esbensen & Deschenes, 1999).

Research also suggests that girls' delinquency rates are increasing and that this is directly impacted by girls' involvement in more serious gang crimes (Smith & Thomas, 2000). According to reports of delinquency, females' arrests for assault and weapons charges are increasing faster than boys' (Smith & Thomas, 2000). Also, in 1992, the FBI reported that arrests of girls for murder rose by 12 percent, for robbery by 48 percent, and for aggravated assault by 62 percent (Chesney-Lind, 1993). In addition, Poe-Yamagata and Butts (1996) found that violent crime arrests for adolescent females increased by 108 percent between 1973 and 1992, with a growth in arrests for aggravated assaults that doubled

males' from 1989 to 1993 (as cited in Smith & Thomas, 2000). While many researchers have identified that female crime rates are increasing, other researchers question whether it is the crime rate that is increasing or simply visibility. Female gang members have traditionally reported being able to mostly avoid police detection for their crimes, which causes some to believe that females are simply becoming more visible to law enforcement as attitudes about women and crime change (Campbell, 1991; Miller, 2001; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

High rates of criminal involvement and delinquency are important reasons to examine female youth gang membership. However, research has shown that there are other important factors in understanding the meaning of girls in gangs. These factors help researchers to understand not only the impact of gangs on society, but of society on the gang member.

Youth gang members tend to have more identified risk factors than other serious and violent offenders, which lead them to gang membership (Howell, 2010). In one study, Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith, and Tobin (2003) measured seven risk-factor categories – neighborhood characteristics, family/sociodemographic characteristics, parent-child relations, school, peers, individual characteristics, and early delinquency – and found that 40 percent of females with elevated scores in all 7 categories were gang members, compared to only 20 percent of females with elevated scores in 4 to 6 categories (as cited in Howell, 2010).

A significant element of risk for gang members is victimization. Gang members typically experience significantly more victimization prior to gang

involvement (Glesmann et al., 2009) and are at a greater risk for continued victimization than nongang youth (Miller, 1998). Female youth in particular have disproportionate histories of victimization prior to gang involvement compared to nongang females and gang males (Miller, 1998; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

Prior to gang involvement, youth most often experience victimization in the form of abuse. Widom and Maxfield (2001) found that people who are abused or neglected as children are more likely to be arrested as adolescents, as adults, and for violent crimes (Glesmann et al., 2009). For female youth, the abuse often has a specific pattern: girls are more likely to be emotionally and sexually abused than boys (Smith & Thomas, 2000). Sexual victimization may not be contained in the youth's home, as evidence suggests that some young women are sexually exploited again within their gangs (Miller, 2001; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). Research demonstrating the presence of significant risk factors for youth in gangs, prior and repeated victimization histories and risk, and the particular abuse patterns common for female gang members describes important implications for identifying prevention and intervention program needs of female gang members.

Many indicated violence and gang prevention programs have been implemented over the past thirty years, including Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.), Aggression Replacement Training (ART), CASASTART, and other community-based programs (Howell, 2010). However, most violence prevention programs have been developed using research on male gang members; as a result, there is little evidence that these programs have equivalent outcomes

for girls (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; Smith & Thomas, 2000). In recognizing identified differences between male and female gang members, researchers recognize that male and female gang youth have different prevention and intervention needs (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Curry, 1998; Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999; Esbensen & Deschenes, 1998; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

In order to create effective female-focused intervention programs, researchers and practitioners who work with girls in gangs need a more specific, in-depth understanding of girl gang members' treatment needs. Obtaining this information means looking at specific variables that may be associated with female gang membership including substance abuse; criminal history; family history; and mental health issues. Recognizing the prevalence of these factors in girl gang members' lives will lead to a more efficacious research approach to girl gang membership. These factors will be explored in-depth through the current study.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Introduction

Gangs have been an integral part of the American crime scene for over one hundred years. They have been glorified and condemned by individuals, groups, and the media at different times throughout history. Gang members are at once the liberated outcast and the demonic symbol of violent crime. These themes emerge through the focus of research at different points in time and contribute to what we currently know about gangs, particularly about youth gangs and girls in gangs.

Research Before 1940

The first account of a gang was an Irish gang in 1825 called the Forty Thieves (Campbell, 1991). This New York gang precipitated the formation of other Irish immigrant gangs, and soon gang battles ensued (Campbell, 1991). A few decades later, Thrasher (1927) conducted the first extensive academic study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago and published his findings in his book *The Gang* (as cited in Campbell, 1991). This book has been considered the beginning of the study of gangs and the first academic acknowledgement of gangs as a societal issue (Curry, 1998; Wood & Alleyne, 2009).

A small list of female gang members were documented in Thrasher's (1927) book, though they were referred to solely as auxiliary members and sex objects and were blamed for instigating gang wars (Campbell, 1991). Thrasher's (1927) depictions of female gang members reflected the roles women in gangs

were ascribed throughout this time period (Campbell, 1991). This male-centered perspective was dominant for decades and focused on gangs as a male phenomenon, rejecting the possibility of young women having a significant role within the gang (Campbell, 1991; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

Research from 1940 to 1980

After Thrasher's (1927) study, people appeared to lose interest in gangs. This interest experienced a resurgence in the early 1950s. The majority of the people who became interested in studying and explaining this phenomenon were journalists and 'street workers' who were individuals who ventured into gang territory in order to try to understand the gang member's daily life within his own environment but were not social workers or researchers (Campbell, 1991).

In the 1950's and 1960's, street workers began conducting case studies of gangs and their members while in the members' neighborhood (Campbell, 1991). Multiple books were written by people who worked with gang members in their own environments (Hanson, 1964; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965; Yablonsky, 1962). This decade represented a sustained interest in the understanding and characterizing of male gang members, although one author (Hanson, 1964) wrote about a female gang in New York. Short and Strodtbeck (1965) wrote a book about male youth gang members called *Group Process and Gang Delinquency*, which reported on differences between nongang and gang males in a group of Anglo and African American youth. Yablonsky (1962) headed a crime prevention program in New York and wrote a book entitled *The Violent Gang*,

which compared past and present male youth gang behavior and reported on male youth gang characteristics.

While the majority of journalists and street workers focused their attention during this time on male gang members, some individuals focused on females in gangs. In 1949, William Bernard provided a description of New York juvenile gangs that depicted growth in the number of female gang members and focused on how their role as sex objects allowed them to set up rival gang members during gang wars (Campbell, 1991). In 1964, Hanson, a journalist, provided another account of the role of girls in gangs in her book *Rebels in the Streets: The Story of New York's Girl Gangs*. This was one of the first accounts to focus on female gang members and to explore their reasons for joining gangs. However, Hanson (1964) was criticized by some feminist researchers for sensationalizing girl gang members and their sex lives (Campbell, 1991). Both authors failed to grasp the complexity of female gang membership and continued to discount the integral role of girls in the gang phenomenon. The majority of the street workers and journalists who wrote about female gang members during this time consistently focused on sexual promiscuity and attempted to intervene by exposing girl gang members to cosmetics, cooking, sewing, and etiquette, believing these skills would encourage young women to respect themselves and end their sexual promiscuity (Campbell, 1991). This represented common societal beliefs at the time that young women who engaged in gang behavior had low self-esteem and were misguided, simply needing more socialization into the role of a woman (Campbell, 1991). An additional influential factor may have been that most

researchers were male and most of the youth who they interviewed, including about female gang members, were also male (Campbell, 1991; Curry, 1998; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

In the 1970's, government agencies became more interested in quantifying and understanding gang membership from a criminological perspective. As a result, police departments in major cities developed Gang Intelligence Units and began collecting statistics on gang membership (Campbell, 1991). The first nationwide gang surveys of law enforcement agencies occurred in the 1970's, although measures of female gang members were often not observed or reported, since many jurisdictions chose not to identify females as gang members (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001) and young women were able to avoid police detection more often than males (Miller, 2001; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

Female gang members were not considered in the majority of criminological theory or research before 1970 (Esbensen & Winfree, 1998) but in the late 1970's, the focus of research began to change, most likely due to the first dissemination of national statistics documenting the scope of the gang phenomenon and the presence of female gang members. Street workers, journalists, and national surveyors began to acknowledge female gang members and female delinquency as a problem worth studying. As a result, some male researchers began to ask questions about female gang members and female delinquency (Curry, 1998). They decided to approach young women for this information, demonstrating a fundamental movement away from the male-centered perspective (Curry, 1998).

Research from 1980 to 2000

As youth gangs and literature became more common and visible in the 1980's, public concern increased (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). As a result, there was a new focus on research studies that could describe why youth joined gangs and what risk factors led them to gang membership, and on research identifying the individual and societal repercussions of youth gang membership. A number of prospective longitudinal studies of youth focused on these issues, including in Rochester, NY (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993) and in an emerging gang city, Denver, CO (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993).

Gang researchers also began to collaborate more and disseminate their findings to other interested researchers. In 1990, Huff edited a compilation of articles, studies, and essays that examined current research and perspectives on gangs, including a couple of articles on girls in gangs and on gendered gang theory, in his book *Gangs in America*. In 1996 and 2001, the second and third editions of this book were published. In addition, Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn (1999) published the first volume of essays on female gang membership titled *Female Gangs in America*.

Another significant change during this time was a shift towards a more female-centered perspective, which was initiated by Campbell's (1984) publication of *The Girls in the Gang*, an in-depth study of girls in New York gangs. In her book, Campbell (1984) explored the history of females in gangs, the dominant theoretical explanations of female gang membership, and the stories of three young women in gangs.

Research on female youth in gangs in the 1990's continued from a female-centered perspective and attempted to formulate gendered theories of gang membership through studies that compared male and female gang members (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Esbensen & Deschenes, 1998; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Miller, 1998). The majority of these studies used self-report surveys to identify female gang members, and found larger percentages of female gang members than had been reported by previous surveys of law enforcement agencies (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Curry, 1998; Esbensen & Deschenes, 1998; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Esbensen & Winfree, 1998; Miller, 1998). One prominent book that explored a gendered perspective on gang membership was Moore's (1991) *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change*, which studied Chicano gang members in East Los Angeles.

The 1990's marked the first national focus on female gang membership, as research comparing male and female gang members demonstrated to government agencies that female and male offenders had different programmatic needs (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). As a result, in the early 1990's, the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provided three years of funding for gang-prevention programs for females in seven different cities (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). In 1993, the FYSB published a report suggesting that these programs had demonstrated promising, gender-targeted results (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). However, the programs were discontinued in 1995, when the focus and funding for gang prevention returned to law enforcement (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

Research from 2000 to 2011

Most research before 2001 consisted of ethnographic, in-depth studies on individuals or gangs in a specific city; self-report surveys examining factors influencing or related to gang membership; and law enforcement reports of gang crimes (Esbensen & Deschenes, 1998). In the 2000's, researchers acknowledged the wealth of information that was provided by these studies; however, they noted that previous research was primarily focused on specific gangs in specific geographic areas, so it was not possible to generalize the findings (Esbensen & Deschenes, 1998). As a result, efforts were made in the past decade to improve the breadth and depth of gang literature.

Gang research in the past ten years has begun to ask questions from a developmental perspective, which examines the lasting impact of gang membership on individuals and society (Howell & Egley, 2005; Thornberry et al., 2003). Thornberry et al. (2003) published a book titled *Gangs and Delinquency in Developmental Perspective* that examined gang membership through a life course perspective. Following, Howell and Egley (2005) applied this theory to identified risk factors for gang membership and delinquency.

Recent gang research has also frequently focused on which individual and societal factors most reliably predict gang membership. Researchers have focused on risk and protective factors within the neighborhood, school, family, peer, and individual domains (Bell, 2009; Hill, Lui, & Hawkins, 2001; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). These studies built on research in the 1990's that identified significant risk factor domains for youth (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Esbensen &

Deschenes, 1998) by identifying the significance of specific variables within those domains, such as violent victimization (Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2000; Taylor, 2008); drug use (Bjerregaard, 2010; Hunt, Joe-Laidler, & Evans, 2002); and school maladjustment (Dishion, Nelson, & Yasui, 2005). These variables have been found to have a significantly higher predictive reliability than other risk factors variables, such as self-esteem. In addition, research has found that the more of these risk factors a youth has, the more likely he or she is to join a gang (Hill et al., 2001; Howell, 2010).

In an essay summarizing literature on violent victimization of youth gang members, Taylor (2008) found that research supports that youth gang members experience more victimization before, during, and upon exiting the gang than other groups of youth. This essay supported previous research that identified violent victimization as a predictive factor for youth who join gangs (Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999; Miller, 1998) and has continued to reflect a dominant theme in research on risk and protective factors of youth gang members (Bell, 2009; Howell, 2010).

Bjerregaard (2010) examined drug use and drug sales using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth from 1997. Bjerregaard (2010) found that drug sales were more common in youth gang members as they became older and that they generated a higher income from drug sales as they approached adulthood. The study also found that youth gang members use marijuana more frequently than nongang youth, which supports findings from other studies (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Hill et al., 2001; Hunt et al., 2002).

Dishion et al. (2005) examined the role of middle school adaptation in 714 6th graders from three different middle schools. The study followed up with youth in the 8th grade to determine how grades, antisocial behavior, and peer relationships had been influenced by school adaptation and to determine if these factors were predictive of gang membership (Dishion et al., 2005). The study found that antisocial behavior was the strongest predictor of self-reported gang membership, followed by association with deviant peers, being disliked by peers, and school failure (Dishion et al., 2005). As a result, it appears that poor middle school adaptation is predictive of youth gang membership (Dishion et al., 2005).

Research on risk and protective factors has also determined that a variety of factors appear to predict male and female gang membership to differing degrees (Bell, 2009; Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; Wood & Alleyne, 2009). That is, the routes to and consequences of gang membership are unique for males and females, yet there is still overlap in these areas that is unique to general experience of gang membership (St. Cyr & Decker, 2003).

Bell (2009) examined the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to determine whether male and female adolescents experienced the same risk factors leading to gang membership differently. This study found that neighborhood disadvantage, school safety, parent-child relationships, and exposure to fighting affected male and female adolescents' chances of joining a gang nearly equally (Bell, 2009). However, Bell (2009) also found that neighborhood crime, school safety, and a lack of close familial relationships more significantly impacted the rate of female gang membership. These findings differ

somewhat from Bjerregaard and Smith's (1993) gender comparison study, which found that parental attachment was not predictive of gang membership and that the expectation of completing school was the only variable uniquely correlated with female gang membership. While Bell (2009) did not examine violent victimization in her study, other studies conducted by Joe-Laidler and Hunt (2001) and Moore and Hagedorn (2001) identified violent victimization as a risk factor that more significantly affected female gang membership than male gang membership.

Moore and Hagedorn (2001) acknowledged the limited quantity of research specifically about females in gangs, and suggested that further research be conducted in nearly all areas pertaining to female gang membership. Miller (2001) provided the most current, in-depth account to date of female youth gang membership through her journalistic account of girls in Columbus and St. Louis in her book *One of the Guys: Girls, Gangs, and Gender*. Her book explored the risks and variables associated with female gang membership and was a significant addition to the literature, one that firmly documented the need for research on girls in gangs.

In order to further understand girl gang members' marginalization, femininity, and roles in the gang, Joe-Laidler and Hunt (2001) interviewed 141 female gang members in the San Francisco bay area about how they defined respect, respectability, and their roles in the gang. They found that, for girl gang members, respect and respectability were directly related to appearances and conduct that were reflective of femininity, and that being respectable

distinguished oneself from others and provided a sense of status within the gang (Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001). They identified that this was different from the more masculine form of respect in gangs: a demand for authority and power that was typically attained through aggressive behavior (Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001). In addition, males could demand respect whereas females must earn respect by negotiating a balance between standing up for herself and accepting ascribed roles, between being streetwise and innocent, and between self-control and readiness to fight for the gang (Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001). In essence, girl gang members defined respectability as both a rejection and acceptance of conventional gender roles (Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001).

Joe-Laidler and Hunt (2001) also found that female gang members controlled and ostracized other young women based on how well they negotiated this balance. Girls who were sexually promiscuous or who used drugs recklessly in front of male gang members were 'othered' and devalued or harassed by the more 'respectable' girls in the gang, who used the opportunity to confirm their own reputation (Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001). This information is consistent with Miller's (2001) findings and helps to explain why female gang members participate in the degradation of other young women and begins to explain female gang members' participation in violently exploitive acts, such as rape and the recruitment and entrapment of female prostitutes (Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001).

The roles and status of young women in the gangs varied most by the type of gang (Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001). A small number of young women were in independent gangs and appeared to have both more flexible roles and greater

solidarity; as a result, they were less likely to degrade other women or participate in exploitation of other women (Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001). The young women in mixed-gender gangs had more prescribed roles, rules, and placed clear markers on girls who were not respectable (Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001). They appeared to participate more heavily in ‘othering’ processes and sanctioned harsh punishments, including rape, for females who did not follow the norms of respectability (Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001).

In addition to the literature that explored general characteristics of femininity and gender roles, many researchers explored specific variables that appeared to have a more significant impact on female gang membership than on male gang membership. These variables included substance abuse (Bloom, Owen, Rosenbaum, & Deschenes, 2003; Hunt et al., 2002; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; St. Cyr & Decker, 2003); criminal history (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; Smith & Thomas, 2000; St. Cyr & Decker, 2003); violent victimization (Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2001); familial abuse (Bloom et al., 2003; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; St. Cyr & Decker, 2003); and runaway history (Bloom et al., 2003; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; Smith & Thomas, 2000; St. Cyr & Decker, 2003).

Interventions

Research over the past twenty years has determined that gang involvement is problematic and that prevention strategies are essential. The research on particular variables within risk and protective factor domains was particularly salient in the development of gang prevention programs. Most of the programs that were developed and have been evaluated were community-based,

collaborative programs that sought to address youth risk factors for gang membership (Howell, 2000; Howell, 2003; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2008; Spergel, 2007; Tita, Riley, Ridgeway, Grammich, Abrahamse, & Greenwood, 2003). Community-based programs attempt to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors in multiple domains so that youth are less likely to join a gang to fulfill their needs and are more likely to use community supports to enhance their resiliency (Howell, 2010). Some communities have favored intervention efforts that focus on gang suppression through increased law enforcement instead (Skogan & Steiner, 2004; Weisel & Shelly, 2004). However, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention reported that the most effective programs engage as many community agencies and individuals as possible, including law enforcement, schools, hospitals, churches, and youth programs (Howell, 2010).

While research has also indicated that female and male youth have different programmatic needs, very few gender-specific programs have yet been developed (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provided funding for gender-specific gang-prevention programs targeting female youth in 1990 (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). The programs were implemented in Boston, MA; Denver, CO; Hartford, CT; Minneapolis, MN; St. Louis, MO; Seattle, WA; Stockton, CA and demonstrated significant reductions in some types of delinquency, but were discontinued in 1995 (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). It was

speculated that this was because the focus and funding for gang intervention turned to law enforcement (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

Currently, no national gang-prevention programs are being implemented. Small-scale, gender-specific interventions are implemented in specific settings in some areas, but have not been evaluated for efficacy with other populations or in other settings and geographical areas. For example, the Phoenix Gang Intervention Curriculum has a gender-specific component and has been implemented in the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections with female youth but has not been evaluated or replicated (A.R. Phoenix Resources, Inc., n.d.). Also, there is a gang prevention program specifically for females at the Youth Employment Institute in Portland, OR, but it has not been evaluated or replicated either (Youth Employment Institute, 2011). Mother/Daughter Leisure Functioning was recently evaluated by Snethen (2009) who determined that the mother/daughter relationship can be a protective factor for female youth at risk of gang involvement. However, even this evaluated program is not recognized by the OJJDP and does not appear to be replicated nationally.

It is evident that research needs to continue to enhance the development, implementation, evaluation, and replication of prevention and intervention programs. It is also clear that more research on the specific prevention and intervention needs of female gang members can assist in developing gender-specific programs that can meet rigorous evaluation criteria.

Gang Theory

Some of the earliest perspectives on gang membership reflected social control theory, which suggested that people with low levels of self-restraint and low levels of attachment are more likely to engage in illegal behavior (Esbensen & Deschenes, 1998; Wood & Alleyne, 2009). This theory reflected societal beliefs during the 20th century that problems occurred within individuals. It has continued to be explored in more current gang research (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Esbensen & Deschenes, 1998; Thornberry, 2006). Studies that explored the predictive reliability of social control theory on gang membership have found mixed results, from low predictive reliability (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Esbensen & Deschenes, 1998) to moderate predictive reliability (Thornberry, 2006).

Another perspective of the 20th century that attempted to explain gang membership came from the social disorganization theory, which suggested that poverty and a breakdown of institutional control in disorganized communities provides a mechanism for gang involvement (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Wood & Alleyne, 2009). This theory focused more on problems within society, rather than problems occurring within individuals. As gang membership rose in the 1980's, a new perspective combined social disorganization theory with social control theory to describe an emerging sect of society labeled the "Urban Underclass," a group of people who were described as significantly marginalized and impoverished due to irrevocable societal segregation and persistent isolation from economic opportunity (Curry, 1998). This economic destabilization and the identification of the "Urban Underclass" may help to explain why youth living in

high-crime and impoverished areas are more likely to commit delinquent acts (Hill et al., 2001). However, Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) researched the impact of social disorganization and poverty on gang membership through the Rochester Youth Development survey and did not find any significant associations for males or for females.

Another theory that has been linked to youth gangs in strain theory. Strain theory stemmed from a belief about marginalized subcultures that reflected the social disorganization perspective (Wood & Alleyne, 2009). Social strain theory suggested that society sets goals for all people, such as economic stability, self-efficacy, and status, but limits the opportunities to achieve these goals to a limited number of people, typically those with middle or upper class backgrounds (Wood & Alleyne, 2009). Strain theory explained youth gang involvement by proposing that youth experiencing deprivation of opportunity are encouraged to find alternative means of achieving prescribed goals, such as through drug sales and obtaining status within the gang (Wood & Alleyne, 2009). Strain theory was developed as an eclectic theory, drawing from other perspectives rather than a new, alternative theory.

Social learning theory is a distinct theory that focuses on how youth learn from their environment, stating that delinquent and aggressive behaviors are learned through a process of observation, re-enactment, and reinforcement (Bandura, 1978; Esbensen & Deschenes, 1998). This theory preceded a similar concept, the group process perspective (Short & Strodtbeck, 1965), which suggests that peer delinquency may be an important factor in gang membership.

Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) found peers to be a significant risk and protective factor for both genders, though having anti-social peers was a more significant risk factor for male gang members, and having pro-social peers was a more significant protective factor for female gang members. Research has suggested that social learning theory and the group process perspective may be helpful in understanding and predicting gang membership (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Esbensen & Deschenes, 1998).

Wood and Alleyne (2009) recently conducted a systematic review to determine the role of theory in general gang research. The review does not discuss the impact of gender on application of theory. Wood and Alleyne (2009) explored multiple theories, including social disorganization, strain theory, and social control theory and highlighted research that both supported and critiqued these theories. The outcome of their review was a model for a more unified theory of gang involvement, one that incorporates aspects of multiple criminological theories, as well as psychological and sociological perspectives (Wood & Alleyne, 2009). They suggested that a more multidisciplinary approach that incorporates these perspectives will better serve to guide gang research in the future (Wood & Alleyne, 2009). However, their review, consistent with many prior research perspectives, fails to recognize gender and its role in shaping and responding to gang theory.

Researchers who study females in gangs typically endorse the formation of a gender-specific theory that can explain female gang involvement and that can describe young women's experiences in the gang (Bell, 2009; Bjerregaard &

Smith, 1993; Bloom et al., 2011; Campbell, 1984; Chesney-Lind, 1993; Curry, 1998; Esbensen & Winfree, 1998; Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001; Miller, 2001; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). Multiple studies have been conducted to determine the extent of gender's impact on gang involvement and the need for gendered theory (Bell, 2009; Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001; St. Cyr & Decker, 2003). These studies found that gang theories, while having similar implications for males and females, demonstrate nuances that explain different aspects of gang involvement for females as compared to males; as a result, they advocate for a gendered approach to gang research and theory (Bell, 2009; Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 2001; St. Cyr & Decker, 2003).

Feminism began to play a role in gang theory in the 1980's, as researchers became more interested in the female's perspective on her own experience (Campbell, 1984; Curry, 1998; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). Research through the feminist lens introduced the liberation theory, which suggested that female criminality was empowering, offering autonomy, financial freedom, and social status that was traditionally unavailable to women (Adler, 1975; Chesney-Lind, 1993; Curry, 1998). Campbell (1984) supported this theory through her study of Hispanic female gangs in New York, where she noted that young women of color who grew up in impoverished neighborhoods had inaccessible, unrealistic aspirations in a society that had little to offer them. Research through the feminist lens also introduced a contrasting theory, the social injury perspective, which suggested that the negative impact of female gang membership on the individual

and on society transcended any notion of personal liberation (Chesney-Lind, 1993; Curry, 1998; Miller, 2001). There is some consensus that evidence exists for both perspectives and that information learned through both perspectives enhances researchers' understanding of female gang involvement (Curry, 1998; Miller, 2001).

This study adopts the feminist perspective and multidisciplinary model proposed by Wood and Alleyne (2009).

Review of Variables

This study looks specifically at girl gang members' substance use, delinquency, family history, and mental health in order to better understand female gang members' treatment needs. A review of the research on these variables exposed multiple gaps, namely the paucity of research specifically on girl gang members and the lack of attention to issues behind drug use and delinquency, including familial abuse and mental health problems.

Substance abuse. Most studies that examine gang members' substance use ask respondents whether or not they have used a particular drug and sometimes also ask about the frequency of use. However, they typically do not specifically talk about substance 'abuse'. It is clear that gang members use drugs more frequently, in greater amounts, and experiment with more different types of drugs, than youth in the general population (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Hunt et al., 2002; Yoder, Whitbeck, & Hoyt, 2003).

In a study of 602 runaway and homeless youth, Yoder et al. (2003) found that both gang members and gang-involved youth were more likely to use

substances than nongang youth. This finding is supported by other studies that compared gang members to nongang members (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993). A study of 262 at-risk female youth, 22 percent of whom were gang members, identified that female gang members reported higher alcohol and marijuana use than both nongang females and nongang males (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993). In addition, female gang members reported slightly higher use of marijuana than male gang members (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993). Similarly, Esbensen and Huizinga (1993) found that female gang members used alcohol and other drugs at a significantly higher prevalence than nongang males and females. In addition, female gang members reported slightly higher prevalence of both alcohol and drug use than male gang members (Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993).

In 2001, Moore and Hagedorn conducted a review of existing literature on females in gangs for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). In the review, Moore and Hagedorn (2001) examined literature on substance abuse among girl gang members and found that female gang members had a variety of experiences with drugs. For example, Fagan's (1990) study was cited, in which 33 percent of female gang members used hard drugs and another 33 percent of female gang members stated they were not using drugs or alcohol. Overall, the review found that female gang members' substance use was of concern and required intervention (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

Brotherton (1996) compared three San Francisco street gangs on street-smarts and business knowledge; how tough their enforcement of business-related

codes was; and how gang business allowed members to become independent. Through snowball sampling, Brotherton (1996) identified 46 female gang members and interviewed them on these issues. Through the interviews, the study identified that all gang members said their gangs used drugs, among them marijuana, alcohol, crack, PCP, LSD, and coke (Brotherton, 1996).

Similar findings were made by Hunt et al. (2002) in a sample of 168 female gang members from 60 different gangs in the San Francisco Bay area, also identified using a snowball sampling strategy. Hunt et al. (2002) used an in-depth interview containing both quantitative and qualitative questions to examine the gendered ways in which female gang members used drugs and to examine how they defined acceptable drug use within the context of the gang. Hunt et al. (2002) found that drug use was a highly gendered activity, heavily influenced by negotiated definitions of femininity and acceptable drug use, which was typically defined by male gang members, but was enforced by both male and female gang members.

Enforcement by male gang members, particularly if the male was the female's boyfriend, could result in violent confrontation (Hunt et al., 2002). In addition, not following rules of restraint when using drugs in front of male gang members could lead to sexual victimization, in which the female was blamed (Hunt et al., 2002). Girl gang members mostly responded to these rules by following the restraints when in the company of males, but ignoring them when using drugs with other female gang members (Hunt et al., 2002). This was a way of maintaining respectability in the gang (Hunt et al., 2002). However, some girls

rebelled against the rules of drug use and were given less respectable positions within the gang by male gang members, which were then reinforced by the more 'respectable' female members (Hunt et al., 2002).

Of note is that the study also found that most girls were first exposed to and first experimented with drugs with immediate or extended family members and that most respondents noted that drug use, particularly by their parents, was disruptive to their family system (Hunt et al., 2002).

When quantitatively examining girl gang members' drug use, Hunt et al. (2002) found that 98 percent of respondents had used an illicit drug and 96 percent of respondents had tried marijuana, making it the most commonly used drug. Marijuana was also the most frequently used drug, with 65 percent of respondents having used marijuana over 50 times and 21 percent having used it daily within the week prior to the interview (Hunt et al., 2002). In addition, approximately 82 percent of the sample participants were polydrug users, with the frequency of other drugs used varying by ethnicity (Hunt et al., 2002). Other drugs used were LSD, cocaine, PCP, crack, methamphetamine, ecstasy, heroin, glue/inhalants, and quaaludes. Hunt et al. (2002) characterized female gang members overall as a heavy drug-using group and suggested that the extent and frequency of their drug use, particularly their polydrug use, was significantly higher than other youth populations.

Hunt, Joe-Laidler, and MacKenzie (2000) interviewed 97 female gang members from 53 gangs in the San Francisco Bay area to explore the role of female drinking in the context of the gang, including extent of use, relationship of

use to relationship with other members of the gang, and early drinking experiences within the family context. Hunt et al. (2000) found that drinking was an integral part of everyday gang life and that alcohol was often used throughout the day during regular social activities, including when gang members would 'kick back' or 'hang out'. Alcohol was also a significant component of more formalized 'partying' and could be part of gang rituals, such as after a funeral where a fellow gang member passed away or before and during initiation of a new gang member (Hunt et al., 2000). Drinking before violent activities among rival gang members was frequent and was one of the primary reasons that female gang members reported using alcohol (Hunt et al., 2000). Using alcohol also led to an increased desire for confrontation with rival gangs, even when confrontations were not planned prior to drinking (Hunt et al., 2000). The other primary reason girls cited for drinking was to improve their self-confidence (Hunt et al., 2000).

This study also found that gender roles created rules for girls' drinking and that most girls enforced these rules and punished other girls for not following them, even if they stated to the interviewer that they did not like males making rules about their drinking (Hunt et al., 2000). The most salient way in which these rules affected the young women was if they drank too much, in which case they could lose their 'respectability' and were often blamed for the consequences of intoxication, including rape (Hunt et al., 2000). To protect against this, the girl gang members often created their own contexts where they could break the gang's rules of drinking, such as by drinking only in the company of other girl gang members and at each other's houses (Hunt et al., 2000). The rules laid out by

male gang members were not enforced by female members when the girls drank by themselves (Hunt et al., 2000).

Another similar pattern in the context of drug use between Hunt et al. (2002) and Hunt et al. (2000) was that the family environment often exposed girl gang members to drug use. For example, Hunt et al. (2000) found that 50 percent of respondents reported that one or more of their family members were alcoholics. In addition, 73 percent of respondents reported that they started drinking regularly at or before the age of 15 (Hunt et al., 2000). At the time the study was conducted, 44 percent of the female gang members reported hard liquor as their beverage of choice, the highest percentage of any type of liquor (Hunt et al., 2000). These patterns of exposure within the family setting and of high alcohol use reflect the overall pattern of drug use identified by Hunt et al. (2002).

An earlier study looked specifically at a different drug: heroin (Moore, 1994). Moore (1994) identified 51 young women through probability sampling from two of the oldest barrio gangs in Los Angeles in order to explore the life course of Chicana gang members who were heroin users and the influence of gender and culture on young women's drug use. Respondents were asked whether or not they had used heroin and were then interviewed about their drug use or decision not to use drugs (Moore, 1994). Overall, 41 percent of the female gang members interviewed reported heroin use, which Moore (1994) described as uncharacteristic of Chicana females and connected high prevalence of use to gang membership. Through this study, Moore (1994) found that girl gang members who used heroin were more likely to come from disruptive, violent, and unhappy

homes; were more likely to have substance-using mothers; were more likely to have dealt drugs as teens; and were more likely to have been incarcerated than other female gang members and even heroin-using male gang members. Moore (1994) also found that heroin use tended to increase the negative impact of the gang on females over their life course, increasing their chances of staying in the gang and decreasing their options for other career advancement.

It is clear that many female gang members use drugs and the research suggests that female gang members use drugs more frequently and are more often polydrug users than both nongang males and females (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Brotherton, 1996; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Hunt et al., 2002; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; Yoder et al., 2003) and that they may even use some drugs at a higher frequency than male gang members (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Hunt et al., 2002; Moore, 1994). These study findings also suggest that there is a specific context in which female gang members use drugs. Their exposure often first occurs at home and then is extended when they join the gang to other drugs and to other contexts (Hunt et al., 2000; Hunt et al., 2002; Moore, 1994). In addition, the context of use is highly gendered and comes with specific expectations that both male and female gang members enforce; however, girl gang members are able to escape these rules when they use drugs in the absence of male gang members (Hunt et al., 2000; Hunt et al., 2002).

Delinquency. Delinquency is typically defined in terms of minor, moderate, and serious delinquency and is most often documented as prior delinquency through self-report or through police records (Deschenes &

Esbensen, 1999; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Miller & Decker, 2001; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). Minor delinquency is considered somewhat normative for adolescents, but the high rates of moderate and serious delinquency among gang members, including violent crime, is more troublesome (Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Giordano, 1978; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; Thompson & Lozes, 1976).

A multisite evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program yielded data for Deschenes and Esbensen (1999), who examined the impact of gender on violent crime through a cross-sectional design that included 623 gang members. Deschenes and Esbensen (1999) found that more than 90 percent of gang males and females had engaged in violent behavior and that female gang members engaged in violent behavior at higher rates than male and female nongang youth. For girls, the most prevalent violent offenses were engaging in gang fights and hitting someone ‘with the idea of hurting them’ (Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999). It appears, however, that male gang members still commit the most serious violent offenses at higher rates than female gang members (Chesney-Lind, Shelden, & Joe, 1996).

Another study by Esbensen and Huizinga (1993) found similar results using data from the Denver Youth Survey. In the study, 5 percent of youth were gang members and, of these, 20 to 46 percent were female depending on the year in Esbensen and Huizinga’s (1993) cross-sectional analysis. Esbensen and Huizinga (1993) found that female gang members had a significantly higher

prevalence of delinquency (including street offending, drug sales, serious offending, and minor offending) compared to nongang females.

Through a national survey of 213 girls, Smith and Thomas (2000) categorized violent and nonviolent girls and questioned them about anger, school, and relationships in order to compare the two groups. While gang membership was mentioned as a risk factor for increased violence and some of the violent girls' anecdotes described gang affiliation, Smith and Thomas (2000) did not specify the number of female gang members in the study. The study revealed that girls' violent offending had increased (Smith & Thomas, 2000). For example, the Violent Crime Index (VCI) arrests of female juveniles increased by 108 percent from 1973 to 1992 (Smith & Thomas, 2000). Nonetheless, other data sources have suggested that girls' involvement in violent offenses has not changed significantly (Chesney-Lind et al., 1996).

Smith and Thomas (2000) questioned why girls engaged in violence and found that many of them described it as a choice between "being violated or being violent," a response to previous victimization (Smith & Thomas, 2000, p.552). The study also found that the most common charge girls involved with the juvenile justice system had was for assault and that 48 percent of violent girls reported bringing a weapon to school, the most common being a knife, but also brass knuckles, box cutters, razors, and screwdrivers (Smith & Thomas, 2000). This data is relevant to female gang delinquency because girl gang members are more likely to engage in delinquency than their nongang peers, both male and female (Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993). As a result,

it can be inferred that many of the girls arrested for violent offenses, such as assault, and who bring weapons to school, could be gang members.

Bloom, Owen, Rosenbaum, and Deschenes (2003) studied the individual and social factors contributing to delinquency by conducting focus groups with females involved in the juvenile justice system in California. Bloom et al. (2003) did not specify the percentage of girls who were gang involved, but did report that gang involvement contributed to delinquency for a number of the girls in the study. Bloom et al. (2003) found that girls were more likely to commit some status offenses such as running away, petty theft, assault, and battery than were males. However, of girls incarcerated in 1996 in California, 75 percent were committed for violent offenses, a considerable increase from thirty years earlier (Bloom et al., 2003). In a sample of 108 female juvenile offenders, 54 percent of whom had been or were in a gang, Giordano (1978) also found that girls in gangs were significantly more delinquent than other girls ($p < .001$). The study found that gang affiliation and self-reported delinquency were strongly correlated (Giordano, 1978).

Moore and Hagedorn (2001) conducted a review of existing literature on females in gangs and found that female gang members offend at higher rates than nongang females and nongang males, but at lower rates than male gang members. In addition, Moore and Hagedorn (2001) noted that girls' charges were more often for property crimes, drug crimes, and status offenses than for violent crimes. This data is consistent with Chesney-Lind et al.'s (1996) review, which found that female gang members were three times more likely to commit property offenses

than male gang members and were nearly equally likely to commit drug-related offenses. In addition, Moore and Hagedorn (2001) reviewed data on gang-related arrests in Chicago from 1993 to 1996, which showed that drug offenses and violent offenses were the most common charges for female gang members. The review also found that female gang members were frequently involved in gang fights and often carried weapons, though their rates of violent offending were consistently lower than male gang members' (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). This data is again consistent with Chensey-Lind et al.'s (1996) findings.

In 1993, Bjerregaard and Smith studied female gang participation, causes, and consequences in order to fill some of the gaps in the literature on female gang members. The study included 262 at-risk female youth, 22 percent of whom were gang members, identified through the Rochester Youth Development survey in New York (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993). The study found that 68 percent of gang females reported moderate delinquency, compared to 32 percent of the at-risk, nongang female (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993). In addition, no significant differences were found between male and female gang members' rates of minor and moderate delinquency; however, male gang members were reportedly more likely to engage in serious delinquency (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993). This data is reflective of St. Cyr and Decker's (2003) study, in which seven female gang members detained by the St. Louis Juvenile Court were interviewed about their involvement in delinquency. The girl members reported that they believed girl gang members participated in all major gang activities, including drug sales, gang

fight, and property crimes, which would typically fall under minor and moderate offending (St. Cyr & Decker, 2003).

Brotherton (1996) compared delinquency in three gangs in San Francisco and identified 46 female gang members within these gangs. The female gang members in two of the three gangs reported involvement in drug dealing, one gang in crack dealing and one in coke and marijuana dealing (Brotherton, 1996). Female gang members of one gang also reported involvement in prostitution and pimping and members of two gangs reported boosting, or shoplifting (Brotherton, 1996). In addition, drug sales in particular – but other delinquent activities as well – helped to create a degree of autonomy for many of the gang females who felt they did not have other options for financial success and independence (Brotherton, 1996).

In 2001, Miller and Decker specifically examined how gender differences affected girl gang members' patterns of offending, their victimization risk, and their involvement in gang homicide. The sample of 27 female gang members was obtained through snowball sampling and connections with agencies serving youth in the St. Louis area (Miller & Decker, 2001). It is part of the data that was used in Miller's (2001) book *One of the Guys*. Homicide data to assist in the analysis was obtained from the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (Miller & Decker, 2001). The study found that girls' involvement in gang crimes sometimes went undetected because of their gender and that the girls could take advantage of this (Miller & Decker, 2001). For example, one girl reported that if a male gang member drove a stolen car, he was less likely to be pulled over and

arrested if he had a female with him (Miller & Decker, 2001). Another female gang member reported that police did not suspect she was dealing drugs because they were more suspicious of young men hanging around in groups (Miller & Decker, 2001).

Nonetheless, delinquency was common among girls in the study (Miller & Decker, 2001). Miller and Decker (2001) found that almost two-thirds of the girls had sold drugs, with marijuana and crack the most prevalent, and that approximately 26 percent sold drugs regularly. The crimes that a sizeable number of girls had committed in the past six months were hitting someone with the intention of hurting them (67 percent) and carrying a hidden weapon (56 percent) (Miller & Decker, 2001). The most common crimes girl gang members had engaged in were hit someone with the intention of hurting them (85 percent); carried a hidden weapon (89 percent); participated in a gang fight (85 percent); and attacked someone with a weapon or with the intention of seriously injuring them (74 percent) (Miller & Decker, 2001). Female gang members were more likely to use and carry a knife; only a few had carried a gun (Miller & Decker, 2001).

Overall, Miller and Decker (2001) found that some girls were significantly delinquent, while others mostly participated in gang fights. Examination of homicide data revealed that females were far less likely to be victims of gang homicide because their confrontations more often involved knives and rival gang members of the same gender (Miller & Decker, 2001). Male gang members were more likely to use guns and to be killed during confrontations (Miller & Decker,

2001). Only 8 percent of gang homicides in St. Louis from 1990 to 1996 involved female victims and 74 percent of these homicides were drive-by or walk-by shootings where the female victim was not the intended target (Miller & Decker, 2001). This is consistent with the female gang member narratives, where they stated that they were more fearful of being killed accidentally than purposively (Miller & Decker, 2001).

Miller and Decker (2001) also examined girl gang members' victimization as it related to delinquency and found that more delinquent youth were more likely to have higher rates of victimization. The study found that 41 percent of the sample had been stabbed and that 44 percent had been sexually assaulted (Miller & Decker, 2001). The majority of gang girls who had been stabbed were involved in more serious offending (Miller & Decker, 2001).

After arrest data from 1967 to 1974 demonstrated that female crime was increasing and that the contribution of female offenders to typically male offenses increased significantly ($p < .001$), Thompson and Lozes (1976) conducted a study to identify the underlying factors. Thompson and Lozes (1976) used the Jessness Inventory and data from the Maryland Juvenile Court in an attempt to identify personality patterns among seven female gang members that could potentially explain their heavier involvement in delinquency than their nongang peers. The seven girls were participating in group therapy sessions through a psychological services program after contact with the Maryland Juvenile Court system (Thompson & Lozes, 1976). The seven girls had charges including assault, disorderly conduct, breaking and entering, stealing, and incorrigibility (Thompson

& Lozes, 1976). Through the study, Thompson and Lozes (1976) determined that the gang females had an identifiable personality pattern, including distrust for authority; an external locus of control; impulsivity; and disregard for societal norms and rules, which distinguished them from other delinquent females used as a comparison group in the study.

Despite an inability to generalize these findings and the limitation of using girls already identified as needing counseling services to demonstrate personality patterns, Thompson and Lozes's (1976) study was nonetheless one of the first to examine the factors that led to increased involvement in delinquency through the gang context. The present study will not examine personality traits, but will examine other issues that contribute to gang membership and subsequently to increased involvement in substance use and delinquency, including the family context and mental health issues.

Victimization in the home. Many studies have examined girls' exposure to violence and victimization as risk factors for gang membership and delinquency (Bloom et al., 2003; Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2001; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; Smith & Thomas, 2000; Yoder et al., 2003). In these studies, violent victimization is any type of offense that a girl experiences where she is a victim, which may include assault, injury by a weapon, domestic violence, familial abuse (physical, sexual, and neglect), and other similar experiences (Bloom et al., 2003; Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2001; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; Smith & Thomas, 2000; Yoder et al., 2003). However, few studies have actually explored victimization in the youth's home.

Hunt and Joe-Laidler (2001) conducted a study with a sample of 141 female gang members from 44 gangs in the San Francisco Bay Area in order to fill some gaps in previous literature on the nature and extent of violence both before and during gang membership and on the extent of girls' involvement in violence as both victims and perpetrators. Hunt and Joe-Laidler (2001) found that girl gang members experience extensive violence in numerous settings throughout their life, including the family, their romantic relationships, and their daily activities within the gang. The study also found that girl gang members often join gangs for a protective sense of family (Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2001) even though gang membership is associated with increased victimization (Melde, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2009; Miller, 1998; Smith & Thomas, 2000). This is consistent with the perspective that gang members may prefer the predictive and more controlled violence of gang membership over the chaos and lack of predictability in family and interpersonal violence (Melde et al., 2009; Miller, 1998; Smith & Thomas, 2000).

Yoder et al. (2003) conducted a study with 602 homeless and runaway youth, where 15 percent of the participants were gang members and 32 percent were gang-involved. Of identified gang members, 39 percent were female (Yoder et al., 2003). Of gang-involved youth, 59 percent were female (Yoder et al., 2003). The study found that 35 percent of gang members and gang-involved youth experienced neglect and that approximately 25 percent of them had experienced sexual abuse (Yoder et al., 2003). These numbers were not significantly different from the nongang homeless and runaway youth in the study

(Yoder et al., 2003). However, the data also showed that gang-involved youth were significantly more likely to have been victims of physical abuse and that gang members were significantly more likely to have been threatened or assaulted with a weapon by a family member (Yoder et al., 2003).

Bloom et al. (2003) conducted a study with females involved in the juvenile justice system in California in order to understand the individual and social factors that contributed to female delinquency. Sexual, physical, and emotional abuse were found to have a significant and long-term impact on female delinquency (Bloom et al., 2003). Many of the girls in the study reported that suffering abuse was part of what led them to delinquent peer groups (Bloom et al., 2003). Bloom et al. (2003) also identified that running away from home was often one of the first delinquent acts the girls committed and that it was generally due to not feeling that it was safe to live at home.

In Hawaii, Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) found similar negative impacts of experiencing abuse for girl gang members. Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) interviewed 48 youth, 13 of whom were girls, from gangs in Hawaii to explore both males' and females' reasons for joining gangs. In interviewing the youth, they found that 75 percent of the female gang members reported physical abuse at home and 62 percent reported being sexually abused or sexually assaulted by family members (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995). The study also found that female gang members were more likely to have experienced abuse within the home than were male gang members (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995).

Moore and Hagedorn (2001) conducted a review of existing literature on females in gangs for the OJJDP. In the review, Moore and Hagedorn (2001) stated that research generally suggests that there are higher rates of sexual abuse in the backgrounds of female gang members than there are in the backgrounds of male gang members or female nongang youth. The review's findings prompted Moore and Hagedorn (2001) to suggest that female gang membership is a serious concern and that more research needs to examine abuse as a risk factor for female gang membership. Overall, Moore and Hagedorn (2001) identified that female gang members were more likely to come from troubled homes and were more likely to have run away to avoid violence in the home than were male gang members. This is consistent with the findings of Smith and Thomas (2000), which suggested that girls who are abused at home are more likely to run away from home and may resort to delinquency to survive and to protect themselves. Abuse is a salient issue when studying female gang membership, particularly because of its cross-interaction with running away, a pathway to delinquency (Bloom et al., 2003; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; Smith & Thomas, 2000).

Runaway history. Running away from home can be classified differently depending on the study and the participants. Some have defined it through the youth's perceptions, others through delinquency reports; this choice is typically influenced by the breadth and focus of the study. Running away can last for a few hours or for years depending on the youth's situation and how it is being defined by the reporter (Bloom et al., 2003; Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2001).

Through a national survey of 213 adolescent females, Smith and Thomas (2000) categorized violent and nonviolent girls and questioned them about anger, school, and relationships in order to compare the two groups. While Smith and Thomas (2000) discussed gang involvement as a risk factor for increased violence among girls, they did not specify how many girls in the sample were gang-involved. Nonetheless, the study identified some interesting points when considering girls' risks for running away. Violent girls were more likely to report poor relationships with their families (28 percent) than were nonviolent girls (6 percent) and girls who were abused were more likely to run away from home to avoid their families (Smith & Thomas, 2000). Smith and Thomas (2000) determined that the experience of abuse within the home was what most frequently led girls to run away. Running away was directly linked to victimization and subsequently became linked to violence and delinquency, as girls were frequently unable to survive on the streets without engaging in any delinquent behavior (Smith & Thomas, 2000).

Bloom et al. (2003) studied the individual and social factors contributing to delinquency by conducting focus groups with females in the juvenile justice system in California and found similar results. Data collected in California revealed that female juveniles were responsible for 62 percent of 83,000 runaway cases over a six-year period (Bloom et al., 2003). The percentage of juveniles who were gang members was not identified. However, running away was a significant risk factor for delinquency and Bloom et al. (2003) found that that running away was associated with negative peers groups. For example, running

away was often the first delinquent act committed by many of the girls and often led to a path of increased delinquency through involvement with negative peers and through substance abuse (Bloom et al., 2003). In addition, physical and sexual violence were the most commonly cited reasons why the delinquent girls felt they could no longer live in their homes and instead decided to put themselves at the mercy of the streets (Bloom et al., 2003).

Runaway history is a factor often overlooked by gang researchers. It is a risk factor associated with abuse and delinquency, but it has not been examined in most studies on girls in gangs to date. However, Hunt and Joe-Laidler (2001) attempted to fill some of the gaps in the literature on females in gangs through an analysis of interviews with 141 female gang members from 44 gangs in the San Francisco Bay area. Through a study focusing on the nature and extent of violence, both before and during gang membership, as well as on the extent of girls' involvement in violence both as victims and perpetrators, Hunt and Joe-Laidler (2001) identified that running away was a common escape from parental drug use, family conflict, and family violence. More than half of the respondents had run away from home at least once and some girls had run away from home more than twenty times (Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2001). This study suggests that running away is a salient factor to consider when looking at girls in gangs, for the same reasons that it is a salient factor when looking at violent or delinquent girls: it is a complex issue, intertwined with abuse, delinquency, and family conflict (Bloom et al., 2003; Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2001; Smith & Thomas, 2000).

Mental health. Mental health problems are typically defined as the presence of a classified mental health disorder (Ellickson, Saner, & McGuigan, 1997; Teplin, Abram, McClelland, Dulcan, & Mericle, 2002). The presence of a mental health disorder is determined by a qualified mental health practitioner, which varies by setting, and is presented in the form of a diagnosis (Ellickson et al., 1997; Teplin et al., 2002).

Ellickson et al. (1997) studied longitudinal data for more than 4,500 high school seniors and dropouts in California and Oregon in order to understand the prevalence of violent behavior and co-occurring problems. Of the study participants, 54 percent were female (Ellickson et al., 1997). Although the study did not specify how many respondents were gang-affiliated, Ellickson et al. (1997) found that 13 percent of males and 3 percent of females had engaged in gang fights. Using the 5-item Mental Health Index (MHI-5) Ellickson et al. (1997) found that violent females were significantly more likely to have poor mental health than were violent males or nonviolent females. This is similar to the findings of Teplin et al. (2002), which demonstrated that delinquent females were more likely to have affective and anxiety disorders than were delinquent males. The higher prevalence of mental health problems among violent and delinquent girls, many of whom are gang members, indicates that girls need gender-specific interventions targeting the emotional and behavioral problems that co-occur with violent and delinquent behavior (Ellickson et al., 1997; Teplin et al., 2002).

Depression. Depression can also be difficult to operationalize, primarily because it is not represented in the same way in every study. It can be a general idea or feeling and some studies do not define how they operationalized depression. Others are very specific and use diagnostic indicators of depression, such as the presence of a major depressive episode, or an actual clinical diagnosis, such as Dysthymia (Teplin et al., 2002).

Yoder et al. (2003) conducted a study with 602 homeless and runaway youth, where 15 percent were gang members and 32 percent were gang-involved, in order to compare these groups to nongang youth. Of the gang members, 39 percent were female (Yoder et al., 2003). Of the gang-involved youth, 59 percent were female (Yoder et al., 2003). Yoder et al. (2003) did not find significant differences for depression between gang-involved youth, gang members, and non-involved youth. However, the study did not specify the number of gang-involved youth experiencing depression (Yoder et al., 2003).

A study on delinquent youth found that mental health problems were of particular concern for delinquent youth, though the study did not compare the results to non-delinquent youth (Teplin et al., 2002). Teplin et al. (2002) looked at 1,829 juveniles arrested and detained in Cook County, Illinois, and asked about the prevalence of mental health disorders in delinquent youth using the Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children (2.3). Of the respondents, 657 were females aged 10 to 18 (Teplin et al., 2002). The study found that affective disorders were particularly prevalent among female juveniles and that over 20 percent of them met criteria for a major depressive episode (Teplin et al., 2002). In addition,

approximately 16 percent met criteria for Dysthymia (Teplin et al., 2002). Female delinquent youth were more likely to meet criteria for a depressive episode and for Dysthymia than were male delinquent youth (Teplin et al., 2002). It appears that depression could be an important mental health concern for gang females, though it is not clear whether gang females would experience depression at a higher rate than girls in the general population. Limitations in the literature, and the lack of research on depression in gang members, prevent an understanding of the prevalence or significance of depression in girls in gangs.

Anxiety. Very few studies have asked gang members, particularly female gang members, about their experience of anxiety. Most of the studies that discuss youth anxiety do not discuss it as a mental health problem, but rather as an emotive descriptor in response to specific events. For example, Melde et al. (2009) examined anxiety as a factor related to actual and perceived victimization, both before and while the youth was a gang member. Through 15 schools providing a law-related education program, Melde et al. (2009) identified 1,450 youth, 54 percent of whom were female. Of the female respondents, 44 percent reported that their group of friends had been or was currently considered a gang (Melde et al., 2009). The study found that youth in gangs had higher levels of victimization, both perceived and actual, but that they had less *anxiety* about victimization than nongang youth (Melde et al., 2009). It is not clear from this study how youth gang members experience anxiety, but the findings suggest that gang youth appear to have less anxiety about being victimized even though they have a higher risk of victimization than nongang youth (Melde et al., 2009).

Despite the paucity of research on anxiety as a mental health concern for gang-involved youth, there are more studies examining how delinquent youth experience mental health problems, such as anxiety. While studies on delinquent youth do not typically ask about gang membership, gang members are more delinquent than nongang youth, so they are likely to be a sizeable percentage of the participants in these studies (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). One such study, which looked at 1,829 juveniles arrested and detained in Cook County, Illinois, asked specifically about the prevalence of mental health disorders in delinquent youth using the Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children (2.3) (Teplin et al., 2002). Of the respondents, 657 were females aged 10 to 18 (Teplin et al., 2002). Teplin et al. (2002) found that approximately 30 percent of the females had a diagnosis of an anxiety disorder, with Separation Anxiety Disorder and Overanxious Disorder as the most common. Delinquent female youth were more likely to have an anxiety disorder than delinquent male youth (Teplin et al., 2002). The findings from this study suggest that treatment for anxiety-related disorders may be more relevant for female gang members than for male gang members.

Anger. Anger can be difficult to operationalize. Oftentimes it is measured through specific questions that ask about aggressive desires or actions (Smith & Thomas, 2000). It can also be characterized through multiple descriptors, including intense, generalized, specific, internalized, or externalized (Lemus & Johnson, 2008; Smith & Thomas, 2000).

Through a national survey of 213 girls, Smith and Thomas (2000) categorized violent and nonviolent girls and questioned them about anger, school, and relationships in order to compare the two groups. The study found important differences in anger between violent and nonviolent girls (Smith & Thomas, 2000). For example, violent girls had anger that appeared to be more intense and generalized, whereas nonviolent girls had anger that was more in response to specific incidents (Smith & Thomas, 2000). This is important to conceptualizing how gang girls might be angry in different ways than nongang youth.

When measuring anger, Smith and Thomas (2000) asked girls whether they felt 'angry enough to hit or hurt someone' and found that many girls who answered 'yes' also responded that they felt 'lonely', demonstrating a correlation between these two variables (Smith & Thomas, 2000). Other significant findings were that 90 percent of violent girls, compared to 63 percent of nonviolent girls, felt 'sad and lonely' very often and that violent girls were more likely to externalize this loneliness through aggressive behaviors (Smith & Thomas, 2000). Somatic symptoms were also significantly correlated with 'feeling angry enough to hit or hurt someone' (Smith & Thomas, 2000). This information also has important implications for how anger is conceptualized and experienced in violent girls, many of whom are involved in gangs.

One study by Lemus and Johnson (2008) compared male Latino gang members to male Latino nongang youth in order to determine whether significant differences existed between the two groups on constructs of bullying, anger, self-esteem, and ethnic identity. Lemus and Johnson (2008) administered a Youth

Participation Questionnaire to 90 Latino males, 44 of whom were gang members, who were enrolled in an after-school community-based program in Washington for adolescents. The study examined anger through The Anger Expression Scale and measured externalization and internalization of anger (Lemus & Johnson, 2008). Through analysis of this data, Lemus and Johnson (2008) found that male Latino gang members had significantly ($p=.00$) higher levels of both internalized and externalized anger expression than their nongang counterparts. This was the only variable that was found to have statistically significant differences between the two groups (Lemus & Johnson, 2008). Lemus and Johnson (2008) suggested that elevated anger in male Latino gang members rendered them vulnerable for co-occurring problems, including suicidality and depression. It appears that anger is an important, yet under-studied, area of research on gang members and needs to be examined using a population of female gang members.

A book titled *The Prosocial Gang: Implementing Aggression Replacement Training* (ART) examined the effectiveness of using a group anger-management intervention to teach gang members prosocial skills in order to change their association with antisocial peers (Goldstein, Glick, Carthan, & Blancero, 1994). The ART implementation project worked with gangs as groups in New York City and Goldstein et al. (1994) found that this 2-year project was effective in teaching juveniles anger management and other prosocial skills. It can be inferred from the above results that anger is a problem area for gang youth and that it should be targeted in intervention programs for gang members (Goldstein et al., 1994). Nonetheless, more research needs to be conducted in this area to determine how

important an anger intervention component would be when working with female gang members (Lemus & Johnson, 2008).

Suicidality. Suicidality in the following studies was measured through questions about suicidal thoughts, or ideation, and through questions about suicide attempts (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Yoder et al., 2003).

Yoder et al. (2003) conducted a study with 602 homeless and runaway youth, where 15 percent were gang members and 32 percent were gang-involved, in order to compare these groups to non-involved youth. Of the gang members, 39 percent were female (Yoder et al., 2003). Of the gang-involved youth, 59 percent were female (Yoder et al., 2003). In the study, no significant differences were found for suicidal ideation among gang members, gang-involved youth, and non-involved youth (Yoder et al., 2003). However, gang-involved youth and gang members were significantly ($p<.000$) more likely to have attempted suicide (Yoder et al., 2003).

Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) interviewed 48 youth, 13 of whom were girls, from ethnic gangs in Hawaii to explore both males' and females' reasons for joining gangs. In interviewing the youth, Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) found that 71 percent of girls (as opposed to 33 percent of boys) reported suicidal thoughts and that these thoughts of suicide were primarily related to feelings of hopelessness about their lives and their futures. While this study did not compare gang girls to nongang girls, it does reveal that suicidality is a salient mental health consideration when treating girls in gangs, whether or not they are more suicidal than other girls (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995).

Research Questions

1. Are female juvenile gang members with a mental health diagnosis more likely to have a history of neglect, physical abuse, or sexual abuse?
2. Is there a relationship between age of first arrest and chronic substance use for female juvenile gang members?
3. What is the prevalence of mental health problems including depression/anxiety, anger/irritability, and suicide ideation among female juvenile gang members?
4. What is a descriptive profile of a female juvenile gang member?

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A sample of 127 female juvenile gang members from all 67 Florida counties was identified by the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice over a five-year period from 2001-2005. All female juveniles flagged as gang members by a Florida Department of Juvenile Justice staff member during this time were included in the present study. The girls were between 11 and 18 years of age ($M = 15.2$, $SD = 1.4$). Their racial makeup was 39.4% African American ($N = 50$), 21.3% Hispanic ($N = 27$), and 39.4% White ($N = 50$).

Instruments

Institutional Review Board permission was obtained from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice and from Arizona State University to utilize and analyze secondary data that had previously been collected, de-identified, coded, and stored on a locked computer.

Upon interaction with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, each female juvenile was interviewed by her parole officer or by a trained intake worker. The interview included administration of the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument – Second Version (MAYSI-2) (Grisso & Barnum, 2000); scoring of the Department's Supervision Risk Classification Instrument (SRCI); completion of the State Attorney's Recommendation form; and a predisposition report.

MAYSI-2. The Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument – Second Version (MAYSI-2) is a youth-reported inventory with 52 yes-no items regarding the truth of a statement “within the past few months” except for items regarding traumatic events, which ask whether the statement was true “ever in the past” (Grisso & Barnum, 2000). The instrument was administered by a juvenile probation officer and, when scored, includes six subscales for girls: Alcohol/Drug Use, Angry/Irritable, Depressed/Anxious, Somatic Complaints, Suicide Ideation, and Traumatic Experiences.

Each subscale except for Traumatic Experiences has a “caution” or “warning” cut-off score to assist the instrument interpreter in determining which youth should receive additional screening and may be in need of intervention. The caution cut-off score indicates that the youth scored at a level that may have a clinically significant degree of mental or emotional disturbance. Therefore, if youth score at or above the caution cut-off score, they should be considered for treatment of mental health problems (Grisso & Barnum, 2000).

The Alcohol/Drug Use subscale consists of eight questions intended to identify significant, not experimental, use of drugs or alcohol by youth. This subscale focuses on youth who should be identified at risk for drug or alcohol dependence. The higher the score (number of yes answers), the higher the risk for the youth to have substance dependence and potential reactions to the inability to access drugs in a residential setting. The caution cut-off score for this subscale is 4 (Grisso & Barnum, 2000).

The nine-item Angry/Irritable subscale was developed to identify feelings of anger, vengefulness, irritability, frustration, and tension associated with anger. An elevated score on this subscale suggests an increased risk of participation in impulsive behavior that may result in harm to self or others. A high Angry/Irritable score indicates that the youth has a high risk of acting out on annoyance, frustration, or anger through physical aggression. The caution cut-off score for this subscale is 5 (Grisso & Barnum, 2000).

The Depressed/Anxious subscale has nine questions and focuses on symptoms of depression and anxiety, including an assessment of inner turmoil, anxiety, and depressed mood. An elevated score on this subscale should be interpreted with caution because the instrument developers found that some scores dropped after a week or two, indicating absence of an ongoing problem. In addition, youth are arrested, transported, and transferred by the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice prior to completion of the MAYSI-2; therefore, the youth's self-report of depressed or anxious symptoms may be influenced by these experiences. The caution cut-off score is 3 (Grisso & Barnum, 2000).

The fourth subscale, Somatic Complaints, contains six questions about body aches and pains, including the physical manifestations of anxiety. Elevated scores here may occur for a variety of reasons, including comorbidity with depressed and anxiety, physical manifestations of trauma history or of a thought disorder, or as a sign of physical illness. The caution cut-off score for this subscale is 3 (Grisso & Barnum, 2000).

The Suicide Ideation subscale has five questions that specifically address suicidal thoughts, self-mutilation, and depressive symptoms. The questions focus on current feelings and behaviors, not past self-destructive behaviors. No research has assessed whether a high score on this subscale is related to an increased likelihood of suicide attempts. Nonetheless, a positive answer to any question on this subscale is considered to indicate suicide risk and intent. The caution cut-off score is 2 (Grisso & Barnum, 2000).

The final subscale, Traumatic Experiences, intends to discover if the youth has been exposed to traumatic life events. The five items ask questions about the youth's experiences throughout his or her entire lifetime. Traumatic experiences measured by this scale include childhood physical and sexual abuse and exposure to violence within the home and the community. Many youth can experience negative emotional consequences or Posttraumatic Stress Disorder as a result of traumatic life events. Elevated scores on this subscale are not intended to definitively diagnose Posttraumatic Stress Disorder; rather, elevated scores simply indicate the presence of traumatic experiences in the youth's past (Grisso & Barnum, 2000).

The MAYSI-2 subscale alpha coefficients for this study were strong, ranging from 0.73 to 0.89.

SRCI. The Supervision Risk Classification Instrument (SRCI) was created by the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice to assist in determining program placement of youth. The SRCI is an actuarial instrument with a total score that identifies the level of risk that the youth poses to the community if she is released.

The juvenile probation officer scores the SRCI using information obtained from the youth's family, the intake staff, and the youth herself. There are a total of 10 items on the SRCI concerning number of prior referrals, prior disposition or current status, age at current arrest, drug or alcohol use, school adjustment, peer relationships, parental control, history of abuse and neglect, mental health, and employment. Items within these categories that predict risk more strongly have the greatest values; therefore, a higher score on the SRCI indicates higher risk to the community. The SRCI has not been validated and no normative data are currently available. The female juvenile gang member's first SRCI from her first arrest was used to measure the variable "age at current arrest." If the female juvenile gang member was arrested multiple times, her SRCIs were compiled to provide a complete picture of the other variables, including drug use, mental health problems, childhood maltreatment, and school problems.

State Attorney's Recommendation form and predisposition report.

The juvenile probation officer also completes the State Attorney's Recommendation form and briefly describes in narrative form both the offense and the risk the youth poses to the community. This document is paired with the predisposition report – which is completed by the juvenile probation officer within 21 days of the youth's arrest – to provide further depth and detail to assess the juvenile. The predisposition report includes collateral information from the youth, her family or guardian, the Department of Children and Families, the arresting law enforcement agency and arrest reports, and past therapist and program reports.

The State Attorney's Recommendation form and the predisposition report were printed for each youth included in the current sample, then coded, and the data combined with the secondary data in SPSS. The predisposition report covered all past and present offense or violation data; family relationships, including who they resided with and whether their homes were chaotic or disorganized; drug and criminal involvement of family members; school attendance information; psychological information, including history of abuse or neglect and past diagnoses or services; and drug and alcohol use. However, the predisposition report content varied for each juvenile regarding the depth of the information provided. These narrative data were entered into mutually exclusive categories in a standardized coding form in an SPSS.

Identification as a Gang Member

Any employee of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice could flag a youth in their system as a gang member, including parole officers, intake workers, police officers, and other staff members. This information was typically gathered from a variety of collateral sources, including identification of known gang associates, information from the youth's School Resource Officer, information from the parent or guardian, identification of gang-related tattoos, possession of gang paraphernalia, and youth self-identification.

Data Analysis

This study utilized a cross-sectional design. Bivariate statistics including *t* tests and chi-square were used to examine the differences between female juveniles in the sample based on a variety of variable factors, including mental

health diagnosis; physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect; age of first arrest; and substance abuse.

T-Tests. In the present study, we used independent *t* tests to assess differences, such as age, within the sample of female gang members on a variety of variables, including mental health diagnosis and history of abuse. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine statistical significance.

Chi-Square. In the present study, we used chi-square tests to determine associations between multiple variables including mental health, history of abuse, age of first arrest, and substance use. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine statistical significance.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Examination of Mental Health Problems and History of Abuse

Mental health was measured on the SRCI with the question “Does the youth have a mental health diagnosis or should they/have they been recommended for a mental health assessment?” This question is answered by a juvenile probation officer through the assembling of information from interviews with the juvenile, her parents/caregivers, police reports, and past juvenile justice documents. Mental health diagnosis was indicated for 65 (51.2%) participants. When comparing female juvenile gang members with and without a mental health diagnosis using t-tests and chi-square analyses, no differences based on age or race were found. Mental health diagnosis was then explored in relation to a reported history of childhood maltreatment.

A history of childhood maltreatment including sexual abuse, neglect, and physical abuse was identified by the juvenile probation officer from collateral data sources and from the juvenile on the SRCI. Childhood maltreatment was reported for 53 (41.7%) participants. When comparing female juvenile gang members with and without a history of abuse using t-tests and chi-square analyses, no differences based on age or race were found but a significant relationship was found between mental health diagnosis and childhood maltreatment. Female juvenile gang members with a mental health diagnosis were found to more often report childhood maltreatment than female juvenile gang members without a mental health diagnosis ($1, N = 127$) = 6.124, $p < .013$.

Examination of First Arrest and Substance Use

Age of first arrest and substance abuse was explored among the female juvenile gang members. Age of first arrest was measured on the SRCI with the question “Age at time of current arrest,” which was indicated by the juvenile probation officer. Age of first arrest was categorized as 16 or older, 14 or 15, and 13 or younger. Substance use was measured on the SRCI with the question “How often does the juvenile use drugs and what is the impact on functioning?” This question is answered by a juvenile probation officer through the collection of information from interviews with the juvenile, her parents/caregivers, police reports, and other previous juvenile justice documents. A total of 70 (55.1%) female juvenile gang members indicated either no drug use or occasional drug use. A total of 57 (44.9%) female juvenile gang members indicated chronic use with serious disruption in functioning. When age of first arrest was compared to chronic substance use, female juvenile gang members who were younger at their age of first arrest were significantly more likely to report chronic drug use than female juvenile gang members who were older at their age of first arrest ($2, N = 127) = 6.344, p < .042$).

Prevalence of Mental Health Problems: Depression/Anxiety, Anger/Irritability, and Suicide Ideation

Prevalence of depression and anxiety was measured by the Depressed/Anxious scale on the MAYSI-2 through questions such as whether the juvenile “felt lonely too much of the time” or had “nervous or worried feelings [that] kept you from doing things you wanted to do” in the past few months. The

mean score for this subscale for all of the female juvenile gang members was 2.81 ($SD = 2.34$) and the cutoff score for a scale elevation is 3. A total of 60 (48.4%) female juvenile gang members were indicated to have a scale elevation. As a result, just under half of the female juvenile gang members reported experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety that warranted further evaluation or treatment.

Experiences of anger was measured by the Angry/Irritable scale on the MAYSI-2, which included questions such as “Have you felt angry a lot?” and “Have you hurt or broken something on purpose, just because you were mad?” in the past few months. The mean score for female juvenile gang members on this subscale was 4.90 ($SD = 2.62$) and the cutoff score for a scale elevation is 5. A total of 74 (59.7%) female juvenile gang members were found to have scored above the cutoff. The majority of the female juvenile gang members reported that they were experiencing problems with anger and irritability.

Prevalence of suicidality was measured by the Suicide Ideation scale on the MAYSI-2, which included questions such as “Have you wished you were dead?” and “Have you given up hope for your life?” in the past few months. The mean score for female juvenile gang members on this subscale was 1.08 ($SD = 1.70$) and the cutoff score for a scale elevation is 2. A total of 34 (27.4%) female juvenile gang members were indicated to have a score above the cutoff. Over one-fourth of female juvenile gang members indicated that they had suicidal ideation in the past few months.

The Girl Gang Member: A Composite Picture

The MAYSI-2 and SRCI results for each female juvenile gang member were closely examined in order to provide a descriptive profile of female juvenile gang members. Demographic data from the SRCI indicated that female juvenile gang members are more likely to be African American ($N = 50, 39.4\%$) or White ($N = 50, 39.4\%$).

On the MAYSI-2, female juvenile gang members on average reported scale elevations on three scales: Traumatic Experiences, Depressed/Anxious, and Angry/Irritable. On average, ($M = 1.56, SD = 1.22$) female juveniles said yes to one or more trauma question, such as “Have you ever been raped, or been in danger of getting raped” and “Have you ever been badly hurt or been in danger of getting badly hurt or killed?” Additionally, 74 (59.7%) of female juvenile gang members reported scale elevations on the Angry/Irritable index and nearly half ($N = 60, 48.4\%$) of female juvenile gang members reported scale elevations on the Depressed/Anxious scale.

On the SRCI, just over half of girls ($N = 65, 51.2\%$) were indicated to have a mental health problem. Also on the SRCI, more than half ($N = 70, 55.1\%$) of the female juvenile gang members reported either no drug use or occasional drug use, as compared to chronic drug use. Most girls also reported problems with school adjustment ($N = 102, 80.3\%$) with 17 (13.4%) reporting chronic tardiness or truancy and 85 (66.9%) reporting a history of suspension, expulsion, or dropping out. Almost all female juvenile gang members ($N = 118, 92.9\%$) lived in a home where their parent(s) or guardian(s) had limited to no control over

them and where they had limited or no supervision. Over half of female juvenile gang members ($N = 74$, 58.3%) denied a history of physical or sexual abuse and of neglect.

Overall, a descriptive profile of a typical female juvenile gang member identified them as being more likely to have a mental health diagnosis and to report mental health problems that included traumatic experiences, depression and anxiety, and anger and irritability; were more likely to use drugs occasionally or never; were more likely to have problems in school; were more likely to live in homes with little control or supervision; and were more likely to deny a history of abuse.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to create a more comprehensive picture of juvenile female gang involvement and to evaluate female juvenile gang members' treatment needs by examining mental health problems, history of abuse, age of first arrest, and chronic substance use in a sample of 127 female juveniles identified as gang members who came into contact with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice between 2001 and 2005. The results of this study suggest that mental health problems, history of abuse, age at first arrest, and chronic substance use are significant factors in understanding female juvenile gang members' treatment needs and that the relationship among these variables can help practitioners conceptualize and treat those in greatest need.

The first research question was whether female juvenile gang members who had a mental health diagnosis were more likely to report a history of childhood maltreatment or abuse (physical, sexual, or neglect) than female juvenile gang members who did not have a mental health diagnosis. After conducting within group comparisons, results indicated that female juvenile gang members with a mental health diagnosis were in fact significantly ($p < .05$) more likely to report a history of abuse.

More than half of female juvenile gang members in the study were indicated to have a mental health concern, including a current mental health diagnosis. This finding is consistent with previous research on violent and delinquent girls, which suggests that these girls are at an increased risk for mental

health problems and are more frequently diagnosed as such (Ellickson et al., 1997; Teplin et al., 2002). In addition, other studies consistently show that female gang members are more likely to have been a victim of some type of violence, frequently familial abuse, when compared to male gang members and nongang females (Bloom et al., 2003; Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2001; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Yoder et al., 2003). As a result, the relationship between the two variables does not come as a surprise. It appears that mental health and victimization (particularly childhood maltreatment) are partnered in significant ways.

The significance of the relationship between mental health problems and childhood maltreatment has several implications for researchers and practitioners. First, while it has been established that girls who come into contact with the juvenile justice system or who are delinquent often have mental health issues (Ellickson et al., 1997; Teplin et al., 2002) and come from victimizing environments (Bloom et al., 2003; Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2001; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Yoder et al., 2003) the actual link between the two has not been fully examined empirically. This finding adds to the literature on female juvenile gang members by suggesting that a significant relationship does in fact exist. From a practitioner standpoint, this means that mental health issues and abuse histories cannot necessarily be addressed alone and that girls who express both may be at increased risk for participating in a gang. As a result, prevention and intervention programs should especially target youth who have had contact with the child welfare system and who are assessed as having a mental health concern. Victimizing environments could also be seen as exacerbating, perpetuating, or

even contributing to, the development of mental health problems in female juveniles. This concern should be addressed by practitioners working with children, youth, and families and should be further explored through temporal-ordering research.

The second research question was whether or not a relationship existed between age of first arrest and chronic substance use. Within-group comparisons demonstrated that female juvenile gang members who were younger at their age of first arrest were significantly ($p < .05$) more likely to report chronic drug use than female juvenile gang members who were older at their age of first arrest.

Overall, female juvenile gang members' drug use was divided between chronic drug use and occasional or no drug use, with a slight majority of youth reporting occasional or no drug use. This finding was consistent with Moore and Hagedorn's (2001) review of literature on female gang members, where they also found that substance abuse and absence of drug use were equally divided. However, the present study's finding contradicts other studies that reported nearly all female gang members studied were drug users (Brotherton, 1996; Hunt et al., 2000; Hunt et al., 2002). This may be due to the fact that these studies included adult females in their samples, whereas the present study only included adolescent girls ages 11 to 18. These studies were also conducted in isolated locations such as specific cities while this study covered the entire state of Florida.

The findings in this study of the prevalence of drug use and its relationship to age of first arrest is compelling because it adds to the lack of consensus in the research literature about female juvenile gang members' drug use and raises

questions about the variable of age. In this study, participants were 11 to 18 years of age. The younger the female juvenile gang members were when first arrested, the more likely they were to have a chronic substance use problem. Other studies (Hunt et al., 2000; Hunt et al., 2002) have looked at young women in their mid-teens to thirties and found that nearly all participants used drugs. Moore (1994) noted in her study of female gang members who used heroin that most female participants said they did not start using heroin until their late teens or early twenties. These compiled findings together suggest that drug use can depend on a variety of factors, including age. The findings from the present study also suggest that female juvenile gang members who are arrested at a younger age are more likely to have a substance abuse problem, which may indicate the presence of other life problems that led to drug use and early involvement with the juvenile justice system. It is possible that these are the female gang members who are more likely to have a lifetime presence of gang membership and of drug use and are more likely to be identified by studies on adult female gang members. Research should further examine this link between age and substance abuse and should focus on determining other variables that play a role in early drug use specifically in female juvenile gang members who are first arrested at a young age.

Practitioners who work with youth in the juvenile justice system or through drug programs should be aware of the link between age at first arrest and the increased likelihood of a substance abuse problem if the female juvenile is arrested at an early age, such as before the age of thirteen. These female juvenile

gang members are likely at an increased risk for future problems and need treatment that focuses not only on their early drug use and arrest, but also on the underlying factors that led to significant problems this early in adolescence. Elementary and middle school social workers and psychologists have the opportunity to identify girls earlier who might be at risk for contact with the juvenile justice system (based on risk factors such as disciplinary problems in school or contact with the School Resource Officer) or who are at risk for a drug use problem, with the literature suggesting that family influences play a significant role in female juvenile gang members' drug use (Hunt et al., 2000; Hunt et al., 2002; Moore, 1994). As a result, family interventions may be most effective for substance abuse and delinquency prevention when youth are still school-age and have exhibited behavior patterns that catch the attention of school staff, particularly clinical practitioners.

The third research question was what is the prevalence of mental health problems among female juvenile gang members, including depression/anxiety, anger/irritability, and suicidality? Important results were noted for each of these subscales, with over half of female juvenile gang members indicating scale elevations for anger/irritability, just under half reporting scale elevations for depression/anxiety, and approximately one-fourth reporting suicidal ideation. This information is clinically significant because it demonstrates that female juvenile gang members have high mental health needs and that these needs include very serious concerns, including a high prevalence of suicidal ideations.

Very little research has been conducted on the prevalence of depressive symptoms in female juvenile gang members. One study found that approximately 20% of delinquent girls met criteria for a depressive or dysthymic episode (Teplin et al., 2002). Similarly, very little research has been conducted on the prevalence of anxiety symptoms in female juvenile gang members. Only one study has been conducted on anxiety and delinquent female adolescents, which was Teplin et al.'s (2002) study, where 30% of delinquent female adolescents met DSM criteria for an anxiety disorder (Teplin et al., 2002). If the presence of depressive and anxious symptoms are combined for Teplin et al.'s (2002) study, it would approximate a 50% prevalence, which is similar to the approximately 48% prevalence identified in the present study. However, it is difficult to compare the results of the present study to Teplin et al. (2002) since we used the MAYSI-2 scale instead of DSM classifications. Nonetheless, it is evident that girls who come into contact with the juvenile justice system should be screened for symptoms of depression and anxiety that meet DSM criteria and that could benefit from treatment. It is also clear that female juvenile gang members experience problems with depressive and anxious symptoms and that they need treatment programs that will focus on these specific problems. Future research should compare female juvenile gang members with the general population of adolescent females in order to determine whether female juvenile gang members are at increased risk for symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Anger has not been explored in the research on female juvenile gang members. Therefore, the prevalence rates of scale elevations on the

Anger/Irritability scale of the MAYSI-2 is an important contribution. Studies that were identified focused more on describing the context and expression of adolescent girls' anger (Smith & Thomas, 2000) or on male gang members (Lemus & Johnson, 2008). Nonetheless, these two studies found that violent girls (Smith & Thomas, 2000) and male Latino gang members (Lemus & Johnson, 2008) who had elevated experiences of anger were more likely to have co-occurring symptoms of sadness and loneliness (Smith & Thomas, 2000) and of depression and suicidality (Lemus & Johnson, 2008). This is similar to the findings of the present study, where similar percentages of youth indicated anger/irritability and depressive and anxious symptoms, and some expressed suicidal ideation. It is possible, therefore, that all three of these elements are connected for youth who are violent and gang members. Future research should further explore the link between these variables and should compare prevalence of anger/irritability between female juvenile gang members and adolescent females in the general population. Practitioners should be aware of the potential link between these symptoms and should take care to assess the presence of depressive or anxious symptoms, as well as suicidality, particularly if they are confronted with female juvenile gang members who are violent, angry, or irritable.

One study by Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) examined suicidality in female juvenile gang members. They found 71% prevalence, which is much higher than the 27% prevalence found in the current study. It is unclear what accounts for the large discrepancy in prevalence rates. Future research should examine the prevalence of suicidality among female juvenile gang members nationally to

determine how these rates might be geographically dispersed. This could assist in targeting suicide prevention where female juvenile gang members are most at-risk. Nonetheless, it is important that any percentage of youth feels like they no longer want to live. Practitioners who work with female juvenile gang members should be aware that suicidality is a problem within this population subset and should assess for suicidal ideation. Prevention and intervention program developers should note that scale elevations on the Suicide Ideation subscale of the MAYSI-2 indicate that female juvenile gang members may feel that their lives are hopeless and purposeless since this highlights the importance of having a treatment component that helps female juvenile gang members to identify reasons for living and to develop goals, skills, and aspirations that will help them to feel hopeful about their future. Fostering development of goals and skills could help female juvenile gang members build resilience that may reduce other problematic factors, including school problems, co-occurring mental health issues, and even gang membership itself since mental health problems are a risk factor for youth joining gangs (Howell, 2010).

The final research question was what is a composite picture of a female juvenile gang member? Developing a descriptive profile of a female juvenile gang member illuminates a gang-involved adolescent girl who has experienced one or more traumatic events in her lifetime; has used drugs occasionally or never; denies a history of abuse; and has mental health treatment needs. These aspects of the composite picture are mostly consistent with previous literature (Ellickson et al., 1997; Teplin et al., 2002), although there is some lack of

consensus over the prevalence of drug use in this population (Brotherton, 1996; Hunt et al., 2000; Hunt et al., 2002; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001) and some different findings for how much of the traumatic history is familial abuse (Bloom et al., 2003; Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2001; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Yoder et al., 2003).

The composite picture of a female juvenile gang member also includes two other components that were not the focus of this study: problems in school and low levels of parental control and supervision. These variables have a much stronger research base and are generally considered to be risk factors for youth joining gangs (Howell, 2010). Problems in school that have been found to increase risk for gang involvement include problematic middle school adaptation (Dishion et al., 2005); low school attachment (Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999); aggression, oppositional behavior, and inattention and hyperactivity in the classroom (Hill et al., 2001); low expectations for educational attainment (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993); and low academic achievement (Hill et al., 2001). School attachment and school expectations are particularly salient factors for female juvenile gang members (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993; Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999). Problems with low levels of parental control and supervision have also been found to increase risk for gang involvement (Bell, 2009; Howell, 2010), although Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) did not find parental supervision to correlate significantly with gang membership.

Since problems in school and low levels of parental control and supervision were found to be problematic for female juvenile gang members in this study, these factors should be addressed through prevention and intervention

programs, especially for youth at risk for joining a gang. Clinical personnel in schools have an opportunity to identify these youth potentially before they become gang members by intervening with youth who are having difficulties in school and whose parents have been found to be under-involved. Clinical personnel in secondary schools should consider that any students they see who are having difficulties with school achievement and truancy may also be gang members and should ensure that these youth's treatment plans and interventions include ways to help them be successful in school and that delineate ways to include the family more in the child's successful development.

This composite picture of a female juvenile gang member can serve as a foundation for creating or administering prevention and intervention programs by identifying what is most common among this population. General prevention programs may not be helpful for this population, as this population appears to have more specific needs. However, selected or targeted prevention programs would be beneficial. These programs should target girls who have experienced trauma; have dysfunction within their homes; are showing signs of school problems, such as academic failure or truancy; and who have a mental health need. These issues can be identified by a skilled social worker or psychologist in the child's school, who may meet the youth after she is referred for issues related to academic success. A skilled practitioner would likely be able to identify signs and symptoms of trauma, family dysfunction, and mental health problems that would further indicate the youth for a targeted prevention option.

Youth who are appropriate for intervention could be identified in much the same way, but may also need to be identified by School Resource Officers, juvenile probation officers, or other juvenile justice and child welfare agencies, since the juvenile presenting for intervention is likely to have already had contact with these systems. Interventions should concentrate on the issues identified in this descriptive profile, but they should also be focused to meet the individual and unique needs of the female juvenile gang member as they have been outlined throughout this study.

While this study did not attempt to evaluate the applicability of any particular theory, the results of this study appear to be most consistent with the multidisciplinary model (Wood and Alleyne, 2009) and with feminist theory (Curry, 1998; Miller, 2001). The results suggest that a multidisciplinary model is most effective for approaching female gang membership because of the interconnected nature of the criminal, social, and psychological systems in these girls' lives. These female juveniles are influenced by their social experiences within the family and the school and by their mental health needs in ways that influence their criminal behavior. Without a lens that incorporates all of these aspects, we would be missing integral pieces to conceptualizing and treating the female juvenile gang member. Additionally, gender differences necessitate a feminist lens due to the unique experience of girls, who are more likely than boys to be victims of personalized abuse, and who are influenced by their experiences of victimization in a patriarchal society (Bloom et al., 2003; Hunt & Joe-Laidler, 2001; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Yoder et al., 2003).

Limitations

As with any study, there are limitations to interpreting and generalizing the findings. While this study is representative of female juvenile gang members in Florida, it is not nationally representative of female gang members; therefore, the results cannot be generalized. This is a consistent limitation among the literature that focuses specifically on female juvenile gang members and more nationally-representative studies should be conducted. In addition, this sample only includes female juvenile gang members who were arrested at least once and who were flagged by someone in the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice as gang members. As a result, female juvenile gang members who did not have contact with the juvenile justice system were not included, limiting the generalizability of this study to only female juvenile gang members who were arrested in the state of Florida.

Other limitations include the self-report nature of the MAYSI-2, which is done when the female juvenile is detained, which may be a time when she is not willing to answer questions truthfully or may not answer reliably if tired or under the influence of drugs. Additionally, the SRCI has not been tested for validity or reliability. It is scored by the juvenile probation officer, but is often missing information until the youth is arrested multiple times and more information is gathered from the juvenile, her family, and other sources. For some youth who only had one arrest, there was sometimes very little or no information about drug use, mental health, or history of abuse. As a result, many female juveniles who had problems in these areas may have been missed and frequencies of these

variables may have been over or under-reported as a result. We believe the error to be in the direction of under-reporting for many of these variables.

Despite some of the limitations, this study is able to present a unique data sample, which is purely adolescent females and includes female juvenile gang members who have had contact with the juvenile justice system but are not necessarily incarcerated or perpetually delinquent. The data collection instruments, particularly the SRCI, also provided descriptive, detailed information that assisted in highlighting significant patterns among female juvenile gang members. These findings contribute to the literature on female gang membership with a unique sample and findings that have not previously been examined in this way.

SUMMARY

This study concentrated on discovering and analyzing the treatment needs of female juvenile gang members with a focus on mental health problems, substance abuse problems, delinquency (age of first arrest), and childhood abuse. Multiple significant results were found, including a link between mental health problems and histories of childhood abuse and between chronic substance use and age of first arrest. Prevalence of specific mental health concerns including depressive and anxious symptoms, anger and irritability, and suicidality were also examined. The culmination of findings indicates that female juvenile gang members have particularly high mental health treatment needs. Findings also suggest that these mental health issues occur within a context of other problems including possible childhood abuse, potential drug problems, low levels of

parental control and supervision, school problems, and contact with the juvenile justice system. These findings are primarily consistent with the previous literature. The findings also expand on the literature on female juvenile gang members, particularly in the area of mental health where there is a severe paucity of research specific to this population. This is an important addition, despite some of the limitations that restrict generalizability of the findings to all female juvenile gang members. More research should be conducted with this population to determine prevalence of mental health problems in female juvenile gang members nationally and to determine whether these prevalence rates differ from those in the general population of adolescent females.

The results of this study have significant implications for clinical practitioners, program developers, and other community-based interventionists. Prevention programs should be targeted for female juveniles who are at-risk for joining gangs by identifying pre-adolescent females who are having problems in school (academic and behavioral); who may show symptoms of depression, anxiety, anger, irritability, suicidality, or trauma; and whose families are under-involved or are involved with child welfare agencies. Practitioners working with female juveniles who are already in gangs should pay particular attention to mental health needs, but should approach them from a multimodal perspective that addresses contextual factors that may be causing, maintaining, or exacerbating mental health problems including drug use, family problems, school problems, and delinquency. Prevention, intervention, and treatment programs for female juvenile gang members should also be gender-specific, as young women

face unique challenges in their life that require a gendered approach and understanding.

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APPENDIX A

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE IRB APPROVAL



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Rick Scott, Governor

Wansley Walters, Secretary

February 13, 2012

Dominique Roe-Sepowitz
Arizona State University, School of Social Work
411 N. Central Avenue, Suite 800
Phoenix, AZ 85004-0689

Re: **Assessing the Treatment Needs of Juvenile, Female Gang Members: An Exploratory Study**

Dear Dominique Roe-Sepowitz,

I am pleased to inform you that the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your proposed study. This approval covers only the study identified in your proposal.

The following conditions apply:

- All information obtained from DJJ is confidential. It may not be disclosed to any person, business, government agency, or other entity unless the disclosure is authorized in writing by DJJ.
- You may not disclose any information that could reasonably lead to the identification of any individual youth. All data resulting from this research project must be published in aggregate form.
- Any person working on this research project must agree to be bound by these conditions concerning confidentiality of information.
- Any person working on this research project that has direct contact with youth or is working with identifiable data must submit proof of a completed DJJ background screening to the DJJ IRB prior to the start of the project.
- We require that you provide DJJ with a review copy of the final publication with a reasonable comment period prior to publication of the study findings. Additionally, we require that you provide a one to five page summary of the final project. This summary will be reviewed by the DJJ IRB. Please send the items to the IRB at the address listed below.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Greenwald".

Mark A. Greenwald
Institutional Review Board

2737 Centerview Drive • Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3100 • (850) 488-1850

<http://www.djj.state.fl.us>

The mission of the Department of Juvenile Justice is to increase public safety by reducing juvenile delinquency through effective prevention, intervention and treatment services that strengthen families and turn around the lives of troubled youth.

**Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
PRIVACY AND SECURITY AGREEMENT**

RECEIVED
12-12-12

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and Dominique Roe-Sepowitz (Requester) hereby enter into this Privacy and Security Agreement pursuant to § 985.04, Florida Statutes and DJJ Policy on Information Resource Security (Policy Number DJJ 5.30) for access to and use of any DJJ data. DJJ data is defined as data that is provided by DJJ or collected as part of the study that contains client-identifying information, such as name, social security number, agency identity numbers, or other data that could reasonably be traced back to an individual.

1. Access to and use of the above-listed DJJ data are limited to the following purposes:

The research protocol specified in "Assessing the Treatment Needs of Juvenile, Female Gang Members: An Exploratory Study" that was approved on January 12, 2012,

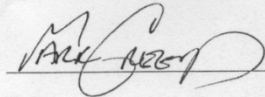
2. Requester agrees to the following terms and conditions for access and use:
 - a. DJJ data shall be kept confidential by the Requester. Except as provided in this agreement, DJJ data may not be disclosed to any person, business, government agency or other entity unless the disclosure is authorized in writing by DJJ. All DJJ data resulting from this research study must be published in aggregate form describing groups rather than individuals.
 - b. Access to DJJ data shall be strictly limited to the above stated purposes and restricted to those authorized agents of the Requester with need of it for those purposes. All such agents shall be specified by name in a written list provided to the DJJ Institutional Review Board (IRB) Director prior to commencement of the review.
 - c. Each authorized agent of the Requester provided access must agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, and shall be required to sign the attached form indicating their understanding of the confidentiality terms.
 - d. Disclosure of client-identifying information to any person or entity other than among authorized agents of the Requester or for any other purpose may place the discloser in violation of Chapters 119, 815, and § 985.04, Florida Statutes.
 - e. Requester shall not have on-line access to any client DJJ data. Access to DJJ data shall be provided either through hard copy printout(s) or electronic file(s) produced by DJJ or its contracted provider of data processing services.

- f. The Requester may be limited to accessing DJJ data by examination on-site at department offices or those of its contracted providers or partners under an existing inter-agency data sharing agreement, of hard copy files or printouts of the specified records listed above. Authorized agents of the Requester shall be allowed to take notes of information contained in the files or printouts, but shall not be allowed to copy any or remove any file, printout or portion thereof from the site.
 - g. If utilized, the random selection process and the number of cases to be selected shall be mutually agreed upon between the Requester and DJJ prior to access.
 - h. Any unauthorized access or disclosure will be immediately reported to the DJJ IRB Director. The DJJ IRB Director will notify the DJJ Information Security Manager for investigation and send a copy of incident reports to the DJJ Office of the Inspector General, which will decide whether to investigate further.
3. DJJ data obtained or collected by the Requester during performance of this agreement will be returned to DJJ or upon direction of DJJ, destroyed within 90 days after the end of this agreement, upon completion of the research, or upon the request of DJJ. Records shall be destroyed by shredding or burning, or in the case of magnetic media by degaussing, electronic overwriting, or physical destruction. Should the Requester be required by federal regulations to retain records, DJJ will act as custodian for the required period.
 4. DJJ data will not be duplicated without expressed written permission from DJJ. Any electronic media received from DJJ will be returned within 90 days of the end of this agreement, or at the direction of DJJ, will be disposed of as specified.
 5. The Requester will provide a copy of any Privacy Certificate submitted in support of a grant application to any agency.
 6. At the discretion of DJJ, the Requester shall pay fees for required data processing services to DJJ or its contracted provider, based on an hourly fee for data processing. The Requester will be notified of any fees in the IRB approval letter.
 7. The Requester will provide the DJJ Office of Research and Planning with draft results of the analyses of DJJ data provided under this agreement, and draft copies of any written documents, or any materials to be presented verbally or otherwise, including results such as findings and conclusions; allowing a minimum of 60 days review by the DJJ Office of Research and Planning prior to proceeding to release such materials to others. If the DJJ Office of Research and Planning provides comments or exclusions, these will be incorporated in a manner acceptable to DJJ or the following disclaimer must be included: "Points of view and conclusions expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not

necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.”

8. This Agreement may be modified by written agreement of both parties, or terminated, by written notice, at the discretion of either party.
9. The term of this Agreement shall be for no more than 365 days from the date of last signature below.
10. The obligations of the Parties shall survive the termination of this agreement.
11. The undersigned are authorized to enter into this Agreement and bind the respective parties hereto.

APPROVED:



Chief, Bureau of Research and Planning
(Secretary's Designee)

DATE: 2-21-12



Requester

DATE: 1/19/12



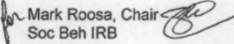
Witness (of Requester's signature)

DATE: 1/19/12

APPENDIX B

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL

To: Dominique Roe-Sepowitz
UCENT

From:  Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 12/06/2011

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 12/06/2011

IRB Protocol #: 1111007113

Study Title: Assessing the Treatment Needs of Juvenile Female Gang Members: An Exploratory Study

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(4).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The author of this work is Leighanne Downing, a graduate student who will receive her Masters of Social Work from Arizona State University in May 2012. Leighanne's primary area of interest is working with at-risk adolescents. She first became interested in this area during her undergraduate studies, where she was a student teacher in a Title I school. She enjoyed working with these students and accepted a job teaching English at a Title I high school in Aurora, Colorado. After two years of working with these youth, Leighanne decided to pursue her graduate degree in social work in order to better understand and meet the needs of at-risk adolescents. Upon graduation, Leighanne hopes to continue working with this population through individualized and programmatic interventions.

