

I AM WHO YOU SAY I AM;
I AM WHAT YOU MAKE ME.
AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF
GANGS IN THE HEARTLAND

By

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Are gangs¹ a national epidemic? Many gang researchers would answer this question with a resounding, yes. In fact, gangs have become an institution among minority populations, particularly, within Latino communities (Vigil 1993). Within the last forty years the United States has seen an explosion in youth “street gangs”. Gangs are everywhere; they exist in all fifty states (Egley 2005). The exact number is hard to determine (Howell 2000; Curry and Decker 1996); however, the National Youth Gang Survey-NYGS (2009) currently reports there are approximately 1 million gang members and over 20,000 active gangs in the United States (Put as a footnote These totals include both prison gangs and motorcycle gangs (NYGA 2009)).

Why has there been such a dramatic increase in gangs? The 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment (NGTA) suggest the proliferation of gangs is related to the increase of

¹Throughout this dissertation, the word “gang” will refer to “youth gangs or street gang.” The term “gang homicides” will refer to incidents that involve gang members as victims and/or offenders.

new media technologies which gangs have adopted as new recruitment techniques, such as, cell phone texting, face book, MySpace and other social networks. Another contributing factor to the proliferation of street gangs is the blurred lines between prison and street gangs (Decker, 2001); formerly incarcerated gang members released into the community often maintain connections with other gang members still in prison and particular street gangs, such as the Bloods and the Crips has grown to be a part of prison life when street members enter the correctional system (McGloin 2005; OSBND 1991). Moreover, enhanced law enforcement reporting and improved gang awareness may have also contributed to an increase in the number of gang members identified by some law enforcement agencies with the percentage of law enforcement agencies reporting gang activity in their jurisdictions increased from 45 percent in 2004 to 58 percent in 2008 (NGTA 2009, p.5).

Prior to the 1980s, problems with gangs were almost non-existent. Characterized as a minority problem; little attention was placed on the existence of gang prior and during the 1960s. Three federal commissioned studies² on the nature, causes and treatment of crime, all concluded youth gangs were not of major concern; nor did they pose a significant threat to the populace (Miller 2001, p. 3). In the 1970s, only 20 states and 73 counties in the United States reported problems with youth gangs (Miller 2001, p.25). During 1985-1989, Oklahoma law enforcement agencies only reported three cities and six counties experiencing problems with gangs (Miller, 2001, p. 20). However, by 1995 Oklahoma was included in the top 10 gang-city states in the US during a period of

²1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, the National Commission of the Cause of Prevention of Violence (1969), and the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justices Standards and Goals.

unprecedented growth in the number of youth gangs and localities with gang problems. In Oklahoma, while law enforcement and policy makers scrambled to address this growing gang problem, political leaders refused to accept this issue as a growing problem. In 2001, Miller characterized Oklahoma's two sided response to this emergent gang problem a discontent between the criminal justice system, where "there was an awareness of gangs by appointed officials, but a denial by elected officials" (Miller 2004).

Overview: Street Gangs in the United States

Though gangs became a significant concern in the 1990s, the emergence of street gangs is not a recent occurrence and is cyclical in nature (Klein 1995). Many scholars have documented the existence of gangs in one form or another for over two hundred years (Thrasher 1927; Gurr, 1989; Shelden, Tracy and Brown 2000; Spergel 1990; Taylor 1990, Delaney 2006, p.37). But why are gangs a continuing concern? One reason is that gangs are no longer just a problem in urban areas they have sprung up in a number of small cities, counties and even rural communities, where they had not previously been observed (Miller 2001). Seen as a threat to public safety, the proliferation of gangs and the amount of crime and violence that accompanies them has paralyzed cities across the US.

Highly publicized drive-by shootings has raised the issue of gang membership in both the public consciousness and the political arena. The accessibility of guns and competition over illegal drug market has been cited as reasons for an increase in gang violence (Vigil 2003). Endemic in gang infested neighborhoods/communities is fear of

retaliation; “*No Snitch*” street code and witness intimidation serves to reinforce a culture of silence among neighborhood residents. Victims of gang violence and/or their families rarely report crimes perpetrated by gang members (Rosenfeld, Jacobs and Wright 2003); thereby, impeding efforts to involve communities in combating crime.

Street Gangs and Crime Rates

Although crime rates across the nation remain at the lowest levels recorded since 1973, (McCarthy 2009), a disproportionate amount of crime can be attributed to organized criminal syndicates and gangs in the United States (Thornberry and Burch 1997). Gang members are ten times more likely to go to prison, than any other ordinary citizen. Gang researchers (Huff 2004; Thornberry and Burch 1997) have consistently found that gang members commit a disproportionate amount of crimes when compared to delinquent non-gang members (Amato and Cornell 2003). Even if youth are already delinquent, their levels of delinquency increase dramatically during gang membership and decrease when they leave the gang (Bendixen, Endresen and Olweus, 2006). Gang members are twenty times more likely than at-risk youth to participate in a drive-by shooting, ten times more likely to commit a homicide, eight times more likely to commit robbery, and three times more likely to commit assault in public (Huff 1998). Furthermore, gang members are far more likely to die at the hands of another gang member, than non-gang members (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 2007).

This determinist lifestyle has proven to be a “*Do or Die*” reality for many gang members (Bing 1991); today, stories of senseless violence fill newspapers and headline local evening newscast weekly. So, what is the motivation to join gangs? Why is gang

life so attractive (Howell 2000)? These questions have existed as long as there have been gangs; researchers continue to struggle to derive hypotheses to answer these questions (Howell 2000). Only a few gang researchers (Freng and Esbensen 2007; Vigil 1988) have been provide able to comprehensive theoretical framework by which to understand gang involvement.

Significance of the Study

Sorting through the vast number of gang studies and theoretical perspectives used to understand the origins and current behavior of gangs; I have observed several key gaps including scant literature on urban gangs from an ethnic member's standpoint and few studies on gangs in emergent areas. Moreover, very few studies have been based on interviews from former gang members. Denoting the distinction between emergent and traditional gang cities, this dissertation will extend contemporary gang research, by examining gang involvement in an emergent Midwest, mid-size metropolitan city. Specifically, this study will focus on the existence and history of gangs in an under-researched area (Tulsa, Oklahoma). I will provide data regarding similarities and/or differences between Tulsa, Oklahoma; moreover, I will present information regarding national gang trends.

The prevalence of gangs and their volatile nature is well documented (Huff 1990; Miller 2001). Most research on gang involvement and activities originate from the survey of law enforcement, school personnel, social service providers and correctional/probation staff. However, there is little data regarding the extent and precise nature of the day-to-day activities of gang members (Katz and Jackson-Jacobs 2004).

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of gang life from the perspective of former gang members (Decker and Lauritsen 1996); thereby, understanding gang formation and involvement from an insider's point of view. This study will address the scarce literature on street gangs from an ethnic member's standpoint (Collins 2000); thus offering an authentic minority "Voice" (Phillips and Bowling 2003). Finally, a section of this dissertation will focus on gang distain; examining the parameters by which, some gang members leave and stay out of gangs and why others say they will never leave. This could aid in the implementing more effective gang prevention and intervention programs.

Researcher's Personal Connection

Tulsa's gang problem emerged in the relatively poorest areas of the city. Although, my immediate family has never directly been involved in gangs, we lived in an area saturated with street gangs. Commonly known by community members as "*Turley*", the neighborhood where I grew up in is a predominantly Blacks, poor, working-class neighborhood located on the outer edge of north Tulsa's city limits. Female headed-households are commonplace; many young Blacks children grew up with part-time fathers or without a father in the house, similar to my siblings and me, (Cohen 1955; Vigil 1988, 2002). For many youths, the streets are classrooms with a hidden curriculum (Schubert 1982) with rules for expected behavior (Code of the Streets). Socially isolated, with limited access to quality schools and lack of jobs, many unemployed Tulsa youth felt their options were limited. Gang membership and selling drugs was seen as a viable alternative. When crack-cocaine hit the streets of Tulsa, young men who had previously

been poor were experiencing a new found wealth; they were able to buy things that had previously been out of their reach (Guess jeans, pagers, Roper boots, Nikes, jewelry, car rims, stereos, etc.). Often times, many of them financially contributed to their family's household; several acquaintances of mine were the sole-supporter of their families.

I can recall two events that influenced my desire to examine delinquent behavior and gang involvement. My initial exposure to street gangs occurred during the summer of 1985, several of my childhood friends began reppin' the "hood"; referring to themselves as "Grape Street" (a Crip set that originated in Compton, CA). Since, we lived in an isolated pocket within our neighborhood; everyone, including young ladies was encouraged to embrace this new found "social capital". The sounds of gun fire and police sirens in the distance were common; neighborhood boys roaming the neighborhood committing random acts of misdemeanor vandalism and loitering was an everyday occurrence. Within three years, many of them were selling small amounts of marijuana and crack-cocaine. Proudly displaying their allegiances to Grape Street, my childhood friends exhibited this new found "social capital", and machismo. Unfortunately, their involvement in "Grape Street" was futile; for some of them, a prison number became a reality and for others, a life of financial hardships and death for some.

Second, I can vividly remember when the phrase "drive-by shooting" became a common term in my vernacular. Violence associated with gang involvement became real to me; days before the start of my junior year in high school, a childhood/neighborhood associate was gunned down at the annual "Okmulgee Rodeo" street party (East and Stumpe 1988). This was the first time that someone I knew had been killed in a drive-by

shooting (Stumpe 1988). In the days and weeks to follow, newspaper articles described what many of us already knew; violence among rival gang members, the “Rip Boys” (Bloods) and Crips had become common place. Drug dealing, gang members had beef over turf and perceived disrespect. The lyrics from the title soundtrack to the movie *Colors*³ best articulate the evolutionary nature of street gangs in Tulsa.

“Psychopath talking, nightmare walking, the colors I choose Red or Blue, Cuz or Blood, it just don't matter, this is real colors, colors, colors”.

Angry, young Blacks males were at a safe distance from mainstream America; black-on-black crime and violence did not affect the average middle-class Tulsan. However, twenty-three years later, senseless violence committed by gang members affects us all. Innocent victims are dying because they are driving the wrong color car, at the wrong time.⁴The above mentioned experiences have heightened my curiosity of gang involvement and desire to identify the cause and possible methods of prevention, intervention of gang involvement.

Research Questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What is the lived experience of youth who become gang involved, and how do the people that influence them the most contribute to their gang involvement?
2. To what extent can gang behavior be understood as a response to marginalization (exclusion from mainstream culture)?

³ Colors, 1988 movie based on the use of colored clothing wear by rival gang members, Crips and Bloods to symbolize gang affiliation.

⁴ Sunday, Sept. 7, 2008 Donivan Crutcher, his brother Andrion Crutcher and Jeremy Williams were driving home from church when a car pulling beside them and began spraying their car with bullets fired from a SKS assault rifle(www.da.tulsacounty.org/Forms/Newsletter/V2_4_fall09.pdf).

3. Do compounded risk-factors contribute to likelihood of youth to join gangs?
4. Vigil (1988) suggests issues of identity (affiliation, associations, identification with others, and group solidarity) are important in gang formation and membership. Citing “gang status” as a motivating factor among gang sets; is there a relationship between the escalation of gang related violence and gang status?

Dissertation Outline

It is impossible to discuss the relevance of this study without first providing an overview of relevant gang literature; in chapter two, I will examine competing definitions of gangs and outline contemporary gang formation theories. Chapter three examines the integrated gang theoretical model that informs this study, which helps to define and describe characteristics related to gang formation and varying organizational gang structures. Chapter four provides an overview of the evolution of street gangs in the United States, and then focus more specifically on the state of Oklahoma, and, finally, Tulsa, OK. In chapter five, I will discuss the research design, methodology and discuss issues of reliability, validity and limitation of the study. Research findings are discussed in Chapter Six. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I will discuss the limitations of my study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Competing Gang Definitions

~That which we cannot define, we cannot accurately address~

The complexities of determining what constitute a “gang”, gang membership and gang related-crime has long been a problem in not only gang research but also legislative statutes (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Ball and Curry 1995; Decker and Kempf-Leonard 1991; Esbensen Winfree, He and Taylor 2001; Klein 1995; Short 1985). Definitions of a gang are as numerous as the researchers trying to define them; there has not been a universally accepted definition of what constitutes a gang (Spergel 1990). Below I will examine three broad gang definitional approaches; gangs have been define on the basis of criminal involvement, a set of definitional criteria that distinguish gangs from other forms of delinquent groups and self-nominated status as a gang member (Bjerregarrd 2002).

Since there has not been a consistent definition, gang literature has been plagued with the mix-matching of incongruent concepts. Goldstein (1993) suggests definitions of gangs vary with time and place; more specific, definitions of gangs have varied in

response to political and economic climate as expressed by police, governmental officials and concerned citizens. According to Oklahoma State Title 21, Section 856(F) a criminal street gang is defined as “Any ongoing organization, association, or group of five or more persons that specifically either promotes, sponsors, or assists in, or participates in, and requires as a condition of membership or continued membership, the commission of one or more of the following criminal acts:

1. Assault, battery, or assault and battery with a deadly weapon, as defined in Section 645 of this title;
2. Aggravated assault and battery as defined by Section 646 of this title;
3. Robbery by force or fear, as defined in Sections 791 through 797 of this title;
4. Robbery or attempted robbery with a dangerous weapon or imitation firearm, as defined by Section 801 of this title;
5. Unlawful homicide or manslaughter, as defined in Sections 691-722 of this title;
6. The sale, possession for sale, transportation, manufacture, offer for sale, or offer to manufacture controlled dangerous substances, as defined in Section 2 - 101 et seq. of Title 63 of the Oklahoma Statutes;
7. Trafficking in illegal drugs, as provided for in the Trafficking in Illegal Drugs Act, Section 2-414 of Title 63 of the Oklahoma Statutes;
8. Arson, as defined in Sections 1401 through 1403 of this title;
9. The influence or intimidation of witnesses and jurors, as defined in Sections 388, 455 and 545 of this title;
10. Theft of any vehicle, as described in Section 1720 of this title;
11. Rape, as defined in Section 1111 of this title;
12. Extortion, as defined in Section 1481 of this title;
13. Transporting a loaded firearm in a motor vehicle, in violation of Section 1289.13 of this title;
14. Transporting a weapon in, or discharging a weapon from, a boat, in violation of Section 1289.14 of this title; Possession of a concealed weapon, as defined by Section 1289.8 of this title; or Shooting or discharging a firearm, as defined by Section 652 of this title.”

A lasting term, the word gang has been used to categorize, classify and identify behavioral characteristics of particular groups and/or cliques. Hagedorn (1988) identified two divergent paths in which gangs have been defined within criminological literature; the oldest criminology approaches defined gangs by either emphasizing them in terms of

group processes, or using a delinquent-based definition (Bursik and Grasmick 1993).

Thrasher's (1927) classic description of a gang argues that gang members are not criminal, but rather just delinquents like other similar age-graded neighborhood youth.

In one of the most influential studies on gangs, Thrasher (1963, p. 46) provides this definition of a gang:

The gang is an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict. It is characterized by the following types of behavior: meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict and planning. The result of the collective behavior is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, esprit de corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory

In a similar vein, Moore's (1991) extends Thrasher's gang definition, implying the absence of delinquent or criminal activity. Moore argues they are just a group of unsupervised peers, who are socialized by the streets rather than by conventional institutions. Emphasizing the social dynamics within a gang, Thrasher's approach to gang development permits other gang researchers to define/describe the term gang, by the interplay between delinquent behavior, social cohesion, environmental factors, strain and anomie, and social disorganization (1991).

The old adage, "*You are what you do*" summarizes Yablonsky's (1959) definition of a gang. From a social psychological perspective, Yablonsky (1997) defines gang types along a behavioral continuum; he identifies three types of gangs; delinquent gangs, violent gangs and social gangs (p. 146). Thus, the type of gang is determined by normative habits, behavioral patterns, and personalities of the gang membership (Knox 1991). Suggesting, gangs range midway between a stable, cohesive, and relatively

permanent group with fixed membership and a spontaneous, chaotic, temporary mob with shifting membership. Later, Yablonsky characterized gangs as a “multipurpose gang”; a social gang, which exhibits delinquent and violent behavior (1997).

Another conceptualization is provided using social disorganization theory. For example, Cloward and Ohlin’s (1960) definition of a gang, takes into account, the significance of environmental factors in the formation of gangs. They postulate gang formation is rooted in the alienation of adolescents who are denied access to legitimate means, by which the “American Dream” is achieved. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) argue the way gangs are formed depends upon neighborhood characteristics, identifying three subcultures for gang typology: (a) *criminal gang* (b) *conflict gang*; and (c) the *retreatist gang*) (Lanier and Henry 2004).

Frustrated with earlier efforts to construct a standardized definition, Miller (1980) utilized a national consensus of opinion from various juvenile justice personnel to define gangs. Miller (1980) argues gang members are bound by mutual interests. He defines a gang in terms of a self-formed association of peers, with a structured hierarchy and identifiable leadership that operate in concert for the purposes of illegal activity and control over a particular territory or physical structure (Miller 1980, p. 121).

Hagedorn and Macon (1988) argue contemporary gang literature should no longer characterize gangs within the context of territory, asserting reliance on a stringent definition of gangs fails to recognize the variation in types of gangs. Hagedorn defines a gang as a friendship group of adolescents who share common interests, with a less than

clearly defined territory. They are committed to defending one another and their gang name (Hagedorn and Macon 1988).

Offering more of a delinquency-based definition of gangs, Maxson (1989) argues delinquency and violence distinguishes gangs from others groups (Gardner 1993). Patterns of criminal behavior, often lend a hand in gang classification. She define gangs as groups of adolescents and/or young adults who see themselves as a group (as do others) and have been involved in enough crime to be of considerable concern to law enforcement and community (Klein and Maxson 1989, p 208). Whereby, Decker and Van Winkle (1996, p. 31) define a gang as “an age-graded peer group that exhibits some permanence, engaging in criminal activity, and has some symbolic representation of membership”.

The existence of competing definitions makes it inherently difficult to arrive at a consistent and accurate picture of gang activity throughout the United States. However, Ball and Curry (1995) argue that a more concise definition of gang membership would narrow gang research and make it too restrictive (p. 240). Law enforcement agencies have attempted to define gangs in such a way as to categorize or catalogue groups of delinquents for the purposes of statistical analysis and/or prosecution (Katz, Webb and Schaefer 2000).

For the purpose of this study, I will utilize Klein’s (1995) definition of a gang; this member-based definition signals the importance of self-reported membership. Emphasizing a criminal element; the definition implies the manner in which individuals defines themselves largely affects the manner in which they related to others (Bjerregarrd

2002). Furthermore, self-reported membership adheres to law enforcement officers' primary criteria for identifying "official" gang members. This method of identifying gang members has been supported in previous literature (Curry et al., 2002; Esbensen et al., 2001; Vigil 1988). Finally, it signals an adolescent age range; thereby, omitting other crime groups such as prison gangs, motorcycle gangs, and other adult criminal groups.

Klein (1995) defines a gang as:

“Gang is defined as a loosely organized group of adolescents/ young adult (11-24 yrs. of age) who collaborate together for social reasons; this group of people form an allegiance for a common purpose and engage in aggressive, unlawful, criminal, or anti-social activity” (Klein 1995, p. 20-30).

“Gang-related” crime

According to the first Gang Task Force in the United States, formed under the California’s Attorney General, (1989, p.3) a crime is deemed “gang-related” if one of the following acts is committed during the commission of the crime; homicide, attempted murder, assault, with a deadly weapon, robbery, rape, and kidnapping, shooting at an inhabited dwelling or arson is reported and the suspect, or a victim is on file as a gang member or associated member. However, other state law enforcement agencies across the country has adopted different definitional policies for tabulating and reported gang-related crimes (Maxson and Klein 1990). Representing contrasting “realities” of gang proliferation, procedural policies for defining gang-related crimes is significance. Below,

I offer a brief discussion regarding competing definitional approach of gang-related crimes.

Arguing law enforcement is the best source available for comparing gang prevalence and violence, Maxson and Klein (1990) put forth two definitional approaches of gang homicides. Differentiating between “gang-member” and “gang motive” gang crimes, Maxson and Klein (1990) associated gang crime with large metropolitan police departments, Los Angeles and Chicago. The Los Angeles definition, labeled as “gang-member” gang crime, suggests any crime is gang related if a gang member or associate is involved on either the offender or the victim side. The Chicago definition, labeled as “gang motive” gang crime, suggests any crime committed as a result of a gang purpose, such as, drive-by shootings, drug trafficking for profit sharing in the gang, and offenses used as initiation into the gang (Maxson and Klein 1990).

Acknowledging the differences among law enforcement jurisdictions, Maxson and Klein’s (1990) findings were consistent; applying both definitions, they found the use of member-defined definition tends to overstate the amount of crimes attributed to gangs (Klein 1995, p. 15). However, Klein (1995) suggested that using a gang motivated-defined definition, which focus on crimes that are “clearly due to the presence of gangs” such as, drive-by shootings would understate the gang problem, because other crimes such as a robbery committed by a gang member would not be considered a gang-related crime if the robber did not share his proceeds with fellow gang member or if the robbery was not a retaliation against rival gang members (p.15). Favoring the “gang member” definition, Klein (1995) echoes Knox’s sentiment, “Communities confronting the

proliferation of gangs will use the Los Angeles definition; those wanting to espouse anti-gang rhetoric and obscure it hoping it will ‘just go away’ will use the Chicago definition” (p. 343).

Literature Review

This review of literature on gang research illustrates that no one-specific theory can explain gang phenomenon (Jankowki 1991; Knox 1998). Since the earliest identifiable characteristics of street gangs emerged, an enormous amount of research from diverse theoretical perspectives and across academic disciplines has devoted much attention to studying the phenomenon of gangs. Dating back to Thrasher’s (1927) classic piece “The Gangs”; research on gangs in the United States has been treated as spectacles, upon which to see pathological social conditions (Delaney 2006). Denoting possible correlations between gang formation and social environment; Hagedorn and Macon (1988), Klein (1995) and Moore (1991) have all argued the existence of gangs is a by-product of post-industrial development (Esbensen 2000).

Since the literature on gangs is so vast, in this review, I will cover a representative segment of gang formation theory. This review of literature is not exhaustive; merely, a foundation from which to present the theoretical perspectives that will inform this study. Citing the growth of the underclass as formulated by Wilson (1987), as a cause of gang formation and proliferation; several gang researchers (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Hagedorn and Macon 1988; Fagan 2000; Moore 1991 and Vigil 1988) link the existences of urban “underclass” to economic dislocation, deindustrialization, gang violence, and high crime rate.

Extending ecological explanations of gangs, Decker and Van Winkle (1996) explored the role of threat. After conducting ninety-nine interviews of gang members and twenty-four interviews with relatives (family members) over a three year period, Decker and Van Winkle (1996) conclude the loss of formal and informal social institutions, such as family, schools, and law enforcement, in disorganized communities creates threats. As a result, violence by gang members develops and spreads through the community. Gang members, in turn, become isolated from these communities and the institutions within them, creating a cycle of gang involvement (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996).

Hagedorn and Macon (1988) hypothesize deindustrialization is directly related to gang formation in Milwaukee. Seeking to change the public perception of gangs, Hagedorn and Macon set out to conduct an exploratory analysis of gangs; they interviewed the forty-seven founders of nineteen gangs. Active gang members interviewed were the “top dogs of Milwaukee’s gangs (p. 32). Fifteen were black, three Hispanic, and one white. Hagedorn and Macon’s (1988) study reveals a positive correlation between unemployment, lack of education and continued gang involvement as adults. Hagedorn’s study reveal adult participation in gangs well into adulthood, contributes to the institutionalization of gangs in poor minority neighborhoods (Spergel 1983). Unlike Wilson (1987), Hagedorn and Macon did not attribute the mass exodus of the middle-class blacks for the alienation of black underclass youth; instead they argue institutional policies, such as, school desegregation and the lack of community-based programs contribute to the erosion of positive community spirit and an increase in socially destructive behavior (1988).

Fagan (2000) argues the sharp decline in cocaine prices, profound social and economic changes within impoverished and disorganized communities produce situations, in which existing legitimate blue-collar jobs were replaced by illegitimate drug related jobs. After interviewing gang members, Fagan (2000) concluded the expanding “crack” market essentially provide jobs for a surplus pool of the unskilled. As the number of drug dealers increase, so did acts of drug related violence; street gangs became a major vehicle for maintaining drug territories for, and offering collective protection against rival dealers seeking to expand their drug territory.

Vigil (1988) sought to explain the high prevalence of gang formation within communities, and among youth, who experienced multiple marginality. Vigil analyzed sixty-seven life stories of Latino males; twenty from Los Angeles County, forty-two from San Bernardino County and five were from Orange County. Data was derived from participant observation or single-session in-depth interviews. In Vigil’s observation of macro-historical pattern in Los Angeles, he argue segmented labor markets, poverty, racism, and social isolation produce situations in which the community and its residents were outside of, or marginal to, the legitimate economy and the accepted cultural mainstream. Vigil concludes that gangs arose as a coping mechanism for those youths who were prevented from adapting to the dominant culture.

Limitations of Studies reviewed

Studies included in this literature reviewed utilize different methodologies to establish the level of gang members (questionnaires, interviews, informants, administrative records). Moreover, each study used different questions and time frames,

upon which to classify gang membership. Definitions vary widely from gangs to delinquent youth. Some studies included relied on self-reported membership, while others are based on the perceptions of law enforcement, detached street worker and family members. Furthermore, some of these studies fail to validate the hypothesis they put forth.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented a literature review of gang studies and an examination of competing definitions of a gang and gang-related crimes. The literature review informs our understanding of the emergent gangs from a structural, historical and socioeconomic perspective. Framed within the context of deindustrialization (Hagedorn 1989; Vigil 1988), the development of the underclass (Wilson 1987), and street socialization (Vigil 1988); these studies offered explanation of gang formation and reasons for gang membership. Furthermore, the examination of competing gang definitional approaches revealed there is little consensus on what constitutes a gang; the debate regarding its membership, levels of engagement, activities and/or crime commitment by its members will continue (Decker and Van Winkle 1996). In the next chapter I discuss the James Vigil's Multiple Marginality Model and a brief overview of the central theories related to the formulation of Vigil's gang model (1988).

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL APPROACH

[America] I charge you with robbery, for robbing me of my history.
I charge you with false imprisonment for keeping me trapped
in the projects.... *Nightmare, that's what I am, America's nightmare.
I am what you made.* The hate and evil that you gave me, you should
be scared. You should be running. You should be trying to silence me.
Just as you rose, you will fall, by my hands.⁵

The title of the dissertation references lyrics written by rapper Tupac Shakur, A “Nightmare, that’s *what I am*, America’s nightmare. *I am what you made*”. This rap song is symbolic of the struggle experienced by the marginalized; Tupac’s (1991) cynical summation of life in the ghetto articulates feelings of rage and frustration. A quasi-declaration of retaliation and reckoning for discrimination and oppression experienced by minorities everywhere; Tupac’s lyrics encourage nihilism among frustration angry, marginalized youth through his depiction of unrepentant opposition to social order (De Genova 1995). Characterized as a battle ground and likened citizens of a war torn country, Vigil (2003) implies residents living in ghettos and barrios across America are

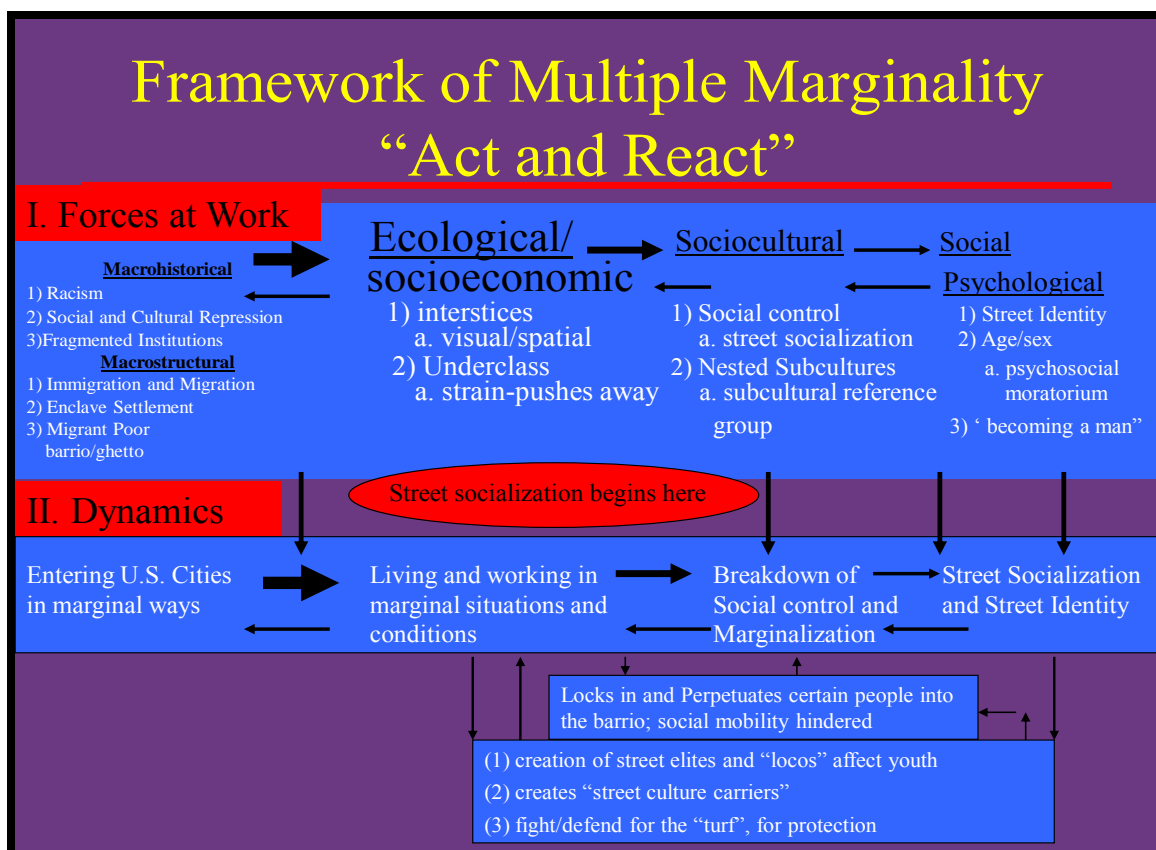
⁵ This song, called “*Words of Wisdom*” written by Tupac Shakur: Reprinted in law enforcement guidebooks as alleged calls to war against the police.

angry armed "natives". Vigil maintains, often out of necessity youth living in barrios and ghettos make tough decisions to join a gang as a strategy for survival or starve (p.230).

Integrated Perspective: Multiple Marginality Theory

The theoretical framework that will inform this dissertation is Vigil's Multiple Marginality perspective (Vigil 1988, 2002); to date, Vigil (1988) offers one of the most eclectic explanations for gang formation and involvement. This framework challenges previous theoretical perspective of gangs beyond cultural or individual factors. Vigil (2002) posits "street gangs are a result of marginalization, that is, the relegation of certain persons or groups to the fringes of society, where social and economic conditions result in powerlessness." (p. 7). Vigil asserts (1988) socioeconomic status; poverty, environmental factors (neighborhood) and racism are contributing risk factors to gang involvement. This "fresh" theoretical perspective acknowledges multiple-pathways that influence and sustain gang involvement. Derived from macro-historical perspectives and present societal conditions and circumstances of minority group; Vigil (1988) suggests racial segregation, depressed economic and social conditions produced a sense of powerlessness among ethnic groups, which, in turn, leads to sub-cultural and psychological mechanisms of adjustment" (i.e., gang formation) (Vigil 1998, p.1).

FIGURE 3:1 MULTIPLE MARGINALITY FRAMEWORK



Theoretically, Vigil’s Multiple Marginality model is made possible by integrating fundamental elements of several classical theories in criminology: Social disorganization, Strain theory, Subculture of violence, Routine activities theory, and Social Control theory. Below, I will provide a brief summation of the classical theoretical perspectives, which influence Vigil integrative theoretical model. Vigil argued gang research must

simultaneously look at structural forces and interpersonal relational dynamics, which contribute to the persistence of gangs.

Social Disorganization

Hagedorn and Macon (1988), Klein (1995), Moore (1991) and Vigil (1988) have all alluded to factors that have contributed the prevalence of gangs; high rates of mobility, poverty stricken, and high crime rates are common in communities with gangs display common features of social disorganized areas. Even though, Vigil does not make specific reference to social disorganization theory, the fundamental principles are incorporated throughout his theoretical framework. Citing neighborhood-level processes, Vigil suggest structural neighborhood features including concentrated poverty, high-rates of resident mobility, economic isolation and a concentration of minorities contributes to the persistence of gangs. Eventually, evolving into an underclass, members of socially disorganized neighborhoods or barrios develop maladaptive behavior by which to validate “status”.

The origin of social disorganization theory is credited to the work of Shaw and McKay (1942); they maintained the cause of delinquency among youth was attributable to the neighborhood in which they live. Shaw and McKay tested their hypotheses by examining 56,000 official arrest records from 1900 to 1933, of juveniles (ages of 10 to 16 yrs. old) who were at various times involved in the juvenile justice system (Pfohl 1994). When geographical plotted, the arrest records of the juveniles indicated a correlation between social conditions of geographical settings and delinquency. Shaw and McKay

(1942) reported that rates of crime and deviance varied accordingly among five “concentric zones”.

At the center of the five zones was Zone (I), the central business district; characterized as dynamic force behind the city, Zone (I) was source of urban social changes. Zone (II), the transitional zone was characterized by public housing structures and a high concentration of recent immigrants; Zone II was an area where newly arrived immigrants and blacks would go to live, in hope of obtaining employment in nearby factories. Zone (III), working class housing was made up of individuals who escaped from Zone (II); these individuals were second and third generation immigrants. Zone (IV), single-family residential zone was made up of more expensive homes. Zone (V) Commuter zone, was made up of the wealthiest white residents who could afford to distance themselves from the “undesirables” (Pfohl 1994).

Shaw and McKay’s research suggested the greatest rate of crime was located in zone (I) and zone (II); leading them to conclude areas of transition led to social disorganization (Pfohl 1994, p.190). The encroachment of zone (I) the central business district upon zone II created a pocket if you will, just beyond zone II of displaced individuals, homeless, vagabonds and street bums; a slum. Residents of zone II experienced high rate of delinquency, truancy, adult crime, mental illness, prostitution, gambling and suicide. Utilizing this concept of social disorganization, Shaw and McKay (1942) viewed delinquency as a result of a dysfunctional, social disorganized community. That is, a social disorganized environment and the values within that environment produce juvenile delinquents. Hence, a juvenile growing up in a socially disorganized

environment would be subjected to criminal life styles, and gangs, and would learn the deviant patterns of behavior and norms of the community.

Strain Theory

Building on the contributions of Merton; Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) had the same opinion strain exist between cultural goals and socially available means of goal attainment; "Blocked Opportunities" (Lanier and Henry 2004, p.244). However, they diverge from Merton's classic strain perspective and argued that strain is a result of "differential opportunity structures". Incorporating Sutherland's proposition that deviance is learned in interaction with others; Cloward and Ohlin introduced an analytic approach to explain delinquent subculture formation (Pfohl 1994). In their study of juvenile delinquency Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) concluded that most delinquent behavior occurred among groups in their pursuit for upward mobility. According to Cloward and Ohlin, frustration produced by strain did not automatically result in collective delinquent behavior; rooted in alienation the formation of youth gang or delinquent groups resulted in the unjustly denial of access to legitimate means to succeed in conventional society. When discrete groups come to believe that they cannot attain their economic and social objectives by legitimate means, they will adopt other means beyond the middle-class way of life; which might offer alternative route to success-goals, such as illicit or illegal ventures (Merton 1949; Cloward and Ohlin 1960). Their delinquency will be organized, rational and respectful of the deviant or organized criminal authority structure. Inevitably, when lower-class neighborhoods experienced group pressure toward deviance; they will also contain relatively stable criminal

opportunities (Cloward and Ohlin 1960, pp. 172). Cloward and Ohlin identified three forms of subcultural involvement; criminal subculture, retreatism, and conflict subculture. The general source of societal strain is the same for all three; anomie is produced by blocked legitimate opportunities (Pfohl 1994). Rosenthal (2000) argued in the five decades since Cloward and Ohlin advanced their theory, social organization in the inner city has hardly improved; restricted opportunities for upward mobility to individuals with limited skills and educational attainments continue to create an “Underclass” (p.118).

Failed Socialization/ Social Control Theory

The social control theory postulates people are by nature selfish and capable of committing anti-social behavior, including crime. Differentiated on the basis of attachment and commitment, Kornhauser (1984) suggests there are two types of social control theory; broken bond theory and failure to bond theory (Henry and Lanier 2004). For the purpose of this review, I will examine one of the most widely known social control theory, Hirschi’s version of failure to social bond theory. Which suggest “conformity requires a certain kind of socialization, meaning the “differences in nurturing will account for variations in attachment to others and commitment to a structured way of life” (Nettler 1984, p. 290).

Drawing on Toby’s (1957) “Stake of conformity”; Hirschi’s (1969) examined factors associated with the production of social conformity. Hirschi (1969) claims the lack of social attachment to conventional institutions, such as, family, government, education, or authority/legal system leads to a lack of social integration thereby, creating

a greater propensity to engage in delinquent behavior. The underlying assumption of Hirschi's argument is "that all people would break the law if they did not fear the damage and consequences of getting caught" (Hirschi 1969, p.21). Suggesting, that conformity is determined by the degree to which individuals are socially integrated. Hirschi's offered several elements necessary for conformity: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. Interconnected and binding, each element is critical in the analysis of a chain of causation; "thus from attachment to parents, through concern for persons in positions of authority, to the belief that the rules of society are binding on one's conduct" (Hirschi 1969, p. 200).

Attachment is defined as caring about others; rooted in mutual respect, attachment is the result of positive relationships that develop from ongoing interactions and intimate relationship with conventional adults. Implying a cost benefit analysis, commitment, refers to the extent an individual will invest in conventional behavior; individuals are less likely to participate in delinquent activities if the "risk" behavior will result in loss of investment. Involvement is the amount of time and energy spent participating in conventional activities. The more time spent doing conventional activities (employment, school, pro-social activities: sports, girl scouts, etc.), the less time to engage in deviant acts. The final component of social bonding is belief; the internalization of conventional norms as guidelines for behavior (Hirschi 1969).

My brief review of literature on gang formation and deviance illustrates that no one-specific theory can explain the gang phenomenon (Convey, Mensard, and Franzese 1992; Jankowki 1991; Knox 1998). Each of these theories of delinquency offers avenues

that link community characteristics and individual-level behavior. Limited in their approach, each theoretical perspective accounts for a singular aspect of gang life; each assumes that there is significant difference in individual-level correlation of delinquent behavior. However, each; social control theory, strain theory and social disorganization depends, in part, on macro contexts. Rather than offer competing ideology, Vigil (1988) suggested that integration of opposing theories provides a multidimensional strategy to effectively address gang problem.

Social Control

Vigil asserts, as primary agents of social control, the family, school and law enforcement have not adequately diminished the growth of gangs (1988, p.125). Vigil (1988) suggests a strong correlation between youth involved in gangs and one-parent (single-parent mothers/children raised by grandparents) family structure. Characterized by absentee fathers, domestic violence, severe financial strains and stresses often increase and intensify under marginal situations and conditions (Sampson and Laub 1993). With limited to no parental supervision, gang involvement has been cited as a coping mechanism for youth (Sullivan 1989; Vigil 1988), providing esteem and opportunities for personal fulfillment; subsequently, creating a new social identity and thus a need for a new person identity (Vigil 2003).

Educational marginality (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993) increases the risk for gang membership. Poor academic performance, truancy, high dropout rates, high rates of discipline problems, coupled with ineffective, uncooperative secondary schools within highly transient urban areas contribute to high rates of delinquency (Curry and Spergel

1992 and Kozol 1992). Moreover, gang members who have problems in school, frustrated by their experience there, and general distrust of authority see little advantages to staying in school and graduating (Vigil 1988).

Other Contributing Factors of Gang Formation/involvement:

Socioeconomic Factors

Examining the evolution of Mexican barrios of Los Angeles within the context of marginality; Vigil (1988) argues there are multiple factors such as, social positioning, poverty, environment (neighborhood) and racism contribute to the marginal status of urban youth, ultimately making gang membership, appear to be a viable option. Vigil (2002) argues that the creation of barrios or ghettos was a by-product of social positioning of Latinos and Blacks in American society. Primarily located in urban, dense minority communities (Alonso 2004), gang members do not live in exclusive “gated” communities. Many grow up in neighborhoods their parents could afford, usually working-poor track housing where the criminal lifestyle is a manner in which many individuals operated (Venkatesh 1996). Time and time again youth in economically depressed communities see a depressing reality of underemployment, low levels of educational attainment and dead end jobs, with only a handful of full-time employed adults making above minimal wage. Where exclusion from the “American Dream” is the norm, the attraction of gangs is a powerful alternative.

Gang socialization processes vary by age, context, situation, and access to alternative roles (Vigil 1988). As mentioned above, adolescents and young adults join

gangs for various reasons; however, one of the prevailing reasons why youth join gangs is for recognition or status. Under conditions of social deprivation youth seek identity and self-esteem they cannot find elsewhere (Vigil 1988).

Physical aggression and brutality is often exhibited among gang members during adolescence (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Vigil and Long 1990); the redefinition of masculinity is filled with real and symbolic messages. The “Rites of Passage” into manhood can be a strong generator of aggressive and violent behavior; particularly in communities where young males come from female single-parent families (Vigil 1988, 2002). Thus, the streets become the arena for what is learned and expected by others to gain recognition and approval. Vigil (1988) suggests this intrinsic *“Loco”* attitude is deeply internalized by some gang members, especially instrumental as an attitude that can be adopted as circumstances warrant (p125).

Lastly, Vigil (2002) asserted that collectively, social institution jointly contributed to the gang problem (p. 63). “In the absence of home and social socialization, the gang has taken on the responsibility of providing means for age/social development; establishing norms of behavior, defining and structuring outlets for companionship, safety, protection and financial support” (Vigil 2002, p. 8). Therefore, structural causes must take center stage, if we are to have a fruitful discussion of the origin and creation gang; we must begin within the multiple marginality framework and begin with ecological and economic factors that are at the root of the breakdown of social control (Vigil 2002).

I propose utilizing the Multiple Marginality theoretical perspective (Vigil 1988, 2002) to understand the relationship between multiple marginalities and Blacks gang members in mid-size cities. This framework challenges previous theoretical perspective of gangs beyond cultural or individual factors. Vigil (1988) argues gang research must simultaneously look at structural forces, which contribute to the persistence of gangs.

Cumulative in nature, Vigil (1988) states, “Multiple Marginality is derived from macro-historical perspectives and present societal conditions and circumstances of minority group; arguing a sequential order of development, Virgil suggests racial/ethnic segregation, depressed economic and social conditions produced a sense of powerlessness among ethnic groups, which, in turn, leads to subcultural and psychological mechanisms of adjustment” (p.1). The Multiple Marginality model is made possible by integrating fundamental elements of several classical theories in criminology: strain theory, cultural deviance and social control theory (Vigil 1988).

Multiple Marginality in the Heartland

To put the emergence of gangs in Tulsa into an historical context, I will briefly review two major antecedents that contributed to gang formation in Tulsa, the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 and deindustrialization. The institutionalization of gangs is a result of what Vigil (1988) calls the “perfect storm”; discrimination, economic marginalization and long-term estrangement create conditions suitable for the formation and persistence of gangs (Huff 1989). The polarization along socioeconomic, geographic, racial/ethnic lines (Klein 1995; Vigil 1988) has resulted in Tulsa’s most disenfranchised communities to be populated almost exclusively with Tulsa’s Underclass (Wilson 1987, p. 8).

1921 Tulsa Race Riot

The scars of the 1921 Tulsa's Race Riot can still be observed in north Tulsa today; predominately occupied by Blacks, north Tulsa is academically and economically stagnated. Bounded by the ghosts of Tulsa's 1921 Race Riot⁶, members of Tulsa's Blacks community remain marginalized. Relegated to the fringes of Tulsa's mainstream society nearly ninety years later, the resilient spirit of Tulsa's black community has not risen above the debris and ashes that covered the ground after the horrifying night of June 1st, 1921. An alleged assault on a young white woman, Sarah Page, by a black man Dick Rowland triggered one of the worst race riots recorded in American history (Ellsworth 1982), over 300 blacks are presumed to have died and hundreds suffered serious injuries (Johnson 1999) and property damage ran into the millions; many Blacks fled Tulsa, never to return (Johnson 1999). Tulsa's Greenwood district famously known as "*Negro/Black Wall Street*" "was reduced to a wasteland of vacant lots, crumbling storefronts, burned churches and homes" (Franklin 2001). Once, economically prosperous and a hotbed for cultural, political and intellectual progressives (Messer 2008), Tulsa's Greenwood district was home to numerous restaurants, grocery stores, confectionaries, jazz clubs and a hospital. After the riot, Tulsa's black community was socially and economically devastated; the pleas of the black community and reformers largely went unheeded. The failure to rebuild Tulsa's black community (Greenwood District) after the 1921 riots opened a vacuum for distrust, frustration and skepticism. The insidious effects of the Tulsa Race Riot continue to persist today; Tulsa's black community overwhelmingly

⁶Tulsa's 1921 Race Riot Formerly known as "Black Wall Street", Tulsa's African American commercial district was once boasted as the only black-owned commercial district in the entire Southwest region was destroyed (Ellsworth 1990).

holds lower-paying jobs, has limited access to quality educational opportunities, and its neighborhoods are riddled with blight, abandon homes and high rates of crime.

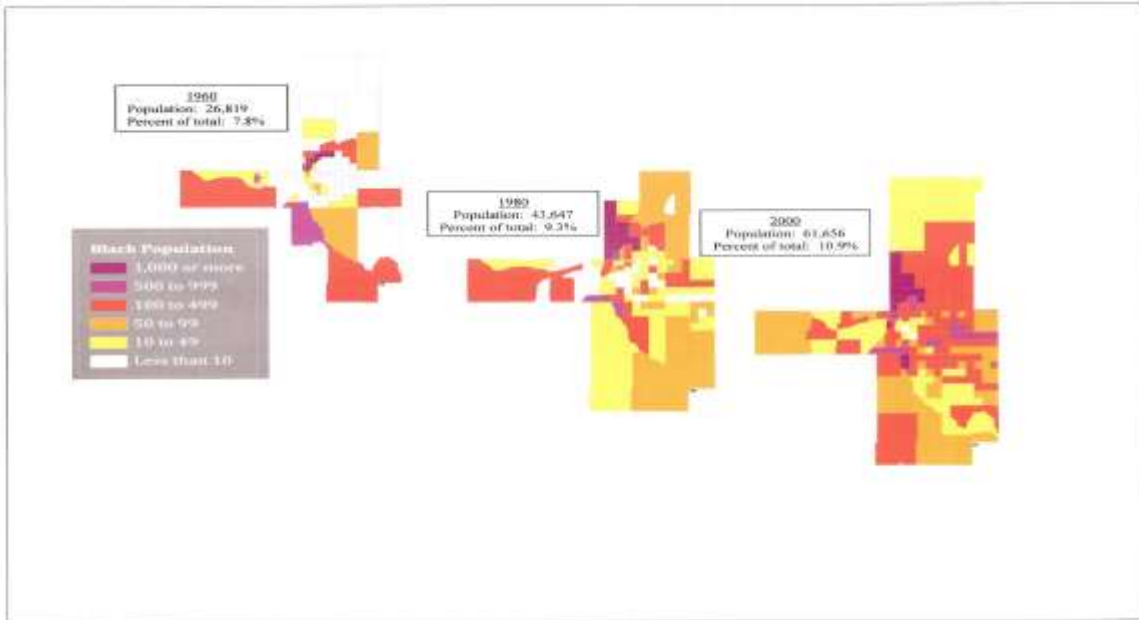
Deindustrialization

Since the mid-1970s, the economic landscape of Tulsa changed drastically. Massive layoffs in the manufacturing-sector, an increase demand for jobs in Tulsa's service sector and the relocation or outsourcing of blue-collar jobs in the airline and the oil and gas industries (Rockwell, McDonald Douglas and Boeing) prompted structural changes which brought about deindustrialization (Hagedorn 1998; Huff 1989; Klein 1995). The exodus of middle-class black families (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Wilson 1987) to surrounding suburbs led to an isolation of Tulsa's underclass (Wilson 1987). Characterized by concentrated poverty and hyper-segregation (Massey and Denon 1993), a disproportionate number of Blacks Tulsans have experienced racial and economic isolation (Wilson 1987; Jargowsky 1997). Plagued by high crime rates, poverty, blight, low performing schools, and a high rate of female-headed households; north Tulsa is the home to some of the most notorious gangs in Oklahoma. At present, Blacks living in Tulsa have the highest unemployment rate, at 15% (US Census Bureau 2010), the second highest school dropout rate of 50.5% (Community Service Council CSC Annual report 2008) and have one of the lowest educational attainment (14.2%) level among adults in the Tulsa area (Community Service Council 2010). Moreover, forty percent of those formerly incarcerated inmates in the Oklahoma Department of Correction return to the Tulsa area and reside in north Tulsa and/or other low-socioeconomic communities throughout Tulsa County (Oklahoma Department of Corrections, report 2008).

Patterns of Racial migration

Tulsa's pattern of residential migration can be observed in relation to governmental policies, racial attitudes and institutional practices. Cited as a contributing factor for economic and educational marginalization, the residential segregation of Tulsa's black communities continues to persist (Massey and Denton 1993), despite more tolerant racial attitudes and a growing diverse middle class with income sufficient to encourage residential mobility (Massey and Denton 1993). Utilizing census data, two separate reports: *School Desegregation in Tulsa*, the Oklahoma Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and *Population Trends in Tulsa County: 1960s to 2000*, chronicled Tulsa's patterns of racial residential migration. The reports illuminate a seemingly invisible "red line" that has separated and isolated predominately poor black neighborhoods from the rest of the city for more than ninety years (Oklahoma Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Report 1977 p. 4). Below, figures 2 and 3, prepared by Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa, illustrate the overall population shifts for blacks and whites occurring within north Tulsa from 1960 to 2000. As figures 2 and 3 indicates, north Tulsa's population declined thirty-eight percent between 1960 and 2000, from 115,519 to 71, 988. Every census tract in north Tulsa experienced loss of population in every age group except 65 years of age and older. Moreover, several census tracts experienced population losses of more than sixty-four percent.

FIGURE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK POPULATION TULSA COUNTY, BY CENSUS TRACT
1960 TO 2000



Source: US Census Bureau, 1960, 1980, 2000 Censuses/Prepared by Community Service Council 11/2009.

FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF WHITE POPULATION TULSA COUNTY, BY CENSUS TRACT
1960 TO 2000



Source: US Census Bureau, 1960, 1980, 2000 Censuses/Prepared by Community Service Council 11/2009

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

In its simplest trajectory, multiple marginality theory provides both an extensive and in-depth portrayal of the duplicitous nature of gang life; hence, the goal of this research is demystify “gang life”. Building upon the foundational contributions of scholars within the “Underclass” school of gang research, I propose an extension of Vigil’s research. Although, Vigil’s model was developed specifically to address gang membership among Hispanics; I propose utilizing his multiple marginality model to explore the relationship between multiple marginality and black gang members.

Research Questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What is the lived experience of youth who become gang involved, and how do the people that influence them the most contribute to their gang involvement?
2. To what extent can gang behavior be understood as a response to marginalization (exclusion from mainstream culture)?
3. Do compounded risk-factors contribute to likelihood of youth to join gangs?
4. Vigil (1988) suggests issues of identity (affiliation, associations, identification with others, and group solidarity) are important in gang formation and membership. Citing “gang status” as a motivating factor among gang sets; is there a relationship between the escalation of gang related violence and gang status?

The responses to these questions will lead to a greater understanding of gang formation and interaction; ultimately, offering a greater level of “effective” prevention, intervention and suppression strategies. To address the questions above, in chapter five I will discuss the research design and methodology that will guide examination of street gangs in Tulsa, OK.

CHAPTER FOUR

GANG MEMBERSHIP AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Key to understanding and the ability to affect gang proliferation is an awareness and/or knowledge of gang structures, organizational processes and functional roles of its membership. The following chapter provides a brief overview of gang structures and gang membership typologies, followed by an examination of demographics of gang members and elements of gang activity. The chapter concludes with a historical review of gang formation in the United State and the contemporary gang situation in Oklahoma and the City of Tulsa.

Gang Structure: *Cliques, Crews and all that Jazz*

While researchers (Decker and Kempf-Leonard 1991; Klein 1995; Short 1985) disagree on the definition of gangs, they all agree gangs are a group (Knox 1998). Throughout history street gangs have developed, reproduced, and mutated into many forms and structured groups. In a constant state of flux; the structure of street gangs varies, due in part, to the very nature of their criminal involvement (Delaney 2006;

Regoli and Hewitt 2003). Like any other organization, gangs require some type structure in order to operate efficiently. The degrees to which cliques, sets or crews organize into gangs depend on many factors; the nature and level of interaction among members, its mission and expected behavior of its membership. Some gangs establish membership on race, gender, age, while other gangs form on the bases of geographic area, such as neighborhoods or for the purposes of making money (illegal drug market).

Traditional gangs

Street gangs can be divided into several types of gangs, and first I will consider traditional gangs. Maxson and Klein (1995, p. 37) describe gangs within the context of, the size of its membership, locale of the gang, and the number of years the gang has existed. These traditional gang structures include the traditional gang, hybrid gang, compressed gang, and the collective gang. Traditional gangs have been in existence for twenty or more years. Often characterized by multi-generational membership; traditional gangs are typically large; contain subgroups, usually separated by age, territory “turf gangs” and degree of criminal involvement (Delaney 2006). Gangs prior to 1990s tend to fit a traditional (age-graded) structure. Usually hierarchical (vertical) in nature, gang membership mimicked criminal groups, and possess of the 1920s (Miller 2001) such as, the notorious “James Street” Gang with Al Capone. Contemporary traditional gangs include Crips, Bloods, the People, and Folk Nation (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Klein 1995).

Hybrid Gangs

The emergence of hybrid gangs during the late 1990s has made it difficult to study and respond to them (Starbuck, Howell, and Lindquist 2001). Linked to traditional gangs, hybrid gangs are splinters of more established gangs and are typically medium size with 50 to 100 members. Generally less territorial based (Klein, 1995; Miller, 1992; National Youth Gang Center, 2000), hybrid gang members maintain loose allegiance to traditional gangs. Distinct to specific localities, Hybrid gang culture is characterized by members of different racial/ethnic groups participating in a single gang, participation in multiple gangs, unclear rules or codes of conduct, symbolic association with more than one gang, and cooperation of rival gangs (Starbuck et al. 2001, p.2). For example, modeled after rapper 50-Cent; G-Unit, a violent emergent hybrid gang appeared in Tulsa, OK in the late 2003 to 2006. While they claim affiliation with “Neighborhood Crips”, they display different gang symbols and wear the color green (Marshall 2006). It is estimated G-Unit was responsible for up to five homicides and numerous drive-by shootings in Tulsa during 2006 (Tulsa Area Response Gang Enforcement Team 2006). Initially mislabeled in stereotypical terms of stereotypical “traditional gangs”, the erroneous identification and treatment of localized gangs has contributed to the growth of hybrid gangs (Starbuck et al. 2001).

Another variation is the compressed gang, which is fairly small and ranging up to 50 members. Sometimes conflated, gang membership is qualified by both degrees of attachment and involvement, and an age-graded hierarchy (Delaney 2006). There is typically no more than 10 years in age difference between members. These gangs tend to have a relatively short history and solidify into more traditional forms or remain as a less

complex group. Another variation is a collective gang, which is like the compressed gang except there is a wider age difference and the gang size is a little larger.

The temporal changes in the composition and structure of gangs continue to baffle gang scholars (Starbuck et al. 2001, p. 5), due in part, to the scant amount of gang literature on hybrid gangs. Rather than being characterized in terms of current scientific data, contemporary gang structures continue to be characterized in terms of media stereotypes (Klein 1995). In order to counter the “classic” classification of gang typology, a greater understanding of gang processes is needed to examine the emergence of this “new type of gang” (Starbuck et al. 2001, p.6).

Fundamentally, the organizational structure of gangs impacts the behaviors of its membership. Huff (1989, p. 528-529) describes gang structures within the context of the behaviors exhibited by its membership. These structures include hedonistic, instrumental gangs and predatory. Hedonistic gangs are informal and typically focus on drug related activity. These gangs may occasionally engage in minor crimes but tend not to be involved in violent crimes. On the other hand, instrumental gangs mainly focus on economic activities. The members will commit property crimes for economic reasons. Most of these gang members are alcohol and drug users and some of them may also sell drugs. Predatory gangs generally commit robberies, street muggings, and other crimes of opportunity. These members are likely to use highly addictive drugs and may also sell drugs to gain money for weapon purchases.

Gang Membership Typology

Organizational structures of gang vary from city to city and even within cities (Regoli and Hewitt 2003, p. 309). In an effort to understand the degree of attachment to, and involvement in the gangs, researchers (Huff 1989; Klein and Maxson 1995; Taylor 1990) have developed gang member typologies based on positional roles and characteristics of its membership. The section below examines these underlying factors that influence organizational characteristics of gangs.

Hierarchical structures within a gang are often age-graded (Klein 2006); the sub-grouping of its members is differentiated based on identified roles within gang (Vigil 1988). Operating with some form of leadership, many gangs maintain three distinct sub-grouping: a primary gang leader(s) (Original Gangstas: OGs), associates or regulars (Gangstas: Gs), and on the fringe, “wannabes” or recruits (WBs) (Yablonsky 1997).

OGs are older individuals ranging in age from 20 and up (Klein 1996), who actively engage in gang activity. However, OGs often delegate orders, ensuring they are not directly connected to a particular crime. OGs are often founder members or hardcore members that have come up through the ranks and establishing themselves within the gang by virtue of their longevity and/or the amount of violent crimes committed. Their actions afford them respect, a reputation and subsequent leadership status within the gang (Klein 1996).

Gs are younger, characterized as “soldiers”, and are the most active gang members ranging in age from thirteen to twenty-four. The Gs are most likely to be the

perpetrators of gang-related violence. Often call “hard core” members; they have an established role within the gang (Hagedorn 1989). At the same time, they have the highest level of attachment and commitment to the gang. Gs are considered the “backbone of the street gangs, (OSBND 1991) they represent the rank and file of gang membership”. Gs usually have the most to gain, and, unlike wannabees, they have an established in-status membership.

Wannabees are potential recruits, and may range in age from nine to thirteen. Delaney (2006) asserts WBs can be one of the most dangerous levels within a gang, because wannabees are willing to do anything to “put in work”. Therefore, with respect to degrees of criminal involvement, WBs commits more of the violent and delinquent acts to get the attention of OGs in order to establish a reputation and status within a gang (Yablonsky 1997).

Demographics of Gang Members

Other than by their organizational structure, gangs can be differentiated on the basis of socio-demographic characteristics. Curry and Ball and Decker (1996), Maxson and Klein (1990, 1995) and Spergel (1990) have all argued gangs typify distinctive sets of characteristics; below I briefly examine how race/ethnicity, gender, age and socioeconomic levels are important qualifiers of gang composition.

Race/Ethnicity

In general, gangs tend to be homogenous groups; consisting of members who are predominantly of one racial or ethnic group (Hagedorn and Macon 1988; Howell 2006).

Knox (1994) attributes this phenomenon to historical racial and ethnic conflict in America (p. 79). In the face of discrimination, poverty and exploitation; many immigrants retreated and created street gangs, for the purpose of cutting out a piece of territory and respect for themselves. The initial onsets of street gangs were composed of various white ethnic members; Irish immigrants were the first to form a real street gang in the United States (Delaney 2006, p. 50). However, by the 1950s and 1960s an overwhelming majority of gang members identified by law enforcement have either been Blacks or Hispanic/Latino (Klein 1995). The Justice Policy Institute estimates, “Blacks and Latinos were roughly 15 times more likely than non-Hispanic whites to be identified by the police as gang members” (Greene and Pranis 2007, p. 36). However, most recent, there has been a report of increased rates of gang violence and drug trafficking in Indian Country⁷ (Vigil 2001). Isolated and secluded, Native American reservations have proven to be the perfect breeding for a growing gang subculture; extreme poverty and high dropout rates makes youth especially vulnerable to gangs.

Placed in a broader context, there is a greater propensity for gang problems to develop, escalate, and persist in socially disorganized areas (Kontos, Brotherton and Barrios 2003). The racial/ethnic composition of gangs varies across the country and closely associated with the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the jurisdiction in which the gangs reside. Howell (2006) asserts, “It should not be presumed that all, gang members are Blacks or Hispanic” (p.2, 2006). The 1998 National Gang Survey revealed that race and ethnicity is closely related to geography and the size of the community (NYGS 1998). White gangs formed in the late 1980s (Howell and Moore

⁷ Indian Country is a references to five Midwestern states ()

2010) for the purposes of protections from other gangs at school, in neighborhoods and prisons. 000 While white gangs constituted 11 percent of gang members in large cities (Egley and Ritz 2006); they account for approximately 30 percent of gang members in small cities and rural counties (OJJDP 2000).

Gender

In the past, males have overwhelmingly made up the composition of gangs (Gardner 1993). However, recent research on female gangs provides sufficient evidence of a changing pattern with respect to male gangs. Conversely, youth surveys (Egley, Howell and Major 2006) suggest females make up a much larger portion of all gang members than previously thought. Maxson and Whitlock (2002) argued girls represent a substantial proportion of gang members, probably somewhere between one-fourth and one-third of all gang members” (p.22). Traditionally, females have occupied “stereotypical” roles of auxiliary/peripheral gang members of male gangs; they are seen as sex objects that lure potential male gang members. Nonetheless, according to Campbell (1987) female gang members possess unique positions in gangs. While the numbers of all-female gang remains relatively low, the role of women within male dominate gangs continues to evolve. Recent reports indicate that female gang members are becoming as equally violent; and in some cases even more violent, than their male counterparts (Egley, Howell and Major 2006).

Female gang members use violence as a means of establishing, maintaining, and saving “face” or reputation (Delaney 2006) for both themselves and for the gang as a whole. Moreover, females are taking more active roles, assisting in the movement of

drugs and weapons, and gathering intelligence from other gangs (Campbell 1991; Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1992; Fishman 1995; Miller 1998). Females are also forming their own independent, non-male affiliated gangs (Campbell, 1990). In spite of this emerging independence, female gang members still constitute a minority group, in terms of both their number and their criminal activities, when contrasted with male gang members (Knox 1994).

Age

Previously understood as a relatively youthful phenomenon (Shelden et al, 1997); the age composition of gangs undoubtedly varies by city and periods in time (Knox 1998). Many individuals mistakenly assume street gangs are entirely composed of teenagers or juveniles under the age of 18 years old; despite countless studies which refute this notion (Cummings and Monti 1993; Delaney 2006). Nonetheless, gang membership presently extends into young adulthood, certainly into the early and mid-twenties. The age of gang members has been consistently rising, due in part to, two interpedently factors. First, fewer young men are “maturing out” of gangs, as once believed; the inability to assume more conventional adult roles, such as, legitimate employment with a livable wage after incarceration is related to many remaining active gang members (Cummings and Monti 1993). Secondly, 2nd and 3rd generation gang members are more common in cities that have established gangs over a decade or more (Klein 1995).

Hagedorn and Macon (1988) suggest it would be incorrect to conclude that demographic characteristics alone explain gang affiliation; even though, individual factors are clearly associated with gang membership. An erroneous belief that gangs are

predominantly a minority problem, inevitably leads to failure in analyzing the true impact of America's varying economy on different classes within minority communities. The significance of a minority underclass and the simultaneous emergence and entrenchment of gangs continues to be overlooked (Hagedorn and Macon 1988, p. 89).

As noted above, behavioral and/or structural gang typologies inform our understanding of gang attachment and the degree to which members are involved (Klein 1995). However, the underlying assumptions that gangs are unchanging rather than dynamic negate the evolutionary processes of gangs. Systematic observation and analysis of gang behavior and structure unique to a gang location or community must be a shared in a coordinated effort to effectively orchestrate a state or regional gang control policy (Klein and Maxson 2001). Below, I will briefly present both delinquent and normal activities associated with gang involvement.

Elements of Gang Activity

I tag, so that you will see me....

I bang, so that you will fear me....

Though urban street gangs have been a part of America's cities since the late nineteenth century (Decker and Van Winkle 1996), the presence of delinquency, vandalism and gang brutality has heightened an awareness of gangs than ever before. To understand contemporary gangs requires an examination of gang subculture such as the intrinsic values, images, symbols and behaviors unique to gang life. Although the lives of gang members are plagued by violence, the most common gang activities are legal and fairly harmless (Decker and Van Winkle (1996).

Graffiti

One of the primary indicators of the presence of gang is graffiti on walls, fences and/or other large standing objects. There are several types of graffiti, each associated with a different type of subculture; serving multiple functions, graffiti often reveals hidden language. In his analysis of graffiti, Alonso (1999) created a framework, which categorizes five distinct types of graffiti: existential, tagging, piecing, political and gang. From a sociological perspective graffiti serves as an excellent tool in understanding behavior, attitudes and social processes of certain segments of society. Furthermore, the analysis of gang graffiti can inform gang scholars and law enforcement of gang conflict and linkages among street gang in different cities and regions of the country. For the purpose of this study, I will only discuss gang graffiti.

Referencing the quote above from an anonymous gang member, gang graffiti serves as a marker; whereby, simply being acknowledged is important to gang members (Hutchison 1990, p. 140). In every city, neighborhood or community, gang graffiti serves as a way to communicate a defined territory, express sentiments of revenge or pride, commemorate the dead (RIP), or signal gang affiliation and allegiances (Alonso 1999). Considered as a “closed form of communication” and difficult to decipher (Alonso 1999, p.26), the misinterpretation of the writing on the wall (gang graffiti) could result in death for a gang member, depending on his or her affiliation (Alonso 1999). When decoding gang graffiti, there are two critical elements to consider, the variation in writing styles and symbolism of gang graffiti.

Viewed as artist expression, variations of style in Hispanic gang graffiti tends to be more colorful and elaborate (Alonso 1999; Hutchinson 1993). Whereas, gang graffiti penned by black gang members tends to be less sophisticated and more symbolic. One of the earliest studies of gang graffiti, Romtosky and Romotsky (1975) found Hispanic gangs often write the name of their gang in an elaborate style of large letters referred to as “placas” (translated as plaques), displaying within the graffiti the gang members’ name, his/her gang affiliation, and the geographical coordinates of the gang’s territory (Alonso 1999). Below, the photo in figure 1, illustrate elaborate Hispanic gang graffiti; whereas, the photo in figure 2, demonstrates symbolism (meaning) within gang graffiti.

Figure 4:1 East Tulsa, OK- Gang Graffiti



Source: Photo taken by Corinice Wilson: 2008

In his examination of gang graffiti, Alonso (1999) found black gang members tend to use more symbolism in their graffiti, conveying messages of supremacy and territoriality or direct threats (Alonso 1999). However, regionally Hispanic gang graffiti (specifically in Tulsa, Oklahoma) has been observed to be more symbolic. The use of

gang symbols such as, an upside down crown, arrows, the use of Roman numeral or a mixture of letters and numbers have been observed in both black and Hispanic gangs.

Figure 4:2 Tulsa, OK- Gang Graffiti



Source: Photo taken by Corinice Wilson: 2008

The intentional defacement of a rival's graffiti reifies power, which is an explicit and visible act of supremacy (Sack 1986, p.32). Marked territories serve as an important component to the sense of identity (Entrikin 1991, p.302), defined by the geographical location of gang graffiti in public space. Below, the photo in figure 3 illustrates one gang crossing out another gang indicates a conflict.

Figure 4:3 East Tulsa OK- Rival Gang Graffiti



Source: Photo taken by Corinice Wilson: 2008

Just Hanging Out

Contrary to popular belief, street gangs do not spend majority of their time ‘gangin’; they fill their time “hanging out”, eating, sleeping and engaging in recreational drug use (Moore 1991; Sanders 1994). Many gang members are no different than non-delinquent youth (Delaney 2006), gang members engage in “legitimate” activities such as, going to clubs, play video games, playing ball, even attending religious observances, such as, attending church or mass. This is not to say that gang members do not engage in criminal activities, the violent aspect of gang subculture is ever present. As mentioned above, on average, gang members are responsible for greater levels of crime and violence than non-gang members. Drugs and alcohol use have always been a part of gang life; “getting high”, marijuana and alcohol consumption has been and continues to be the most widely used substances among gang members (Fagan 2004, p. 237). For the most part, the type of criminal activities gang members engage in largely varies from gang to gang.

The difference between contemporary gangs and gangs prior to the 1970s has been the expansion of illegal drug markets and senseless violence. In a declining economy, crack cocaine opened new opportunities for youth to make money. Due to, large numbers of gang members involved in the manufacturing, distribution and trafficking of illegal drugs, has led to the creation of “drug gangs” (Klein 1995). Klein deems it necessary to make a distinction between street gangs and drug gangs (Klein 1995, p.132). However, the concept of “drug gang” is still relatively new and its parameters appear to be ambiguous, in nature, again due in large part to the very definition of a “gang”.

Gang-Related Crimes

With gangs comes violence; due to the nature of gang activities, gang members are more likely to be exposed to and become victims of violent crimes (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Maxson et al. 1998; Taylor et al 2007). “Violence is an important aspect of the gang experience. It motives young people to join gangs; it’s typically a part of an initiation ritual and ever present in the lives of most gangs (Curry and Decker 2003, p. 76). Thornberry and Burch’s (1993) research indicated that gang members had higher rates of delinquency than non-gang members. The sharp escalation in gang homicide rates during the 1980s and early 1990s has led to heightened concern of the role of gangs in fostering serious interpersonal violence (Maxson 1999). Block and Block (1993) revealed in a three year study of street gang-motivated violence in Chicago, that there was a strong correlation between gangs and gang- related violence and drug trafficking. Gangs have used violence to protect turf and to acquire turf; when the turf represents a

profitable marketplace (i.e. drugs); the level of violence often escalates to murder (Delaney 2006).

Previously limited to urban areas, gang-related violence now has reached “middle” American; suburbs and rural communities. Increasingly, street gangs account for a disproportionately large amount of crime (Huff 2004; Thornberry and Burch 1997). In the 2002-2003 bi-annual report, the National Youth Gang Surveys (NYGS) revealed that nearly 4 out of 10 large metropolitan cities reported 10 or more gang homicides annually (Egley, 2005).

History of Gangs in the United States

To understanding the current gang problem, I will briefly examine the origins of street gangs in the United States. Bearing some resemblance to gangs today, street gangs throughout history were formed on the basis of group preservation (Prothrow-Smith 1991). Gangs prior to the 1950s, were largely made up of poor, urban white immigrants (Delaney 2006). Territorial in nature, gangs were largely concerned with protecting their “turf” and protecting “their own” (Thrasher 1927). In the face of discrimination, poverty and exploitation, many immigrants (Eastern and Southern Europeans) retreated to their ethnic enclaves and formed gangs on the basis of territory, ethnic alliance and money.

The violent “*gangster*” culture and its practice of drive-by murders originated in the roaring twenties (Yablonsky1997). Often romanticized, the prohibition era of the roaring 1920s ushered in two distinct types of gangs; organized syndicate gangs and street gangs. Operating in major metropolitan areas, organized syndicate gangs were primarily involved in gambling, racketeering and manufacturing outlawed alcohol

(Delaney 2006); however, by the end of prohibition in 1933, organized criminal gangs lost control of the streets, and street gangs flourished. Internal migration patterns, after World War II also, contributed to the expansion of street gangs; minorities left the south and migrated to industrial cities in the north (Wilson 1987). During the late 1950s white immigrant gangs practically vanished, they receded from public view as mainstream America dealt with overt persistent demands for economic and social equality by minority groups (Decker and Van Winkle 1996, p.7).

During the civil-rights era, gangs became synonymous with minority population (OJJDP 2007). Influenced by the civil-rights movement and political action groups such as the Black Panthers and the Brown Breets, several gangs initiated (Vice Lords and Black P. Stone Nation) social programs, promoting civic engagement and sponsoring employment training programs. However, their community empowerment efforts were futile, when the grant funding dried up and revolutionary organizations were dismantled (Hagedorn and Macon 1988); rates of violence among minority gangs increased (Hagedorn and Macon 1988, p.) simultaneously with deindustrialization and the construction of public housing projects (Spergel 1991).

At epidemic proportions, the spread of crack cocaine in the late 1980s exacerbated the gang problem, technology and the availability of crack cocaine coincided with deindustrialization (Hagedorn and Macon 1988). News stories of gang-related violence, murder and corruption were common. Delineated by the magnitude of violence, street gangs of the 1980s brought about a way of life shared by many of today's street gangs. At epidemic proportions, the spread of crack cocaine in the late 1980s has exacerbated the gang problem; the technology and availability of cocaine coincided with

deindustrialization (Hagedorn and Macon 1988). Drive-by shooting, witness intimidation, terrorism, and drug trafficking is a part of contemporary “gang subculture”. Today, street gangs have reached institutional status (Delaney 2006). Due to notoriety, peer acceptance and even prestige among rap/hip hop celebrities, such as, Snoop Dog (Crip) and Lil Wayne (Blood); a “Gangsta Swagger” can be observed in all fifty states (Miller 2001). Previously limited to urban areas, gang-related violence has been reported in “middle” America (both suburbs and rural communities); gang activity with a western influence has even been observed in communities worldwide (Hagedorn 2005). The demand for cheap labor, gang members joining the military, and the cultural diffusion of gang culture via internet, social media, and global marketing has resulted in the presence of gangs around the global (Hagedorn 2006; Sassen 2006). The quasi-fictional depiction of gangs in *West Side Story* no longer exists; the proliferation of gangs and the violence that accompanies them warrants an examination of gang migration to a mid-size metropolitan city, Tulsa, OK.

Gangs in Oklahoma

Oklahoma’s earliest recorded response to gang activity was in the early to mid-1980s. Metropolitan areas in Oklahoma (Tulsa and Oklahoma City) experienced an explosion of gang activity (Oklahoma State Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control Intelligence Division 1991). The onset and growth of Oklahoma’s gangs did not occur in a vacuum, but directly corresponds to several conditions; deindustrialization, economic changes, a change in residential migration patterns, and cultural changes,

which creates an environment ripe for gang activities to flourish (Decker and Van Winkle 1996, p. 32-37).

In 1990, the Oklahoma State Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control Intelligence Division (1991) conducted a strategic intelligence preliminary analysis of Crips and Bloods Street Gang Activity in Oklahoma. The intelligence report revealed gang activity increased steadily throughout Oklahoma between 1984 and 1987(OSBND 1991); members of the notorious Crips gang from Compton California established gang presence in Tulsa and Muskogee areas (OSBND 1991). Even though, the preliminary report focused on black street gangs; indeed the intelligence report indicated a probable existence of white juvenile gangs, including an all white Crips set in Western Oklahoma (OSBND 1991). The existence of well-developed Hispanic gangs and the likelihood of an Asian gang presence in Oklahoma were also noted (p.141).

Contemporary Oklahoma Gangs

Gangs in Oklahoma are predominately male, ages 13 to 25; however, there are a large number of 26 to 35 year olds (Regional Organized Crime Information Center 2008). Gangs often divided into sub groups, sets, or cliques; these groups most often identify with neighborhoods or street names. Below, table 4:1 reveal majority of the gang sets reported in Oklahoma are Bloods, Crips and Hispanic gangs (Surenos, Latin Kings and Nortenos).

TABLE 4:1- 2009 PREDOMINANT OKLAHOMA GANG SETS

Gang Set	Percentage
Crips	19.0%
Hispanic gangs	18.0%
Hybrid Gangs	17.8%
Hoover Crips	15.5%
Bloods	14.1%
Neighborhood Crips	6.4%
Supremacist groups	3.7%
MS-13	1.2%
Outlaw Motorcycle gangs	3.4%
Indian Gangs	0.6%
Asian Gangs	0.3%

Source: Tulsa Multi-Agency Gang Operational Team, 2011

Often, the number of gang sets can be indicative of the potential gang penetration of a county or metropolitan's population. Oklahoma City and Tulsa counties accounted for 44.5% of Oklahoma's total gang sets (Oklahoma District Attorney Council 2010). Of the 1,026 gang sets operating within Oklahoma, Oklahoma, Tulsa, and Comanche (Lawton) counties reported the largest number of gang sets. Eighty-one percent (81%) of Oklahoma's total gang sets were found to be contained in 20% of Oklahoma's counties (ODAC 2010). However, per capita gang membership ratios are indicative of a county's gang saturation ratio (ODAC 2010). Oklahoma City and Tulsa counties account for 34% of Oklahoma's gang sets; the geographic allocation of gang sets by county is often predicative of the growth of gangs in a particular county and/or adjacent counties.

Below, table 4:2 reveals an alarming reality, of gang in Oklahoma; for every 1,000 residents, Lawton has 13.5 are gang members (Oklahoma Gang Survey: Oklahoma District Attorneys Council's (ODAC) Annual Report 2011 [Retrieved 7/5/11]).

TABLE 4:2 2009 OKLAHOMA'S PER CAPITA GANG MEMBER SATURATION

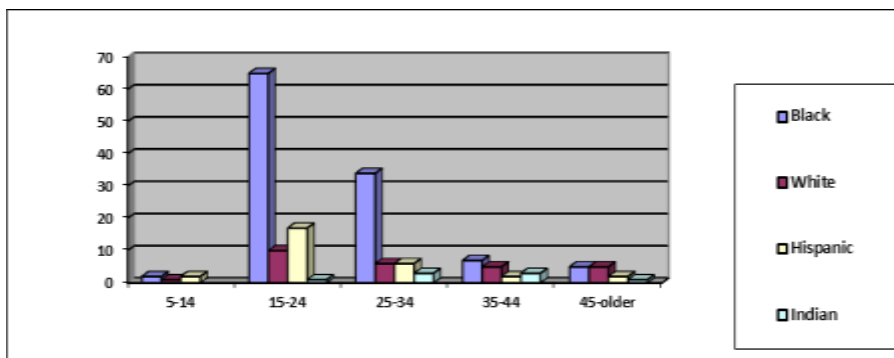
County	Per Capita	Gang Members	Population
Comanche (Lawton)	13.5	1540	113,811
Oklahoma	7.2	5,070	701,807
Tulsa	7.3	4,287	585,08
<i>State of Oklahoma</i>	<i>3.7</i>	<i>13,477</i>	<i>3,617,316</i>

Source: Oklahoma District Attorneys Council (DAC [Retrieved 7/5/11])

The Oklahoma Violent Death Reporting System (OKVDRS) tracks gang-related homicides using information provided in police and medical examiner (ME) reports. As shown in Figure 4:1, Oklahoma gang-related homicide data is consistent with other gang research on gang violence and victimization (Maxson and Klein 1990; Rosenfeld, Bray and Egley 1999), from 2004-2008, fifteen percent (169) of the all Oklahoma homicides were related to gang activity or had gang-like circumstances (OKVDRS2011). Of these, 69% (116) were gang-related, and 31% (53) were gang-like. Ninety-five percent of the gang and gang-like homicide victims were male, and 5% were female. The mean age of victims was 26 years; the youngest victim was 9 years of age and the oldest was 70 years of age. Fifty-four percent of the victims were 15-24 years of age, 28% were 25-34 years of age, 14% were 35 years and older, and 3% were less than 15 years of age. Six of the victims were bystanders (not the intended victims of the shooting), ranging in age from 9

to 38 years. Sixty-seven percent of gang and gang-like homicide victims were black, 16% were white, 5% were Native American, and 12% were mixed and other races. Eighteen percent of gang and gang-like homicide victims were of Hispanic ethnicity. Black males had the highest rate of gang and gang-like homicides (Kabore, Brown and Archer 2010, p. 1).

FIGURE 4:4 NUMBER OF GANG AND GANG-LIKE HOMICIDES BY AGE, RACE, AND ETHNICITY, OKLAHOMA, 2004-2008



Source: 2010 Oklahoma Violent Death Reporting System (OKVDRS)

Gangs in Tulsa

Unlike Hagedorn and Macon's (1988) observation of gang emergence in Milwaukee, the emergence of street gangs in Tulsa was not an outgrowth of break-dancing, a hip hop phenomenon of the late 1970s. Nor was it an issue of racial/ethnicity conflict, but of a lucrative drug market. Street gangs emerged in Tulsa primarily in low-income, homogeneous minority neighborhoods (Tulsa Tribune 1991). Susceptible to the allure of money, power and prestige, Tulsa's black youth began to emulate criminal street gang members from California. The growth of gangs in Tulsa directly corresponds to the decline of economic conditions of Tulsa, OK during the late 1970s and early 1980s

(Decker and Van Winkle 1996). The exodus of middle-class to the suburbs and the disappearance of the manufacturing industry exacerbated the economic decline in Tulsa.

One of the worst mistakes Oklahoma policymakers and law enforcement officials made during the late 1980s and early 1990s was downplaying the existence of gangs in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. “There was an awareness of street gangs by appointed officials, but a denial by elected officials” (Miller 2004, p.2). The Oklahoma District Attorneys Council annual 2011 reported, “Until the fall of 2006, Oklahoma law enforcement officials did not fully comprehend the nature or degree of gang-related criminal activity occurring within Oklahoma borders” (ODAC Report 2011, p. 18). For more than a decade, members of Tulsa’s law enforcement agencies assured its citizenry, there was no major gang problem in the city because most of the area gang members were only “wannabes” (Branstetter 1989). Even suggesting acts of violence were being committed by groups of individuals (“social club disturbances), Tulsa police officers were not allowed to classify such activities as gang related (Fallis 1992). Major Drew Diamond of the Tulsa Police Department refused to acknowledge gang activity in Tulsa. He stated, “We have a handful of dope-dealing street thieves, but they don't constitute a gang,” (Fallis 1992). As Police Chief, Drew Diamond continued his declaration, “There are no gangs in Tulsa”. Chief Diamond suggested acknowledging the presence of gangs, would only give them credibility” (Parker and Robert, 1991). However, many residents in North Tulsa knew gangs were alive and well in Tulsa, OK.

Although, Tulsa’s gang problem is by no means at the level of large urban cities across the country, its gang problem grew at an unprecedented rate between the 1980’s and

1990's (Howell, 2001). Tulsa's population size of 389,536 is less than 10% of the population size of Los Angeles at 3,958,251 (US Census 2010). In the early 1990's Tulsa experienced a surge in shootings and narcotic sales by individuals claiming membership in street gangs known as the Rip Boys (Bloods) and (Hoover) Crips. It was not until 1992, the Tulsa Police department and the Tulsa County Sheriff's Office formed an intervention/ response group, known as Tulsa Area Response Gang Enforcement Team-TARGET and a Gang intervention Team, respectively; whereby, known gang members are entered into a gang member certification database. The creation of Gang Units brought about the institutionalization of street gangs in Tulsa. Within eighteen years, a little more than a decade and a-half (February 1992 and December 2010), the Tulsa Multi-Agency Gang Operational Team has identified 6,475 individuals involved in Tulsa area gangs. The Tulsa Multi-Agency Gang Operational Team (TMGOT) has identified over 500 different gang sets in Tulsa County alone (Tulsa Gang Task Force 2010).

Street gangs that once called the streets of Chicago, Los Angeles or New York City home now stretch beyond big city borders as these gangs migrated to Tulsa bringing with them the brutality of gang-style violence more often seen in large metropolitan cities (Johnson 2004). Involved in illegal drug trafficking, murder, shooting with intent to kill, assault with a deadly weapon, and drive-by shootings, some of Tulsa's gangs have evolved into more organized criminal enterprise, while others have maintained a loose, "hybrid" like quality, such as, "G-unit" and "Clover Clique". The evolution of street gangs has not been confined to the City of Tulsa though; neighboring community has experienced varying levels of the problem. Tulsa's gang problem has been difficult to track, because many gang members cross jurisdictional boundaries and commit crimes in

different communities. This situation makes it difficult for area law enforcement to gather intelligence and pursue gang crime in a comprehensive and effective manner (TARGET 2007). Below, table 4:3 breaks-downs Tulsa gangs by cliques/set names. Table 4:4 identify gang sets and its membership that were identified by Tulsa’s Multi-Agency Gang Operational Team.

TABLE 4:3 PREDOMINANT TULSA GANG SETS

GANG	SETS/SUB SETS
Crips	107 Hoover, 54 th St. Hoover, 63 rd St. Hoover, 61 st St. South Side Clicc, Garrison Blocc Crips, Frankfort Blocc Crips, <i>Grape Street Crips*</i>
Crips	111 NHC (Nabahood), 47 th St. Green Team – NHC, 46 th St. NHC, 44 th St. NHC, Main Street Crips, Rollin 60’s NHC
Bloods	52 nd St. Red Mob Gangsters, Piru Bloods, Bounty Hunter Bloods
Hispanic	Surenos 13, SLW – South Land Wicked, WSC –West Side Criminals, Juaritos 13, Florencia 13, Latin Kings, East Side Longos, MS 13, Nortenos 14.
Supremacists	UAB-Universal Aryan Brotherhood (Prison Gang), Aryan Brotherhood, Peckerwood, Ku Klux Klan, Irish Mob Gangsters, Skinhead groups
Outlaw MC	Bandidos, Mongols, Rogues, Outlaws, Scorpions, Black Piston. Outlaw farm clubs: OK Riders, Loco Viajeros, Malvados
Independent /Hybrid	Green Team (Many are now NHC), 52 nd St. Blacc Mafia, Comanche Park Gangsters, Crazy Young Gangstas (Many are now NHC), Clover Clicc (Several are now Hoover Crips)
Indian Gangs	IBH – Indian Brotherhood

Source: Tulsa Multi-Agency Gang Operational Team, 2011

TABLE 4:4 NUMBER OF TULSA GANG SETS, BY GANG TYPE⁸

GANG	# OF MEMBERS	# OF GANG SETS
Asian Gangs	51	8
Bloods	1131	96
Crips	3157	196
Folk Nation	104	12
People Nation	31	7
Hispanic	821	101
Independent/Hybrid	280	41
Indian	71	9
Outlaw Motorcycle	300	33
Supremacists	529	81
TOTALS	6475⁹	584^{**10}

(Source: Tulsa Multi-Agency Gang Operational Team, 2011)

In 2003, Tulsa experienced 71 murders, the largest number in the city's history, with 31% of these being considered gang-related (Tulsa Police Department 2011). While the total number of murders in the city dropped to 50 in 2004; the percentage of gang-related homicides remained steady at roughly 22%, and 17% in 2005 (Tulsa Gang Taskforce 2006). Seven of the fifteen murders committed in Tulsa during January and February of 2006 were gang-related; a figure that equal or exceed the total number of gang-related murders for 2000 through 2002 (Tulsa Gang Summit Report 2007). 2009 was a record year for homicides in Tulsa; however, it had the lowest percentage of gang

⁸ * The "total number of gang members" listed above include gang members who are considered hard core, gang associates and intelligence on peripheral gang members who do not meet gang associate criteria. It also includes gang members who are in custody of the Oklahoma Departments of Corrections, in Federal Prison, in local jails, in juvenile facilities and deceased gang members, all of which are not considered active in the community.

^{10**} In the "total number of gang sets", for example, just the 107 Hoover Crips 92 different sub-sets, and Nabahood Crips have 52 sub-sets, which are broken down by individual street names. Also, in Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs members are broken down into chapters and Supremacist members can belong to several organizations, which makes it appear there are more splinter gangs and groups, when basically they all align.

related homicides (Tulsa Police Department 2010); the decline in gang-related homicides has continued, in 2010 only 9.6% of the total number of homicides was gang-related.

TABLE 4:5 GANG-RELATED HOMICIDE RATES IN TULSA COUNTY

Year	Total # of Homicides	Gang Related: Motivated Involved*		Percentage that are Gang Related
2010	62	6	15	9.6%
2009*	71	7	33	10%
2008	53	7	17	14%
2007	64	9	17	26.56%
2006	56	7	18	19.6%
2005	64	9	13	17%
2004**	50	Unknown	11	22%
2003	71	Unknown	22	31%

Source: Tulsa Police Department: 2010

*“Gang Involved” homicides are where gang members were either the victim and/or were involved in or arrested for the homicide.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

To ignore structural variation, means to accept stereotypical characteristics of gangs. This chapter shed light on a number of key issues regarding the organizational structure of gangs and how they influence the behavior of its members and types of criminal activity involved (Klein 1995). The connection between the organizational structures and criminal activity informs our understanding of gang proliferation. The chapter concludes with a historical examination of gangs in US, Oklahoma and Tulsa, Ok and a snapshot of gangs in Oklahoma. The use of official data not only confirms the prevalence of gang in Oklahoma, but illustrates the complexity of gangs in Oklahoma. With the intention of understanding a complete picture of gang in Tulsa, OK, the next chapter presents the research design and methodology that will guide the examination of street gangs in Tulsa, OK.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

“Welcome to the Jungle”

RESEARCH DESIGN

The complex and dynamic nature of street gangs cannot be captured solely through official reporting systems (Decker 1989; Hagedorn, 1990); qualitative research methodologies can provide an insightful examination of the everyday experiences of gang life. Committed to the first-hand experience and exploration of gang life, an interpretative phenomenological approach will guide this study. Often cited as the “Father” of American Anthropology; Boas proposes that there are multiple realities, not single realities of phenomena, and that these realities can differ across time and place (Van Manen 1997). This study examined former gang members’ “Lifeworld” (Van Manen, 1997, p. 7), the meaning, understanding, and interpretation of gang life through the eyes of former gang members. My personal experiences with gangs informed this study, but gathering information from a variety of sources enlightened the overall understanding of gang involvement. For the purpose of strengthening the study, I employed multiple methodologies; including historical analysis of local law enforcement

agency reports, content analysis of 150 local newspaper articles and semi-structured interviews. Also, the use of census tract data and maps (Cromley and McLafferty 2002) aided in the examination of the spatial dimensions of at-risk neighborhoods identified by the Office of Juvenile Affairs; these geographical areas were used to draw a snowball sample.

CONTEXTUAL DATA

Drawn from 150 local Tulsa newspaper articles spanning five years (1989-1994), a content analysis was performed with the intent of ascertaining a timeframe by which gang emerged in Tulsa. This analysis is restricted to two newspapers, the *Tulsa World* and the *Tulsa Tribune*. Corroborating data provided by in-depth interviews, information provided an historical context by which gangs emerged in Tulsa (Appendix, timeline events). As the chart below indicate, a search of *Tulsa World Newspapers* database revealed the sheer number of articles on the subject of “gangs”, Crips, Blood or social groups increased from a mere eleven newspaper articles in 1989 to more than fifty news articles in 1994. The content analyses of the articles indicate in the late 1980s, Tulsa’s elected officials, like some many of cities around the country denied the presence of gangs in Tulsa. Tulsa’s police department policy to deny the existence of gangs was strictly enforces; Tulsa’s Police Chief, Drew Diamond insisted Tulsa did not have a gang problem. However, under political pressures and extensive media coverage of drive-by shootings, Chief Diamond was forced to resign. Subsequently, the Tulsa police department adopted policy, which acknowledged the existence of gangs.

TABLE 5:1 GANG- RELATED ARTICLES: TULSA WORLD NEWSPAPER

Year	Number of Gang-Related Articles	
	# Of Articles: Denial of Gang Existence	#Acknowledge gang activity
1989	11	0
1990	2	0
1991	23	2
1992	0	15
1993	41	41
1994	58	
<i>Total</i>	<i>150</i>	

(Source: WorldCat –Tulsa World [Articles retrieved 1/2011])

SAMPLING POPULATION

Considered a "hidden" population, recruiting former gang members to participate in the study was difficult. Only individuals 18 years of age or older were included in the sample; twelve former gang members were interviewed, ten males and two females (Petersen and Valdez 2005).

PPROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Appropriate university institutional review board approval for the use of human participants in the study was obtained prior to begin this study. A waiver of written documentation of consent was granted by OSU's IRB; each participant provided a verbal consent and was given written contact information for Oklahoma State University's Institutional Review Board only. Please see attached **Appendices D- E** a waiver of informed consent and a script for verbal consent.

Participants in the study self-identified themselves as an ex-gang member; therefore, maintaining confidentiality was paramount. Each respondent was informed they were free to withdraw from the study at any time and/or could refuse to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable answering. Participants were assured the information they provide will remain confidential. A case number (#1-12) was assigned to each participant interview; this number was utilized when reporting the finding of the study. Participants did not encounter stressors that were greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

DATA COLLECTION

Former gang members could not be recruited by conventional means (flyers, posters or announcements); therefore, a nonrandom, snowball sampling was employed to obtain the sample. A non-probability sample (Katz, Cook Crouch, 1991) is most effective method when obtaining subjects who are former gang members; informal networks and association with former gang members allows access to this population. I used snowball sampling technique, utilizing community contacts. At the conclusion of each interview, I provided the participant with a card with my contact information (a card with a pre-paid cell phone telephone number) to be distributed to a potential participant. See APPENDIX A, a copy of the contact information card. Participants in the study ranged in ages between 18-45 years old, including both male and female participants. Due to the focus of this research, the participants in the study were African Americans.

Utilizing an adapted survey instrument incorporated into semi-structured interview schedule created by Dr. James Vigil (1988); I extracted behavior, attitudes and perceptions of gang involvement from former gang members (Appendix C). Despite limitations of using a semi-structured interviews, it was the best way to investigate the habitual activities of “time and space” of gang involvement in Tulsa, OK (Decker and Van Winkle 1996). The semi-structured interview scheduled was designed in a way to elicit information regarding perception and attitudes of their gang membership. This qualitative method afforded me the opportunity to gain a distinct level of insight regarding the nature of gangs and gang behavior (Hadegorn 1989 Vigil 1988).

To ensure the safety and confidentiality of the research participants, all interviews were conducted in public “neutral” locations, such as, restaurants (McDonalds), city parks, and city libraries; whereby, participants felt at ease and free from distractions. The safety/security of participants and the PI was not compromised; a person not connected to the study was physically present during all interviews, but at an appropriate distance away from the PI (Corinice Wilson) and research participant.

All interview questions were read aloud. Being clear not to ask leading questions, such as to how they should answer the questions; interviews were conducted in the same manner for each respondent, to ensure consistency and reliability. Only one respondent gave the PI permission to audio record and transcribe their interview; however, the other eleven respondents did not consent to being audio taped. At the conclusion of each interview, the PI provided each research participant a business card with contact information (a card with the PI’s name and a pre-paid cell phone telephone number) to be

distributed to a potential research participant that may be interested in participating the study. Compensation was given to each subject participating in the study at the conclusion of the interview; each interview respondent received \$25.00 for their time and contribution to the research. No respondent withdrew from the study without completing the interview; however several elected not to respond to certain questions. Given the small sample size, this study is not considered generalizable, but exploratory in nature (See **APPENDIX C**).

Qualitative research is not a linear, step-by-step process. Data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity (Merriam, 1998). Data gathered from the participant interview was transcribed and accessible only to the researcher. Utilizing Patton's (1990, p. 376) interpretive paradigm and cross-case analysis, I grouped together and categorized the separate responses of each respondent. Observing emergent patterns across each interview, I was able to discover and identify themes and concepts that emerged throughout the interview process. Limiting access to the data provided additional assurance that the identities of the participants were concealed and anonymous.

Coding data in qualitative research was labor intensive; data were transcribed verbatim from the interviews. After transcription of the interviews occurred, I imported and organized the data into Nvivo9 qualitative research software (QSR International, n.d.). Nvivo9 is computer-aided database software that allows the freedom and flexibility to organize raw data for coding and editing. I sorted for similarity and categorized in accordance to developing themes and concepts. The last level of analysis allowed for the

identification and summarization of emergent themes based upon questions asked during the interview process (see Appendix D).

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

The ecological landscape of Tulsa, OK does not resemble barrios; Tulsa has a variety of socioeconomic sub-parts ranging from multi-million dollar enclaves to areas that have been federally designated as an EZ/EC community¹¹; this study concentrated on several areas federally designated as EZ/RC communities. I drew a snowball sample from four high-risk neighborhoods identified by the Office of Juvenile Affairs: OJA (2005). The criteria for high-risk neighborhood include; the number of serious and violent offenders, the percentage of residents that are a visible minority, the percentage of families led by a single female, high school dropout rate, unemployment rate, the percentage of residents receiving public assistance, percent of residents at or below poverty level and the percentage of population between 10 and 17 years old (OJA 2005).

Below, the geographical areas (Target Area 1 and 2; Service Outreach Area 1 and 2) are located in Tulsa County and are as follows (US Census Bureau 2000). **Target Area 1** is located in north Tulsa and includes census tracts 6200, 8001, 8002, 7900, and 9101. The area is bordered on the south by East Apache Street, on the north by N. 86 St. E, on the west by North Osage Drive, and on the east by North Peoria Avenue, although census tract 8001 extends as far east as the Cherokee Expressway. There are 408 offenders in this area. **Target Area 2**, also located in north Tulsa, includes census tracts

¹¹ Empowerment Zones and Economic renewal Communities are designed to provide tax benefits to businesses that employ residents from the designated areas.

300, 400, 1200, 1300 and 1400. The area is bordered on the south by I-244, on the north by the Cherokee Expressway and East Apache Street, on the east by North Hartford Avenue and on the west by North Harvard Avenue and North Yale Avenue. There are 234 offenders in this area. Within **Outreach Service Area 1**, only one census tract 9004 has been identified as a particularly at-risk neighborhood. The area is bordered by Mingo on the west boundary to 129th on the east; and 31st on the north boundary to 41st on the south. There are 168 offenders in this area. **Outreach Service Area 2** is located in southwest Tulsa and extends from 61st Street South and South Peoria Avenue southeast to 91st Street and South Harvard Avenue. It also includes a large area bounded by I-244 and I-44 on the north and west, 61st Street on the south, and Boston Avenue on the east. Within Outreach Service Area 2, three areas have identified as being particularly at risk. These are census tracts 6701, 7608 and 7610. There are 136 offenders in this area. A total number of 1007 juvenile offenders, including at least 126 serious and violent offenders identified (OJA 2006-07).

FIGURE 5:1 MAP OF TULSA COUNTY HIGH RISK NEIGHBORHOODS



Census tract data included in Table 5:1 provides a clear picture of neighborhoods/communities identified for this study; these neighborhoods/communities are financially restricted, characterized with high rates of unemployment, a large number of single female-headed households and high dropout rates. Tulsa Public School (TPS) district reports an average of 60% of students who receive the free and reduced lunch program benefits district-wide; however, for elementary and middle schools average 96% (TPS 2007). Furthermore, according to Census data below, the unemployment rate in the north Tulsa census tracts is roughly double the unemployment rate in the city as a whole.

TABLE 5: 2 CENSUS DATA: NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS

Census Tract	At or Below Poverty	Unemployed	Public Assistance	School Dropout
Target Area 1				
6200	52%	11.2%	11%	15.3%
8001	65%	13.1%	20.1%	22.9%
8002	35%	8.2%	11.7%	9.9%
7900	38%	12.8%	12.3%	7.4%
9101	40%	12.1%	7.4%	18.7%
Target Area 2				
300	30%	10.5%	7.7%	12.9%
400	30%	12.2%	11.4%	39.5%
1200	36%	9.0%	10.2%	28.8%
1300	34%	8.6%	16.1%	26.4%
1400	29%	8%	9.2%	48.8%
Svc Area 1				
9004	40%	7.4%	6.5%	32.1%
Svc Area 2				
6701	35%	10.8%	10.7%	19.9%
7608	44%	5.8%	7.4%	20.6%
7610	33%	4.5%	3.4%	2.2%

(ACS/US Census Data: 2005-2009)

The areas identified for this study have a particularly large number of female-headed households. In Target Area 1, more than 50% of families are headed by single mothers. Target Area 1 has a total population of 17,533 individuals, including 2,859 youth between the ages of 10 and 17. Eighty-four percent of neighborhood residents are members of minority groups. Target Area 2 has a total population of 18,113 individuals, including 2,287 youth between the ages of 10 and 17. Forty-nine percent of neighborhood residents are members of minority groups. In Target Area 2, approximately one-third of families are headed by single mothers. Within Outreach Service Area 1, census tract 9004, 1, 28.8% of families are headed by single mothers and nearly forty-eight percent are members of minority groups. In outreach service area 2, two areas have identified as

being particularly at risk: census tracts 6701 and 7608; 45.7% and 51.7% of families are headed by single mothers, respectively. Nearly thirty percent are members of minority groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Limitations with Current Research: The complexity and dynamic nature of gang life cannot be captured through official reporting systems (Hagedorn, 1990). Gang Research based on quantitative methodology cannot explain why particular risk-factors correlate to an increase propensity to gang violence and gang membership. Gang member self-reports are particularly suspect, as they may be influenced by pressures to conceal delinquent and violence behaviors or to exaggerate them to confirm gang and self-images. Quantitative gang research reveals general patterns of gang prevalence and gang member characteristics and behavior. However, Qualitative research elicits a distinct level of insight regarding the nature of gangs and gang behavior.

CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter reports the findings of in-depth interviews, their significance and limitations of this study. When applicable, quotes from the respondents are included to convey the sentiment of the respondents in their own words. Demographic descriptions of the respondents, socioeconomic status and characteristics of gang membership are presented. In accordance with Oklahoma State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), specific names of the clique/set each respondents had been affiliated has been omitted to protect the identity of the respondents.

Data analysis was guided by the following research questions: (a) what is the lived experience of youth who become gang involved, and how do the people that influence them the most contribute to their gang involvement. (b) To what extent can gang behavior be understood as a response to marginalization (exclusion from mainstream culture)? (c) Do compounded risk-factors contribute to likelihood of youth to join gangs? (d) Vigil (1988) suggests issues of identity (affiliation, associations, identification with others, and group solidarity) are important in gang formation and

membership. Citing “gang status” as a motivating factor among gang sets; is there a relationship between the escalation of gang related violence and gang status? Finally, contextual data revealed in the content analysis of Tulsa World newspaper articles corroborate finding reported in the in-depth interviews.

Demographics of Respondents

The sample included ten males and two females, all respondents self-reported gang membership and involvement. At the time they were interviewed the respondents ranged in age from 20 to 45 years old, the mean age for the respondents is 35.4 years old. Due to the focus of this research, the respondents were all Blacks. The demographic characteristics of the respondents (N=12) are reported in Table 4:1.

TABLE 6:1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC OF RESPONDENTS (N=12)

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Male	10	83%
Female	2	17%
Age		
18-20	1	8%
21-25	2	17%
26-30	1	8%
31-35	3	25%
36-Above	5	42%
Race/Ethnicity		
Blacks	12	100%

Gang involvement and delinquent behavior have been found to be strong predictors of school failure (Esbensen 2000; Spergel, 1990); however, educational attainment levels of the respondents were found to be significant, there was minimal correlation between academic performance and gang membership. More than half of all respondents (58%) obtained a high school diploma or General Education Diploma GED. Of the seven respondents that obtained a diploma or GED, four (57%) reported graduating from high school on time and three (43%) reported obtaining their GED. Moreover, three of the seven respondents (43%) reported furthering their education and earning some college credits. Controlling for age and gender, educational attainment was found to be significant; respondents 30 years of age and younger reported higher dropout rates, than respondents 31 years older and older. In addition, both female respondents reported dropping out of school before graduating high school; one female respondent said she eventually obtain her General Education Diploma (GED) in prison. At the time of the interviews, only two (17%) respondents had not completed high school or obtained a GED. See Table 6:2 below.

TABLE 6:2 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON GENDER (N=12)

Education Levels				
<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>%</u>
Less than High School	1	50%	1	10%
GED	1	50%	2	20%
HS diploma			4	40%
Some College			3	30%
Bachelor's Degree				
Total	2		10	

Socioeconomic Status of Respondents

Concentrated poverty play a critical role in shaping one's thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. Cited as a contributing factor for gang membership (Hagedorn 1989; Spergel 1990), low socioeconomic status impacts the vulnerability to gang recruitment. If adolescents do not see legitimate economic opportunities, researchers (Anderson 1999; Hagedorn 1989; Vigil 2003) believe they will turn to gangs as alternative means of economic support. In Table 6:3 below, the socioeconomic status of the respondents is reported.

With respect to the family structure of the respondents, more than half of the respondents (66%) reported their parents were never married. Two respondents reported their parents divorced, and three (25%) respondents reported growing up in a two-parent household. Of the three respondents who grew up in a two-parent home, one respondent reported their father passed away (die of a heart attack) during their childhood. In terms of respondents' marital status, fifty percent of the respondents reported living with someone, three respondents reported being single (25%); whereas, only three respondents reported being married (25%).

Socioeconomic status of the respondents was defined by home ownership, number of cars in the respondent's household, the educational levels of the respondents' parents (Rank 2007), and the current employment status of the respondents (Massey and Shibuya 1995). Consistent with gang literature, a significant number of respondents (75%) reported they were renter-occupiers (Tita and Cohen 2005). However, three of the respondents (25%) owned their own home. While the number of cars a person owns is a weak determinate of socioeconomic status, the probability of respondents revealing their

income was low. Nine respondents (75%) of the respondents possessed two cars or less, while three respondents (25%) owned three or more cars. An examination of respondents' employment status indicates past gang involvement, which often includes criminal activities has had an adverse effect on later employment (Good, Pirog-Good, and Sickles 1986; Seals 2009). At the time of the interview, six respondents were unemployed (62%); one respondent was employed on a long term part-time basis, five respondents reported full-time employment in manual labor jobs.

Seven respondents (58%) reported their fathers held a high school diploma or higher; of those seven respondents, one respondent reported their father held a bachelor's degree, and another reported their father obtained a master's degree. Only one respondent reported their father did not complete high school. The four remaining respondents did not have a relationship with their father, and the father's highest educational level was unknown. Only twenty-three percent of respondents reported their mothers did not completed high school. More than seventy-five percent of respondents reported their mothers held a high school diploma/GED or higher; of the seventy-five percent of respondents, less than half (40%) of respondents reported their mothers obtained some college credits, but none obtained a bachelor's degree or higher.

Eleven (92%) respondents reported their fathers were currently either retired or deceased or did not know their father's employment status; whereas, only one respondent was unaware of their mother's employment status. Seven respondents reported their mothers were currently disabled/ retired and four respondents reported their mothers were employed full-timed.

TABLE 6:3 SOCIOECONOMIC LEVELS OF RESPONDENTS

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Level of Income As Defined By Primary Residency (Own/Rent)		
Own	2	17%
Rent	10	83%
# of Family Car		
0	3	25%
1-2	6	50%
3-4	2	17%
5-More	1	8%
Employment Status of Respondents		
Employed- Full-Time	5	42%
Employed- Part-Time	2	17%
Unemployed	3	25%
Unemployed/Student	2	17%
Current Marital Status		
Single	3	25%
Married	3	25%
Living With Someone	6	50%
Employment Status of Respondents' Father		
Employed- Full-Time	1	8%
Unemployed	0	0%
Disabled/Retired	2	17%
Deceased	4	33%
<i>Unknown</i>	5	42%
Highest Educational Level of Respondents' Father		
Less Than High School	1	8%
High School Diploma/GED*	4	33%
Some College	1	8%
Bachelor's Or Higher	2	17%
<i>Unknown</i>	4	33%

Table 6:3 Con't

Employment Status Of Respondents' Mother		
Employed- Full-Time	4	33%
Unemployed	0	0%
Disabled/Retired	7	58%
<i>Unknown</i>	1	8%
Highest Educational Level of Respondents' Mother		
Less Than High School	3	25%
High School Diploma/Ged*	6	50%
Some College	3	25%
<i>Unknown</i>	0	0%
Marital Status of Parents		
Married	1	8%
Divorce	2	17%
Deceased	2	17%
<i>Never Married</i>	7	58%

Characteristics of Respondents' Gang Membership

Respondents' characteristics regarding gang membership are reported in Table 6:4. The age respondents joined a gang ranges from 10-17 years of age, more than two-thirds of the respondents stated they joined gangs when they were 17 years old. Unintentionally, the gang type/set for the respondents is representative of national, regional and state trends (Howell 2001); slightly more than two-thirds of the respondents (75%) were Crips, with only three (25%) of respondents reported Blood membership. The length of time respondents reported being gang involved range from 5 to 20 years; Almost fifty percent of the respondents (46%) reported being active in the gang for more than 6 to 10 years.

TABLE 6:4 CHARACTERISTICS OF GANG MEMBERSHIP (N=12)

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Age Respondent Entered Gang		
10-16	4	33%
17-Above	8	66%
Gang Type/Set		
Crip	9	75%
Blood	3	25%
Length of Time In Gang		
0-5 years	1	8%
6-10 years	6	50%
11-15 years	2	17%
More Than 16 years	3	25%
Age Respondent Exited the Gang		
20-24	1	8%
25-30	8	66%
31-39	3	25%

RESULTS: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the lived experience of youth who become gang involved, and how do the people that influence them the most contribute to their gang involvement.

Lamenting their gang involvement (Vigil 2002), respondents reflected on the lived experiences as a gang member in an emergent mid-size city. Describing the trajectory towards gang membership (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Hagedorn 1989; Klein 1995; Vigil 1988); respondents detail their motivation for joining a gang, relationship with family members, day-to-day activities while involved in gangs, motives for terminating gang membership and consequences of gang membership. Included in their response, research participants discussed the people that influenced and contributed to their gang involvement.

Motives for joining a gang were as diverse (Decker and Van Winkle 1996) as the respondents themselves. For many, the process of joining a gang evolved out of normal features of their neighborhoods (Decker and Van Winkle 1996); sixty-six percent of respondents cited relationship with close friends and their neighborhood as the reason for joining a gang (Hill, Howell, Hawkins, Battin-Pearson 1999). Respondents described growing up, attending the same elementary and middle school with fellow and rival gang members (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Monti 1993). Consistent with research on female gang membership (Campbell 1994; Moore and Hagedorn 2001), one female respondent reported “*Being in love*” as the reason she joined the gang (Hunt and Joe-Laidler 2001). She joined the Crip gang because of her boyfriend. At the opposite end of the spectrum, a male respondent said he was prompted to join his gangs for protection; he

joined the Crip gang, because he was beaten up by blood recruits and he wanted revenge (Decker and Van Winkle 1996).

Respondent #9 said,

“I was filled with hate, so I joined the Crips. If I could have killed them, I would have so I did the next best thing and join the Crips.”

Multigenerational gang involvement (Zatz and Portillos 2000) was found to be motivating factor for gang membership. Three respondents reported a family history of gang involvement (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Jankowski 1991), asserting their families was most influential in joining the gang. Emulating parents, uncles or older siblings, several respondents discussed joining the same gang as their family members (Curry and Spergel 1992; Vigil 2002). When asked how many family members are/were in a gang, ninety-two percent of the respondents reported they had one or more family members in a gang (Decker and Curry 2000; Jankowski 1991; Vigil 1988). Of the ninety-two percent of respondents, seventeen percent reported gang involvement started with them; they were responsible for recruiting their younger siblings and cousins into the gang (Howell and Egley 2005).

Respondent # 2 said,

“Four, all boys, my little brother and cousins.”

Respondent # 4 said,

“Just my youngest brother—the gang started with me (he was shot 8 times by a blood)”.

Respondent # 6 said,

“Most of my family was in the gang”.

Respondent # 9 said,

Er’ body, my whole family is 59 Hoover Crip. My mom, sister, my brothers, cousins. You never really get out of the gang! I’m just not active.”

Only one respondent said none of their family members were in a gang; however, favorable family attitudes towards crime have been linked with gang membership (Vigil 1988). He reported his family was from the streets and were involved in prostitution and selling drugs (Shelden et al. 1997). Very casual, respondent # 10 described seeing naked women all the time at his uncle’s home. He stated, “The women mixed up his uncle’s crack, and because his uncle didn’t trust them, so the women had to work in nude; the other women (prostitute) were having sex with guys in back a room.”

When asked did your involvement with gangs affect your relationship with family members or significant individuals in your life, twenty-three percent (23%) of the respondents reported the gang took care of the each other’s family needs in the neighborhood by providing money for basic needs such as, food, rent and/or utilities (Bing 1991; Hagedorn and Macon 1988; Vigil 1988). Ninety-two percent of respondents reported their relationships with significant individuals were not affected by gang involvement (Horowitz 1987); however, one respondent recalled an estranged relationship during the time he was active in the gang.

Respondent # 1 said,

“Yes, my mom didn't approve. I couldn't go over to her house and she didn't come to my apartment as long as I was bangin and selling drugs”.

Respondent # 4 said,

“My family was in denial, it really didn’t. Even though I wore blue and orange, they didn’t really get it.”

Respondent # 10 said,

“This thing was in the family----- they would just say be safe, at least you are going to school”.

Portrayal of gang life in television documentaries such as, “Gangland” unintentionally sensationalizes the lived experience of gang members. Findings were mixed; approximately seventy-five percent of respondents were considered gang members simply by virtue of knowing, being related to, or hanging around gang members. However, twenty-five percent of respondents reported going through a formal initiation process, “beat in” or performed a mission. A mission is an illegal and often violent act (Decker and Van Winkle 1996). These findings are consistent with gang literature, which suggests joining a gang involves being V-ed in (Hagedorn 1998; Vigil 1988; Yablonsky 1997).

The daily activities for gang members were undistinguishable from non-gang involved youth living in same neighborhood (Hagedorn 1989; Huff 1998). Respondents reported spending much of their time doing normal teenage or young adult activities, going to school, playing sports and hanging out; majority of the respondents reported engaging in a variety of conventional non-criminal activities (Hagedorn 1989; Vigil 1988). Twenty-five percent of respondents reported playing football and basketball in high school (Klein 2005), even going to college on an athletic scholarship.

As found in a previous study (Thornberry 1998), gang membership significantly increases the likelihood of involvement in criminal acts. All of the respondents described

engaging in similar activities, for example underage drinking alcohol, skipping school, and smoking weed (Moore 1991). However, respondents reported varying degrees of participation in violent criminal acts (Thornberry 1998). As much as, ninety-one percent of the respondents reported dealing drugs, burglary, stealing cars, fights with rival gangs (Bjerregaard 2002; Block and Block 1993); while forty-two percent of respondents witnessed, and/or participated in drive-by shooting (Sanders 1994).

Respondent # 6 said,

“We went to school, we all graduated. During the summer and after school we would hang out, sell drugs (weed/crack). Gangs really got started when crack hit Tulsa, because we made money (suppliers were both Crips and Bloods).

Respondent # 9 said,

“Money changes thangs; we used it to support the family, in a gang. Just chillin’, we smoked weed, drank and did whatever the fuck we wanted to do.”

Respondent #11 offered a very succinct description of life in the gang:

“24:7 all day! We partied and kicked it. Makin money, we didn’t struggle-that’s for sure. That how life was, “Just Street”.

Respondent # 12 said,

“Living day to day. Get' in high (PCP was my drug of choice, and I smoked marijuana). We partied, hung out with the guys (my boyfriend and the other guys) and kicked it. But, we (females) had to earn our stripes too. We would break in houses and sell dope. I would carry pistols into the club and carry (I guess I was a pack mule) dope for my man. I was jumped in, if you were sexed-in, you wasn’t respected. I was a fighter, not a shooter. I never wanted to take a life.”

Given the limited amount of legitimate employment opportunities in marginalized neighborhoods, criminal activity is quite normative; findings revealed gang involvement

appeals to respondents' need for money (Hagedorn, 1996; Spergel, 1995; Taylor, 1990; Vigil, 1988). Citing financial motivation for being involved with gangs (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Sullivan 1989), all of the respondents reported selling of drugs (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Thornberry et al 1993). Hagedorn (1996) suggests selling drugs is "probably the most important income generating activity for gang members" (p. 213). Consistent with research (Vigil 2002), respondents admitted selling drugs was a daily activity. Several respondents alluded to a drug dealing hierarchy with structured roles, higher level drug dealer, street-level dealer and pack mule. Thirty-three percent of respondents indicated their gang controlled the drug market in their area, but indicated their suppliers were out of California (Howell and Decker, 1999; Howell and Gleason, 1999). Several discussed being charged with, and found guilty of drug trafficking (Suggesting, they held a higher position within the drug distribution hierarchy). Other respondents only stated they sold small amount of crack, PCP and marijuana (Yablonsky 1997, p. 199).

While the connection between gangs, drugs and violence continues to be contested (Block and Blocks 1993; Hagedorn 1998; Howell 1996; Maxson and Klein 1996; Sanders 1994). Findings support an abundance of research, which suggests involvement in gangs and drugs increases the potential for violent behavior (Bjerregaard 2008). Both expressive and instrumental (Curry and Spergel 1988), findings revealed violence is an integral part of gang life (Block and Block, 1993; Decker and Curry, 2001; Klein and Maxson 1989; Thornberry et al., 2003). Whether protecting their drug turf and/or maintaining "trap houses" (Klein, 1995), or participating in retaliatory drive-by shooting over money (Anderson, 1999; Horowitz, 1983); ninety-two percent of

respondents reported participation in a violent crime (Sanchez-Jankowski 1991). When asked about the number of aggressive or violent incidents seen, the most common response from research participants was, “too many to count”; seventy-five percent of the respondents described witnessing so many violent or aggressive acts they could not recall a specific number. Candid and very graphic, thirty-three percent of the respondents described witnessing someone dying in front of them. Respondents reported majority of gang related violence occurred between rival gang (Egley and Arjunan, 2002); however, similar to Decker and Curry’s (2002) findings, respondents reported gang related homicides involved members of the same gang.

Respondent # 4 said,

“I was involved in and saw a lot, too many to count. I haven’t seen anyone die in front of me. But my close friend (Chris) got shot by a Blood (he was killed by a blood with an AK). Bullets went through is head and his back”.

Respondent # 7 said,

“Too many to count, I can’t put a number on it. I was shot in the face, and witnessed drive-bys.”

Respondent # 8 said,

“Too many to count, I’ve been shot and I saw die in front of me, holding his brains. It just made me harder; I just thought I would be dead at 21yrs old”.

Respondents were asked to elaborate on their exposure to aggressive and violent acts; in a follow-up question respondents were asked to describe their involvement in gang fights and the reasons for the confrontation. Majority of the respondents (92%) reported fighting (beefing) with rival gangs; it didn’t have to be a rival gang (Blood vs.

Crip), several (25%) respondents said they fought different sets/cliques within the same gang over money, drugs or just being disrespected.

Respondent # 1 said,

“Yes, Just being from a different set; we all grew up together (Crips and Bloods), but we would fight for respect, money, just being from a different gang. Respect play a big part”!

Respondent # 3 said,

“Yes, Bloods (rip boys) we would fight just because, over girls, dope, money or being disrespected. I would beat anyone over money; if you were short I would beat your ass. You better bring me back some dope or my money. We would fight anybody (at Skate land, it would go down). Yes, I was involved”.

Respondent # 4 said,

Yes, Everybody. We fought for loyalty to the color. Money! We would fight whoever wasn't a blood. We would fight anyone; we would fight someone for just walking through our set.

Respondent # 7 said,

“Yes, but we fought people in general. We (Crip set) fought Crips more than bloods. If a guy dry snitched (if guy doesn't give someone up, and gives the police a different name but it eventually trickles down to you), he would get hurt or his family, cousin, dog anybody close to them”.

Respondent # 12 said,

Yeah, ongoing feuds- We would fight “Bloods”, then they would retaliate and then we would retaliate. We would fight over colors, sometimes a guys played a big role (the guys would have us fight the girlfriends of bloods). I would fight a girl if she looked at me. Fighting was my “Claim to Fame”- a Newbie would try you and I would get with her. Yeah, I was a fighter, it was exciting and fun. Everyone (girls) who knew me “feared me”.

Through the process of maturation respondents reported leaving behind the gang lifestyle (Spergel 1995; Vigil 1988); however, the aging out process varied among

respondents. Horowitz (1983) observed peripheral members found it easier to leave than did hardcore members. Hagedorn (1994) reported older gang members often develop a desire to establish stronger ties to conventional society; however, they drift in between gang activities and conventional society. Vigil (1988) suggests, most gang members' decision to leave a gang is complicated and encompasses multiple factors such as aging out, family, prison or work related reasons. One female respondent reported leaving the gang by the end of her teen years (Hagedorn 1989); while another said, "You never leave the gang, you're just not active". When asked what motivated you to leave the gang, seventeen percent of respondents stated family/children was a motivating factor to leave the gang. Several respondents reported personal experiences with violence or violence experienced by close friends or relatives affected their decision to leave the gang. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which found violence to be a persuasive factor to leave gangs (Decker and Lauristen 2002; Decker and Van Winkle 1996). Eighty percent of respondents cited "being tired" (Spergel, Curry, Chance, Kane, Ross, Alexander, Simmons and Oh 1994, p. 19) of going jail/prison as reason for terminating their gang membership (Hagedorn and Macon 1988; Vigil 1988).

Respondents # 1 said,

"I'm older and I have children, I don't want to be known as a gang member. My momma."

Respondents # 3 said,

"Going to the penitentiary"

Respondents # 4 said,

“When I went off to college, I would come back home on the weekends and sell drugs and banged. Yes, gang members go to college. One time on campus I got into with some Bloods (students) on campus, I called some Crips from California and it was like the OK cariole. Niggas was fighting, shooting, it was crazy. Multiple things lead up to me leaving. After 3 years in college, I had to leave to take care of family obligations. I was in so deep (selling drugs), I got busted by the feds. It was like your freedom or federal prison (you can get out/slowly walked away).”

Respondents # 5 said,

“Tired of being a fool, getting shot in the back and going to prison”.

Respondents # 6 said,

“Didn’t want to live a life of crime---I WOKE UP! I thought, I have a family”.

Respondents # 11 said,

“You never leave; you just stop banging in the streets.”

When asked what has happened to your fellow gang-members, seventy-five percent of respondents reported “Most are in prison or dead”. Forty-four percent of the respondents indicated several of their fellow gang members are till bangin. Two respondents asserted, “You never really leave”; while, another equated gangs to being in a fraternity, you are a Crip for life.

Respondent # 1 said,

“Still bangin.”

Respondent # 3 said,

“Dead, paralyzed, locked-up; a lot are doing the same thing. We speak but we keep going.”

Respondent # 4 said,

“Just a few are getting their education (they just want a different life---family). Some are around, we speak, but we just keep moving. We are older with kids.”

Respondent #7 said,

“Lockup, dead, some have changed---some are doing the same thing (blooded up)”.

Respondent # 9 said,

“You never leave; you just stop banging in the streets.”

Respondent # 10 said,

“Prison, some still call from prison, some are out/working and a few are stuck in time-still bangin.”

The residuals effects of gang involvement can be felt long after gang involvement. When asked how has past gang involvement contributed to current (past) involvement with the justice system, the responses were split. Forty-three percent of respondents reported going to jail multiple times without conviction and one respondent reported never going to jail. However, fifty percent of the respondents reported going to prison for crimes committed as a gang member; of the fifty percent of respondents who reported going to prison, eighty percent reported serving time in prison on more than one occasion.

Respondent # 2 said,

“I went to jail a couple of times, but I never went to prison”.

Respondent # 8 said,

“Prison, I been to prison three times”.

Turning attention to “their current” situation, the respondents were asked question regarding their current situation. For majority of the respondents, past gang involvement has impeded current employment opportunities. The stigma related to past gang involvement was observed among respondents. Their responses are consistent with Padilla (1992) suggesting job opportunities are often lost due to an individual’s known gang involvement, reputation and criminal record. Thirty-three percent of respondents reported stable fully employment; seventeen percent reported being unemployed and going to college. The other six (50%) respondents gave vague responses, from being unemployed, to reporting having a good life without obtaining a secondary school diploma/GED.

Respondent # 1 said,

“Life is messed up, because I didn't make time for school. I have a lot of gaps in my job history, a lot of spaces”.

Respondent # 6 said,

It’s good, your past doesn’t keep you from job opportunities, if you want a job you can get a job. I work full-time with kids

Respondent # 12,

Life is good, I work and I don’t do drugs. I love to travel. Yeah, I didn’t complete school. I plan to get me GED online (But I really want a diploma).

2. To what extent can gang behavior be understood as a response to marginalization (exclusion from mainstream culture)?

Observed as an adaptation to marginality, (Vigil 1988) gang behavior is best understood as a response to cultural/social alienation and powerlessness (Spergel 1999 et al. 1994; Vigil 2008). Exacerbated by a concentration of high-risk residents, disorganized community, distrust of law enforcement (Anderson 1999) and adherence to the “Code of the Street” (Anderson 2000), gang members and their families are marginalized in virtually every aspect of their lives. Finding support prior research (Anderson 2000; Vigil 1999), which suggests multiple sources of alienation strengthens the salience of the “Code of the Streets”; a social world characterized by violent reactions to being disrespected and character attacks (Anderson 1999).

Anderson (1999) argues respect, and hence safety is earned only through one’s own agency; the “Code” maintains “A man must takes up for himself, and calls on no one else to fight his battles” (p. 307). Consequently, disputes are settled informally and often violently. In this vein, violence is viewed as an acceptable and appropriate manner in which respect of others is maintained (Anderson, 1999; Hughes and Short, 2005). The source of violence is not only an individual-level process in which one adopts the code, but an ecological one that is embedded in the broader social context (Anderson 1999).

As a neighborhood-level property, findings support Anderson’s (1999) assertion that an individual’s attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are, in part, a function of the neighborhood context in which they are positioned (p. 82). Characterized by hyper-segregation (Massey and Denton 1993) and high rate crime (Howell 1998), eighty-three percent of respondents described their childhood neighborhood as predominately Blacks,

poor/working-class neighborhood, with a lot of single-parents (mothers). Of the eighty-three percent of respondents, forty-two percent of respondents grew up in public or low-income housing apartments.

Respondent # 5 said,

“I lived in the “projects”, a lot of unemployment, food stamps, single-parents (mothers)”.

Respondent # 10 said,

“The Projects, you never felt safe. There were a lot of single-mother, poverty and gloom. The projects were and still are controlled by gangs”.

Geographically and economically isolated from mainstream society, gangs flourish in more disadvantaged, socially disorganized neighborhoods where forms of social control are less effective (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Zatz and Portillos 2000). Consistent with prior research, forty-two percent of respondents reported “a lot” of people in their neighborhood belonged to a gang (Katz and Schnebly 2011). Observed as normative behavior (Spergel 1990, p. 231), respondents viewed their involvement in gangs as common.

Respondent # 1 said,

“A lot, in my neighborhood there were a lot of hoovers/and neighbors (Crips)

Respondent # 10 said,

“A lot, you had to get down or get out”.

The prevalence of gang exists for many reasons, often residents identify with gangs because of their own or relatives’ prior involvement; gang members provide protection for and financial support to residents, many gang members are children of

residents, and/or in some instances gangs have become community institutions (Decker 2000; Katz and Schnebly 2011). Consistent with literature (Venkatesh 2008), several respondents reported providing protection to the people in the neighborhood from rival gang members or outsiders trying to rob or steal from their neighbors (Bing 1991; Hagedorn and Macon 1988; Vigil 1988). One respondent viewed his actions as benevolent, stating, “We protected our hood; we wouldn’t let anything happen to our neighborhood.” When someone needed help in the community, the gang members were there to physically and financially support them (Venkatesh 2008). Exhibiting a level of indifference toward their gang (Hagedorn and Macon 1988; Sanchez-Jankowski 1991), several respondents (33%) reported their neighbors really didn’t know what was going on, until the police raid their houses and kicked in their doors.

Respondent #2 said,

“We protected the neighborhood from people trying to rob and steal”.

Respondent #5 said,

“They were cool; we helped the people in our neighborhood. We took care of people (if they needed food, water, lights we turned them on)”.

Respondent #7 said,

“We didn’t do dirt in the neighborhood; most people didn’t really know what was going on until someone tried to jack me and I killed the guy and wounded another. Most of my neighbors weren’t really scared because my family was well respected in the neighborhood; they just thought I was crazy”.

Sanctioned primarily by violence or the threat of violent retribution, many residents in high crime neighborhoods adhere to the “code of the streets” (Anderson 1999, p. 34). Several respondents reported fear of retaliation, being labeled a snitch or

just not trusting the police as reasons their neighbors were reluctant to report crimes committed by gang members (Decker 1996). Being labeled a snitch carries a heavy price (Stretesky and Pogrebin 2007), twenty-five percent of respondents reported their neighbors lived in fear of the gang; respondent # 4 s stated, “A lot of the people in the neighborhood knew what was going on, but would mind their own business (Venkatesh 1997).

Respondent #10 said,

“They accepted it, they had to live with it, didn’t matter what they wanted”.

The respondents were asked how many people in your neighborhood would be willing to report gang crime to the police; unfortunately, ninety-two percent of the respondents reported no one would call the police on them or their fellow gang members. One respondent gave a nuanced response, “It depends, if you were fighting with their kid, they might report a gang crime”. Results indicate an entangled and perverse relationship between the gangs and the neighborhood (Block and Block 1993; Decker 1996; Hagedorn 1991), several respondents reported they provided protection for “our own” from outsiders, thus they would not call the police on the gangs because they felt indebted to the gang.

Respondent # 2 said,

“None, we protected our hood, we wouldn’t let anything happen to our neighborhood. Or either they were scared; they would be have been calling the police on their kids too”.

Respondent # 5 said,

“Nobody would report a crime, unless you wanted to get hurt”.

Respondent # 9 said,

“None, because they had to live there.”

Responses regarding police and gang encounters/interaction varied. Contrary to previous studies (Fagan and Davies 2000), when questioned about interaction with law enforcement, forty-two percent of respondents reported quasi-positive interaction with police officers; whereas, fifty-eight percent of percent of respondents reported being harassed by Tulsa police. Citing unwarranted police stops, verbal and physical abuse, and racial bias (Fagan and Davies 2000), several respondents reported being harassed by the police. More than half of the respondents mentioned recent news reports of police corruption. Interestingly enough, older respondents indicated a tolerable relationship with local enforcement; however, younger respondents described a hostile and indifferent relationship with the local law enforcement.

Respondent # 1 said,

“They classify everyone as a gang member. If they see a group of black people together, they must be in a gang”.

Respondent # 2 said,

“With respect, they would pull up and talk with us, they know what we were doing but they didn’t really harass us. They would try and talk to us and tell us to stop but they knew they couldn’t do anything.”

Respondent # 3 said,

“The police didn’t harass us, because we fought without guns and we didn’t hang out around our house. They didn’t understand the severity of gangs.”

Respondent # 10 said,

“They harassed us, I don’t trust the police”.

Respondent # 11 said,

The police harassed us, but we didn’t care. They are corrupted anyway.

Respondent # 12 said,

They treated us like we were young black thugs, lower than dirt. The police would talk to us like we were trash.

3. Do compound risk-factors contribute to likelihood of youth to join gangs?

Within a developmental context, recent explanations of gang involvement have adopted a “Risk-Factor” approach (Klein and Maxson 2006; Howell and Egley 2005; Spergel 1995; Thornberry 1998). Classified as atheoretical (Hawkins and Catalano and 1993), the risk-factor perspective informs gang research by focusing on antecedents and consequences of delinquent behavior. Cumulative risk-factors associated with gang membership are classified into five categories, family, community, school, peers, and individual domains (Esbesen 2000; Hill, Howell, Hawkins and Battin-Pearson, 1999; Rosenfeld, Bray and Egley 1999; Taylor and Esbesen 2000). Finding support the belief gang membership is highly correlated with two or more risk-factors (Esbesen 2009); a significant number of risk-factors associated with gang membership were identified among respondents.

Family Risk-factor

Family risk-factor (s) has long been linked to delinquency. The most consistently observed risk factor associated with gang membership is the lack family involvement (Curry and Spergel 1992; Vigil 1988). Shaped by marginalization, disruptions of family life often curtail adequate levels of parental supervision and impede effective parenting practices (Thornberry et al., 2003; Vigil 1988); whereby, unsupervised adolescents are left to their own devices (Esbensen 2000; Howell 1998; Maxson et al. 1998; Thornberry 1998; Vigil 1988). When asked what your family was like when you first became involved with gangs? Two-thirds of the respondents reported their mothers or guardians worked more than one job, worked in the evenings or just worked a lot and were not home.

Respondent # 1 said,

“The family wasn’t too concerned; they worked”.

Respondent # 9 said,

“My mom was a single-parent and she worked a lot. I always played sports but I wanted money”.

Reminiscent of previous studies (Decker and Van Winkle’s 1996; Esbensen 2000), findings reveal there was little attachment to, or monitoring by the parents of respondents; seventeen percent of respondents stated their mothers never knew of their gang involvement until their family’s door was kicked in by police. Another seventeen percent of respondents reported their families knew they were involved in gangs, but could not do anything. Candidly, one respondent stated, “There was no excuse, my mom didn’t approve but what could she do, nothing.”

Respondents # 4 said,

“I kinda didn’t tell her I was gang related, I didn’t bring that home. Eventually she kinda knew it by the friend I hung with and the colors and the clothes I was wearing”.

School Risk-Factors

Schools are not devoid of gangs, they play a significant role in the violence and victimization in schools across America (Howell and Lynch, 2000). According to the U.S. Department of Education and Justice (2004), the presence of gangs in school accounts for the majority of incidents of violent acts between students. While the actual rates of violent incidents in school have declined, the perception of violence in schools has increased; due in part, to the saturation of gang members within a particular school (Decker and Van Winkle 1996).

As observed by Spergel et al. (1994), several respondents reported gang violence usually did not occur at school, but sometimes a continuation of an on-going fight would happen at school (p.4). Basically, schools were a place for recruitment of gang members and for planning of gang activities (Spergel et al. 1994). One respondent stated, “We went to school, we all graduated. During the summer and after school we would hang out, sell drugs (weed/crack)”.

Similar to findings in a recent National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse Report (2010), fifty percent of respondents said at least some of their schoolmates were involved in gangs. Whereas, twenty-five percent of respondents reported more than half of the student body was in gangs (Gottfredson and Gottfredson 2001). Twenty-five percent of the respondents reported they really did not know if gangs were not a problem in school, because either they had dropped out in middle school or because they were very young when they were recruited (Elementary and Middle school).

Respondent # 4 said,

“90% of the people in school were in gangs (mostly Hoova and Bloods); the school was in a blood neighborhood.”

Respondent # 9 said,

“Not many, I was in middle school. I hung around older cats”.

Respondent # 10 said,

“Half of the students were gang members, the other half were squares”.

Respondent # 12 said,

“I don’t know, I wasn’t in school.”

Community/Neighborhood Factors

There are several conditions within a community/neighborhood that are related to the early onset and chronic patterns of delinquent behavior (Curry and Spergel 1992).

The most common community risk factor associated with gang membership is the existence of neighborhoods characterized by social disorganization, high mobility and high rates of crime (Klein 1995).

Respondent # 1 said,

“I grew up in a poor neighborhood, a lot of single parents (mothers), and drug selling. Life in the hood..... Try and do your best”.

Respondent # 4 said,

“North Tulsa, mostly single parent homes (mother), poor, maybe two boarded up homes on each street, working poor.”

Respondent # 9 said,

“The “Hood”, everybody’s poor, single-parent mothers, criminals and everything else.”

Two respondents described their neighborhood as being black middle-class/working-class (17%), with majority of the households being two-parent homes. One respondent suggested nearly half of the families in his neighborhood owned their own home, and characterized his neighborhood as a quiet, with a lot of educated people living there.

Respondent # 7 said,

“Black middle-class/working-class neighborhood, everyone worked, nearly every family owned their home; mostly two-parent homes”.

Respondent # 12 said,

“Working/middle-class, a lot of two-parent homes, but now it’s a crack heads and elderly.”

Peer Factors

Delinquent peers are perhaps the strongest predictor of gang membership (Bjerragaard and Lizotte 1995; Bjerregaard and Smith 1993; Curry and Spergel 1992). Association with peers, who are/were gang involved, increases the likelihood of gang membership (Curry and Spergel 1992) formed out of “play groups” (Monti 1993, p.7); findings reveal early adolescent peer group influence played a critical role in gang membership. Sixty-six percent of respondents indicated they joined as a consequence of neighborhood friendships.

Respondent # 2 said,

“All of my friends were bloods. We grew up together. We were a family “one unit”, we were really tight.”

Respondent # 4 said,

“The friends I that I was around with were already in the gang, so I was going to hang with them, I might as well rep the gang they were in.”

4. Vigil (1988) suggests issues of identity (affiliation, associations, identification with others, and group solidarity) are important in gang formation and membership. Citing “gang status” as a motivating factor among gang sets; is there a relationship between the escalation of gang related violence and gang status?

The notion of status managements is significant when examining the behavior of gang members (Horowitz 1983; Vigil 1988, 2002). Claiming gang status provides compensation for a marginalized economic and social position (Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; Katz and Jackson-Jacobs 2004). In Thrasher’s seminal gang study (1963), he described the constant struggle for status among gang members:

“The gang boy’s conception of his role is more vivid with reference to his gang than to other social groups. Since he lives largely in the present, he conceives of the part he is playing in life as being in the gang; his status in other groups is unimportant to him, for the gang is his social world. In striving to realize the role he hopes to take he may assume a tough pose, commit feats of daring or of vandalism, or become a criminal” (1963, p. 230–231).

Group identification is intertwined with group activity; who they say you are has implications for what you do and with whom. Research indicates when youth claim gang membership; they tend to engage in substantially more antisocial and criminal behavior than those who do not profess to be gang members (Esbensen et al. 2001, p. 123). All of the respondents reported engaging in violent and criminal behavior at varying degrees; whereby, perceived status in their gang was achieved (Anderson 1999; Fagan and Wilkinson 1998).

The fatalistic attitude, a willingness to “*die for your set*” or engage in dangerous activities for the gang’s benefit elevates a member’s social status within the gang (Anderson 1999; Fagan and Wilkinson 1998; Miller and Decker 2001). Basically, toughness is equivalent to social capital; Anderson (1999) asserts, “One way to attain

gang status is to develop a reputation for being “crazy/loco” (p.32). Analysis revealed, Two-thirds (66%) of the sample reported involvement with gangs or affiliation with gang members gave them “street creditability” or “status”. Several respondents gave in-depth responses, suggesting involvement with gangs gave them “Power”. The female respondents cited physically aggression as reasons why they had status within the gang (Campbell 1990; Horowitz 1983). Respondent # 12 declared fighting was her “*Claim to Fame*”. Below respondents affirm their perceived “street creditability” or social status within the gang.

Respondent # 2 said,

“Yes, being a blood gave me street cred because I was small, I was a shooter, I was crazy and I would shoot you”.

Respondent # 5 said,

They “feared me”; people would say that is one crazy nigga. I was a big guy and I would fight at a drop of a hat.

Respondent # 9 said,

“Yes, even as young as I was, I was a OG. People feared me”.

Respondent # 10 said,

Yes, they still call me OG (she showed me her tear drop tattoo). She explained her tear drop wasn’t filled in but it could have been. **** *An open fact tear drop, indicates a fallen soldier, but a filled in tear drop means you***

Respondent # 7 said,

“We did drive-bys. If they looked at you wrong. We just got down for stupid reasons---- I was looking for trouble.

Respondent # 12 said,

Yes, I had street creditability, “Girls feared me”; they didn't want to get down.

Normative behavior within the context of gang membership inevitably means a display of allegiance to the gang (Vigil 1988), by fighting, carrying out a drive-by, or avenging a fallen gang member regardless of the negative consequences (i.e. incarceration, death, familial alienation). Several respondents casually reported carrying out drive-bys (it was unknown if individuals died), being shot, and getting into physical altercations with rival gang members; in fact, three respondents described being shot by rival gang members.

Respondent # 6 said,

“I committed a lot of battery. I was involved in multi-shootings. Drive-by shootings were intentional and personal (up close and personal). I didn’t give a shit; it was never random”.

Protection from real or perceived threats against rival gang members or anyone in conflict with respondents was common place. Respondents were asked to elaborate on their participation in aggressive and/or violent acts. Majority of the respondents (11 or 92%) reported fighting (beefing) with others gangs; it didn’t have to be a rival gang (Blood vs. Crip); several (25%) respondents said they fought different sets/cliques within the same gang over money, drugs or just being disrespected. Respect was paramount among the respondents (Skolnick, Bluthenthal and Correl 1993).

Respondent # 1 said,

“Yes, Just being from a different set; we all grew up together (Crips and Bloods), but we would fight for respect, money, just being from a different gang. Respect plays a big part”!

Respondent # 4 said,

Yes, Everybody. We fought for loyalty to the color. Money! We would fight whoever wasn’t a blood. We would fight anyone; we would fight someone for just walking through our set.

Respondent # 3 said,

“Yes, Bloods (rip boys) we would fight just because, over girls, dope, money or being disrespected. I would beat anyone over money; if you were short I would beat your ass. You better bring me back some dope or my money. We would fight anybody (at Skate land, it would go down). And, yes I was involved”.

Respondent # 12 said,

Yeah, ongoing feuds- We would fight “Bloods”, then they would retaliate and then we would retaliate. We would fight over colors, sometimes a guys played a big role (the guys would have us fight the girlfriends of bloods). I would fight a girl if she looked at me. A newbie would try you and I would get with her. Yeah, I was a fighter, it was exciting and fun.

When asked what were the benefits of being in the gang? Only two respondents stated there wasn't a benefit to being in a gang; however, the remaining ten respondents answered this question very succinctly stating, “Money, power, status and rep”.

Financial gain was the greatest benefit of, and motivating factor for being in a gang.

Respondent # 9 said,

“Women, money, status, power (fear is powerful).

Respondent # 7 said,

“Money, girls, cars, jewelry dope, you name it”

Respondent # 10 said,

“Street cred., respect, sex, drugs and rock and roll. It was fun, all day”.

Several respondents equated “being feared” with being respected; establishing a reputation as a “shooter” or crazy validated their status within, and commitment to the set. When asked, what kind of differences do you think people saw in you after you adopted the gang life style?

Respondent # 3 said,

“Had more respect, because they feared me”.

Respondent # 7 said,

People thought I was crazy; my nickname was “shooter”.

Respondent # 5 said,

“People feared me; people would say that is one crazy nigga. I was a big guy and I would fight at a drop of a hat”.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Through the lens of multiple marginalities, this study explored the lived experience of former gang members. Respondents provided rich, and textured reflective narratives regarding the day-to-day life in the gang. In this concluding chapter, I will provide a summary of findings, discuss the significance of the study, present limitations of the student and implications for future gang research.

Findings reported in chapter six reveal a higher prevalence of gang formation occurs within communities, and among adolescents, who experienced multiple marginalities. The results of this dissertation provides support of Dr. James Vigil's Multiple Marginality model, which suggests segmented labor markets, historical poverty, racism, and social isolation interact to produce situations in which the community and its residents are outside of, or marginal to, the legitimate economy. Within a historical context, the occurrence of Tulsa 1921 Race Riot and deindustrialization that occurred in Tulsa during the 1970s and 1980s suggests it was not happenstance that poor racial minority group were relegated to the poorest neighborhoods in inner cities. Furthermore,

economic and ecological factors were found to be significant. In-depth interviews revealed majority of respondents grew up in unstable, lower income areas characterized by residential mobility, concentrated poverty and high crime rates. Consistent with prior gang research (Vigil 1988); majority of respondents grew up without a father. Moreover, respondents reported legitimate employment opportunities were limited, but opportunities to join gangs were abundant.

This study reveals gangs were, and are, composed of brothers, sisters, cousins, and neighborhood friends; they play a significant role in influencing the decision to join a gang and subsequent gang involvement (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Jankowski 1991; Vigil 1993). All but one respondent reported having a family member involved in gangs. This finding has significant implication; although delinquent peers have been identified as a strong predictor of gang involvement (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Jankowski 1991; Vigil 1993), this study reveals family involvement in gangs significantly increases an adolescent's decision to join a gang and actively participate.

While some respondents reported going through an initiation, many of the respondents reported knowing, being related to, or just hanging around friends who were active gang members. Consistent with research on gang membership type (Howell 2001), seventy-five percent of respondents reported being members of the Crip gang (Hoover and Neighborhood), with only twenty-five percent of respondents reported Blood gang membership. The average age respondents reported joining the gang was sixteen years old. The length of time respondents reported being gang involved ranged from five to twenty years; forty-six percent reported being active in the gang for more than six years.

Financial gain was found to be one of the primary motivating factors for gang membership (Jankowski 1990). Findings reveal gang involvement appeals to the respondents' need for money (Hagedorn 1996). All of the respondents reported selling drugs, while others reported dealing in stolen property, prostitution and burglary. Respondents provide little evidence of highly developed gang structures with well-defined roles, rules and regulations. Many of them reported a gang structure fitting a traditional or vertical (age-graded) structure characterized by subgroups based on age (Klein and Maxson 2006); whereby, gang leadership was determined by age, reputation for violence and levels of attachment.

The "Code of the Streets", means the issue of respect is non-negotiable; disrespect is met with violence. Findings reveal a correlation between status management and involvement in violent gang related activities. To varying degrees all of the respondents reported engaging in violent and criminal behavior. Finding also revealed "status" was achieved by way of gang identification, because it signifies power, influence, and access to illegal opportunities or markets. The effort to attain and subsequently maintain a reputation and status within the gang was all consuming. Indeed, arrest and imprisonment was viewed as a means to elevate one's status to an OG.

Gang membership significantly increases the likelihood of criminal involvement. Respondents reported drugs and violence is an integral part of gang life and warns it will continue because kids do not see any viable options; one respondent stated, "When there are no jobs what are you going to do, I sold drugs". Data revealed majority of respondents engaged in recreational drug use, while several heavily abused drugs and

alcohol. The data revealed the violent aspect of gang subculture is ever present; however, many gang members are no different than non-delinquent youth (Delaney 2006). All of the respondents reported engaging in “legitimate” activities such as, going to clubs, play video games, playing sports and even attending religious observances, such as, going to church.

Finding reveal through the process of maturation, respondents left gangs behind for their families, children, incarceration, and aging out or just got tired of always looking over their shoulders. Finally, consistent with prior research (Padilla 1992), majority of the respondents reported their past gang involvement has impeded current employment opportunities and has been the main reason employment opportunities have been severely limited. Aware of the barriers confronting them, the respondents discussed their current situation. The responses were varied, four (33%) respondents reported stable full-time employment; two reported being unemployed and going to college. The remaining respondents (50%) offered vague responses, from being unemployed, to reporting having a good life without obtaining a secondary school diploma/GED.

Respondent # 1 said,

“Life is messed up, because I didn't make time for school. I have a lot of gaps in my job history, a lot of spaces”.

Respondent # 6 said,

Life is good, your past doesn't keep you from job opportunities; if you want a job you can get a job. I work full-time and provide for kids.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study addresses two areas not previously addressed in previous gang research. With the rapid spread of gangs throughout the country, there has been an ever increasing call for research to determine why individuals join gangs, the effects of gang membership on criminal behavior, and the effects of gang membership on longer term life-course outcomes such as education and employment (Howell, 2000). This study contributes to gang research by examining the prevalence of gang in emergent communities; an area of gang research rarely studies.

Secondly, there is notably a lack of gang research in which interviews with former gang members have been conducted. I was able to obtain an insider's perspective on gang life rather than relying on data that originates from survey or questionnaires completed by law enforcement, school personnel, social workers or correctional staff. This study has great implications; information gleaned from in-depth interviews of former gang members may aid in the development and implementation of effective gang prevention, intervention and suppression strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation for Policy

The complexity of gang structures must be understood by, and inform the actions of, policy makers, parents, communities and practitioners alike. There is no “cure all” for gangs; nor is it a gang theory, which provides a readymade solution as to how to disrupt or diminish the harmful effects of social phenomena such as gangs. Vigil (2002) acknowledges systemic changes at the macro level are improbable and unlikely; instead he proposes concentrating efforts on ecological and economic stressors, social control, and street socialization rather than focusing on larger the societal environment (Freng and Esbensen 2007). When asked about their opinion of gang today and how policy makers, law enforcement and social services agencies might address the gang problem in Tulsa, respondents offered chilling cautionary responses.

Respondent # 1 said,

Gang members today don't care; they are putting in work "getting stripes". They are trying to get bigger (make a name for themselves) inside the set and outside. Younger ones are riding for the set.

Respondent # 2 said,

"They don't care, these youngster everybody is doing drugs (instead of selling them). There is no hierarchy----money creates a hierarchy. These cats are using drugs; you can't use your own stuff (drugs). There is no commitment (they just walk-in and walk-out). There is no self-respect, or aspiration, they are “hopelessness”.

Respondent # 7 said,

Crazy, they feel like they have something to prove. They don't know the game---they are not are operating according to the “Code”.

Respondent # 10 said,

Young people have to look up to somebody. They are worse; more of these young gang members are doing dope, they are ignorant. The first role models is a dope dealer---they make their own hours and make money. Money helps make associates (you don't have friends).

In light of research findings, I recommend implementing the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, because this comprehensive gang model espouses a multifaceted, multilayered approach. Prevention, intervention and suppression efforts cannot operate in “silos”; a collaborative initiative leverages and maximizes existing community strengths and resources are needed to develop a comprehensive prevention, intervention and suppression approach. The model mandates coordinated efforts among, policy makers, social service agencies, law enforcement, communities and mental health professional. Ultimately, the aim of the OJJDP model is to prevent and deter future involvement in gangs and violent crime.

The approach includes a mix of five model strategies: Community mobilization, provision of opportunities, Social intervention, Suppression and Organizational Change and Development. Community mobilization involves local citizens in the project (including former gang youth and community groups and agencies); moreover, program and staff functions are coordinated within and across agencies. The OJJDP model includes the Provision of opportunities; program partners develop a variety of specific education, training, and employment programs targeted at gang-involved youth. The third strategic involves social intervention; social intervention requires youth-serving agencies, schools, grassroots groups, faith-based organizations, police, and other criminal justice organizations to reach out and serve as links between gang-involved youth (and

their families) and the community-at-large. The fourth model includes suppression; formal and informal social control procedures must be introduced and/or strengthened. Suppression includes close supervision or monitoring of gang youth by agencies of the criminal justice system and also by community-based agencies, schools, and grassroots groups. Lastly, the OJJDP model requires organizational change and development; policies and procedures must be developed and implemented. The coordination of organizational change requires the most effective use of available and potential resources within and across agencies to better address the gang problem.

Recommendation for Future Studies

Reflecting on this study, recommendations for future gang research include examining the impact of neighborhood structures on gang concentrations. Also, I recommend exploring why gang members are remaining active longer; astonishingly five respondents reported being active in the gang for more than ten years. Third, although this study only included two female respondents, I would recommend further examination of the role female gang members play within male dominant gangs. More specifically, I would recommend examining the increase rate of female participation in gang-related crimes. Finally, very few studies have examined the long-term consequences of gang involvement, death of fellow gang members and stigma attached to past gang involvement, and incarceration are other areas to be explored further.

DATA COLLECTION EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION

Erroneously, I thought growing up in an impoverish community; attending what is considered one of the worst high schools in Tulsa and born to a single-mother afforded me a quasi-street “cred”. I thought I would be viewed as an “insider”, but I was sadly mistaken. While, the social distance between respondents and me allowed them to be more forthcoming as the authority and expert on gang life, there was an air of suspicion and distrust on the part of research participants.

Over the course of five months, October 2010 to March 2011, in-depth interviews of twelve former gang members were conducted during the evenings and weekends. Interviews took place, in parks, fast food restaurants, pubs and a laundry mat. Although, all interviews were conducted in a public place, precautions were in place to maintain my safety and that of the research participants; another person was either present or aware of each interview scheduled; the date, the beginning and ending time of each interview was recorded. Only one subject allowed me audio tape the interview, the others did not want their voices recorded. Eighty-four percent of respondents were suspicious and questioned my motives; many of them thought I worked for the Tulsa police department. Interestingly enough, one of the most difficult aspects of conducting interviews was trying to finding female former gang members willing to be interviewed; it was literally like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Three potential female former gang members failed to keep interview appointments.

Limitations of Study

Several study limitations should be considered. This qualitative study utilized a small sample size (N=12), which limits the generalizability of the findings; moreover, the findings reflect experiences of former gang members from Tulsa, OK and may not reflect the experiences of gang members from Oklahoma County or other parts of state, region or country. Secondly, the sample was purposively restricted to blacks, and only two females were included in the sample. Another limitation to consider is the external validity of the study. Although, I attempted to provide a “speak freely zone”, finding may be susceptible to biases and/or inaccuracy, because data derived from the in-depth interviews may have been distorted for fear of incrimination.

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APPENDIX A

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Friday, September 10, 2010
IRB Application No AS1062
Proposal Title: I am who you say I am: I am what you make me: An Exploratory Analysis of Gangs in the Heartland
Reviewed and Processed as: Full Board

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 9/17/2011

Principal

Investigator(s):

Corinice Cephus-Wilson
1750 Mohawk Blvd
Tulsa, OK 74110

Jean VanDelinder
006 CLB
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

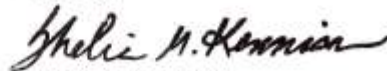
The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sheila Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Principal Investigator: Corinice Wilson

Dissertation Title: I am Who You Say I Am; I Am What You Make Me: An Exploratory Analysis of Gangs in the Heartland

Recruitment Script

Good afternoon or evening, my name is Corinice Wilson. I am doing this research as part of my studies in the Department of Sociology at Oklahoma State University. The purpose of this study is to discover things associated with a street gang. I would appreciate a few minutes of your time to discuss your thoughts on this issue.

If no: PI (Corinice Wilson) will provide the individual with a card (contact information) and ask them to distribute to potential research participants.



APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT VERBAL CONSENT

**Oklahoma State University
Request for Waiver of Written Consent**

Dissertation Title: *I am Who You Say I Am; I Am What You Make Me: An Exploratory Analysis of Gangs in the Heartland*

Principal Investigator: Corinice Cephus-Wilson
Department: Sociology

Date: 8/31/10

Advisor: Dr. Jean Van Delinder

Telephone: (405) 744-6104

I am requesting the following:

 X Waiver of written documentation of consent

Request for written documentation of consent

I believe this protocol is eligible for a waiver of written documentation of informed consent because the protocol meets all of the following criteria:

- (1) This research presents no more than “minimal risk” of harm to the participants.
- (2) The participants of this study are “self-identified” as active or ex-gang members; this research could not be carried out practicably without a waiver of the consent requirements.
- (3) The rights and welfare of the participants will not be adversely affected.
- (4) The principal risk would be potential harm resulting from breach of confidentiality; due to the participant’s involvement in illegal activities. Participants will be told not to make statements regarding intentions to harm others in the future, as I may be required to report such statements to the authorities.
- (5) I will read to each participant and provide each participant with a copy of the informed consent document. Their participation in the data collection will be voluntary and information will be kept confidential.

PI’s Signature



OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

VERBAL CONSENT SCRIPT

Dissertation Title: I am Who You Say I Am; I Am What You Make Me: An Exploratory Analysis of Gangs in the Heartland

PI: Corinice Wilson- Introduction to Study Statement

Before we begin, I would like to take a minute to explain why I am inviting you to participate and what I will be doing with the information you provide to me. Please stop me at any time if you have any questions. After I have told you more about my study, you can decide whether or not you would like to participate.

Script

You are invited to participate in an exploratory study of gangs that is being conducted by Corinice Wilson. I am doing this research as part of my studies in the Department of Sociology at Oklahoma State University.

The purpose of this study is to discover things associated with street gangs. The information collected will be important to the understanding of current gang life/experience; furthermore, assist with the creation of intervention and or treatment programs for youth wanting to leave a gang or deterring the onset of gang involvement. The information you provide may help professionals who work with gang members and their families.

Consent to participate is completely voluntary; no legal names or addresses will be collected or reported. You will not be penalized if you decide not to participate. You are being asked to participate in this study because you have "self-identified" yourself as a former/ ex-gang member.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, participation will take approximately 90 minutes (1.5 hours) to complete. I would like to tape record this interview, so as to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. All audio tapes recorded interviews will be immediately transcribed and destroyed. If you feel uncomfortable about being audio taped, then I will take hand written notes only. Immediately following each in-depth interview, I will place the audio tape recorder in a locked carrying bag while transporting it to OSU-Tulsa; where I will secure the audio recorder in a locked file cabinet. The transcription will be kept in a secured, locked file cabinet on the OSU Stillwater campus for three years, at which time they will be destroyed.

There are minimal risks associated with your participation in the study; in that, there are questions that may require you to disclose sensitive information. If you feel uncomfortable or feel that any questions are too personal or if you are upset when considering any question, you are free to refrain from answering. You may stop the interview at any time without consequences. I will make every effort to keep information provided confidential; however, I am mandated to report any abuse, intended harm to oneself or others. I do not wish to collect any information about current illegal activities. Data/responses will be kept confidential; I am the only person that will have access to your responses. A case number (#1-12) will be used when reporting findings.

The Sociology Department at Oklahoma State University will not provide payment for participation in this study; however, as a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, the



principal investigator will pay each participant \$25.00 for their participation of the in-depth interview. If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive.

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, Dr. Shelia Kennison at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 740748, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu .
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APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

_____ Participant ID#

_____ Time

_____ Date

Exploratory Analysis: Gangs Interview Guide

PI: First, I would like to begin the interview by asking a few general background questions. There is no right or wrong answer. Your opinion concerning each statement is respected. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Section I- General Background Information: First I am going to ask some demographic information

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: _____ Female _____ Male
3. Race/Ethnic Identify:
____Blacks/Black non-Hispanic _____White/Caucasian non-Hispanic
____Native American/Alaska Native _____Asian American
____Hispanic/Latino _____Other
4. Birthplace: _____
a. Would you classify your neighborhood as being located in
South_____ North_____ East _____ or West_____ Tulsa?
5. Marital Status Single Married Separated Divorce Living with
someone
6. Highest Grade Completed
____Completed 1-5th grade _____Completed 6-8th grade
____Completed 9-12th grade _____Completed some college
____Completed college _____Do not know
7. Employment Status: _____ Employed Full-time or Part-time _____ Unemployed
____Unemployed Disabled
8. How many children have you had? _____
Who are they currently residing with? _____
9. Father's birthplace: _____
a. Job _____
10. Grade completed: _____

11. Mother's birthplace: _____
 a. Job _____
12. Grade completed: _____
13. Are you parents still together? Yes _____ No _____
14. If no, are they: Divorced _____ Separated _____ Deceased _____
 a. If divorced, separated or deceased, do you have a stepparent? Yes _____
 No _____
15. How many people are in your home?

16. Do you own your own home? Yes _____ No _____
17. How many cars do you or your family own? ___1 ___2 ___3 ___4 ___5

Section II.

1. Describe your neighborhood when you were growing up.
2. How did you decide which gang to join? (*Which gang were you affiliated with? What was your age when you began spending more time with this gang? Are (were) any of your friends involved in this gang? Are (were) any of your siblings or children involved in a gang? (Briefly explain)*)
3. Tell me, what your family was like when you first became involved with gangs. (*How did the police treat your gang? How did most people in the neighborhood act towards the gang? How many people in your neighborhood would be willing to report gang crime to the police? Do you live in a neighborhood that has a lot of reported crime/drugs/violence?)*)
4. Describe your life when you were active in the gang. (*Follow-up questions*) Describe the daily activities. (*How many of your family members are/were in a gang? How many students would you say were involved in a gang, when you were in school? How many people belong to a gang in your neighborhood? Have many aggressive or violent incidents have you seen? Did your gang fight other gangs? Describe some of the reason why? Were you involved in those conflicts?)*)
5. What were the benefits and drawbacks about being in the gang?
 - a. (*Follow-up question*) Did your involvement with gangs or affiliation with gang members give you street creditability or status?
 - b. (*Follow-up question*) Describe your street creditability or status prior to being involved with gangs?

6. What kind of differences do you think people saw in you after you adopted the gang life style?
7. Did your involvement with gangs affect your relationship with family members or significant individuals in your life? (*Did you show respect for authority (clergy, police, parent, educators, etc...)*)
8. Do you wish that someone had talked you out of joining a gang?
 - a. (*Follow-up question*) Who is the most influential person in your life? What does that person mean to you?
9. Tell me a little bit about your situation right now.
 - a. (*Follow-up question*) How has your past gang involvement affected your present educational and/or job opportunities?
(*Follow-up question*) How has your past gang involvement contributed to current (past) involvement with the justice system? (*During the past five years, have you had any contact with the police in your neighborhood? In general, how much do you trust the police in your neighborhood? Have you ever been incarcerated, if so, for how long?*).
10. Are you actively participating in conventional activities (School, work, church, etc...)?
11. How old were you when you exited the gang? (*What occurred in your life for you to leave the gang? Follow-up question: what motivated you to leave? What's happened to your fellow gang-members?*)
12. What is your opinion about current gangs?
(*Follow-up question*) Have they changed, If so, how? (*Currently, are gangs a problem in your neighborhood? Why do gang members act aggressively/violently?*)
13. Do you feel good about your chances to succeed in the life? If so, why?

Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you

VITA

Corinice Cephus-Wilson

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: I AM WHO YOU SAY I AM; I AM WHAT YOU MAKE ME. AN
EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF GANGS IN THE HEARTLAND

Major Field: Sociology

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born at Tulsa, OK on June 27, 1972, the daughter of Ruby M. Wilson and Theodore Cato. Married to Julian Wilson, November 4, 2000.

Education:

Graduate of Raymond S. McLain High School in 1990; received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in May 1994; Received a Masters of Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma in May 1997; Received a Masters of Sociology from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2003; Completed the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2012.

Experience:

In 2002, I served as Project Director/Comm. Outreach for Community Action Project, Tulsa, OK until 2005. In 2005, I was employed by Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma as a graduate research assistant, Oklahoma State University, Department of Sociology until 2006. From 2006 to 2008, I served as the Director/Evaluator-Data Coordinator, Tulsa Youth Intervention Project: Gang Intervention/Prevention-Community Service Council Tulsa, Oklahoma. Currently, I am the Executive Director of TRiO Programs at Rogers State University in Claremore, Oklahoma from 2008 to present.

Professional Memberships:

Leadership Tulsa-Class of 45, Big Brothers and Big Sisters –Board Member, Youth Services of Tulsa-Executive Board Member, and Former co-chair of North Tulsa Coordinating Committee, Co-Chair Westside Coalition for Youth (substance abuse/prevention organization); Former Board Member of Family and Children's Institutional Review Board; Former Board Member of Roger's County Youth's Services and a Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.

Name: Corinice Wilson

Date of Degree: May, 2012

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: I AM WHO YOU SAY I AM; I AM WHAT YOU MAKE ME. AN
EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF GANGS IN THE HEARTLAND

Pages in Study: 152

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Scope and Method of Study: Through the lens of multiple marginalities, this qualitative study explores the lived experience of former gang members in an emergent mid-size city. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, this study examines contributing factor to gang involvement. Additional methodologies were employed; including historical analysis of local law enforcement agency reports and content analysis of 150 local newspaper articles. Due to the focus of this research, the participants in the study were African Americans.

Finding and Conclusion: Findings reveal the process of joining gangs in Tulsa, OK evolved out of normative features within particular communities and neighborhoods; whereby, multigenerational gang involvement is observed. Concentrated poverty play a critical role in shaping one's thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. Cited as a contributing factor for gang membership (Hagedorn 1989; Spergel 1990; Vigil 1988), low socioeconomic status impacts the vulnerability to gang recruitment. This study concludes a higher prevalence of gang formation occurs within communities, and among adolescents, who experienced multiple marginalities. The results of this dissertation provides support of Dr. James Vigil's Multiple Marginality model, which suggests segmented labor markets, historical poverty, racism, and social isolation interact to produce situations in which the community and its residents are outside of, or marginal to, the legitimate economy.

Advisor's Approval: Jean Van Delinder, Ph.D.