

PERCEPTIONS OF RISK FACTORS FOR FEMALE GANG INVOLVEMENT AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN AND HISPANIC WOMEN

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This study examines ethnic minority girls' perceptions of risk factors for female gang involvement. Thirty-one female students at an alternative school in a high-crime, urban environment were interviewed with regard to their beliefs about why adolescents join gangs. Peer pressure was believed to be the largest influence on female gang involvement. In addition, it was thought that girls might turn to gangs for protection from neighborhood crime, abusive families, and other gangs. Family characteristics linked to gang involvement included lack of parental warmth and family conflict. Furthermore, gangs, through their participation in illegal activities, were viewed as providing access to excitement and moneymaking opportunities not available through more legitimate societal institutions. Finally, adolescents may view gang membership as a way of obtaining respect. Implications for intervention programs and future research are discussed.

The existence of female gang members has been documented since the 1920s (e.g., Asbury, 1927; Thrasher, 1927/1963). Although data from the 1996 National Youth Gang Survey indicated that 10% of youth gang members were female (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998),

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data from self-report studies estimate that the proportion of adolescent gang members who are female range from 3% to 38% (Curry, 1998; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Miller, 1992; Spergel & Curry, 1993). However, female gang members have generally been ignored in the scientific literature. As stated by Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995), "The stereotype of the delinquent is so indisputably male that the police, the general public, and even those in criminology who study delinquency, rarely, if ever, consider girls and their problems with the law" (p. 409). The effect of this stereotype on research is evident in the conspicuous absence of any data with regard to female gang involvement in the 1995 National Youth Gang Survey, the first attempt to collect data on youth gang membership nationwide (U.S. Department of Justice, 1997). When female gang members are discussed in the literature, it is usually through narratives of male gang members (e.g., Bowker, Gross, & Klein, 1980; Jankowski, 1991). Fortunately, the increasing number of researchers interested in this population is precipitating a new body of literature on female gang involvement (e.g., Calabrese & Noboa, 1995; Calhoun, Jurgens, & Chen, 1993; Campbell, 1990, 1991; Chesney-Lind, Shelden, & Joe, 1996; Curry, 1998; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Moore & Hagedorn, 1996; Shelden, Tracy, & Brown, 1997; Sikes, 1997). This study, therefore, seeks to address the gap in the literature on female gang involvement by investigating ethnic minority girls' perceptions of risk factors for female gang involvement.

Much of the existing research on youth gang involvement has focused primarily on estimating the prevalence of gangs in the United States, contrasting delinquency and drug use rates among gang members and nongang-involved youth, and proposing strategies for prevention and intervention. There has been less of a focus on identifying factors that motivate adolescents, particularly females, to join gangs. Moreover, much of this research has been primarily ethnographic or theoretical and has presented little in the way of empirical evidence. As Hagedorn (1988) states, "empirical research on urban gangs is out of fashion in academia" (p. 27). A review of approximately 200 journal articles, edited book chapters, and books on gangs indicate that within the past 20 years, approximately 29 publications have presented original empirical data on risk factors for gang involvement. Of these, 7 have included girls in the sample. Instead, most of the empiri-

cal research on gangs has focused on the criminal behavior of gang members rather than risk factors for gang involvement.

Furthermore, research on youth gangs has generally neglected to use a potentially valuable source of information about risk factors for gang involvement—adolescents who are at risk for joining. Much of the research to date has been cross-sectional, collecting data from youth that are already involved in gangs. Although this approach provides valuable information about the characteristics of youth that are in gangs, it precludes differentiating correlates of gang involvement from risk factors. The experiences associated with gang membership may influence adolescents' recall of why they joined. For example, interview data indicate that when asked why girls join gangs, the responses of girls identified as being at-risk for gang membership (but not currently involved) differed from active gang members as well as from girls who were neither involved nor at-risk for gang membership (Shulmire, 1996). As such, information from girls who are at-risk but not actively gang-involved may be particularly valuable in providing information for prevention programs. In addition, in a study of 193 high school students, McConnell (1994) found that non-gang members can provide accurate knowledge about gangs and that inner-city youth "are a viable alternative for survey researchers conducting exploratory research. Survey researchers can use samples such as this as a reference point to formulate more precise research problems for further study" (p. 272).

This article, therefore, presents the findings of an exploratory study of female high school students' perceptions about potential risk factors for youth gang involvement. We are specifically interested in understanding the perceptions of those girls who have not yet joined gangs but who have some experience and familiarity with these groups and may be on the fringe of becoming involved in gangs. Previous research on risk factors that may predispose adolescents to gang involvement is reviewed below.

Risk Factors for Adolescent Gang Involvement

As noted above, there has been little empirical research on risk factors for adolescent gang involvement. Those studies that have exam-

ined possible factors leading to gang involvement have primarily focused on familial, neighborhood, and psychosocial risk factors. Again, it should be noted that the majority of this research has been conducted with African American and Hispanic men and thus may be limited in its generalizability. However, given that this is an exploratory study, it is necessary to review these studies to identify as many potential risk factors for gang involvement as possible.

Familial factors. There has been some speculation that involvement in gangs is the result of deficient family relations. Specifically, it has been suggested that gangs provide emotional support that is not available from the family. For example, a series of interviews with 15 female gang members indicated that the family environments of these girls were characterized by abuse, domestic violence, and extensive alcohol and drug use by parents (Molidor, 1996). A study of the family relations of 30 Mexican American boys found that the families of adolescent gang members were more likely to be characterized by negative intrafamilial socialization, poor youth supervision, and limited display of affection than were the families of nongang members from similar neighborhoods (Adler, Ovando, & Hocevar, 1984). Finally, in a study of 499 adjudicated African American and Caucasian males, gang members were found to have higher rates of parental defiance (Friedman, Mann, & Friedman, 1975).

Despite this evidence, however, the view that family dysfunction is a correlate of gang membership has not gained universal acceptance. Bowker and Klein (1983) provided evidence that parent-adolescent relationships did not affect involvement in gangs among African American females. Similarly, a study of the family relations of male gang members in comparison to nongang juvenile offenders did not yield between-groups differences for family relations, mother-adolescent relations, or father-adolescent relations (Lyon, Henggeler, & Hall, 1992). Furthermore, Jankowski (1991) reported that gang members were just as likely to come from intact nuclear families as "broken" homes, and in fact, found that many gang members reported close relationships with their families. These findings suggest that family problems may not be associated with gang membership to any greater degree than with serious problem behavior in general.

Although much of the research examining familial risk factors for gang involvement have focused on the quality of family relationships, other researchers have examined other family characteristics. For example, there is evidence that having a family member who is involved in a gang is more strongly associated with gang membership among African American males than among Hispanic males (Curry & Spergel, 1992). Other researchers have speculated that living in a single-parent family places African American and Hispanic youth at risk for joining gangs (Yablonsky, 1997).

Neighborhood factors. With regard to the extrafamilial environment, other researchers have highlighted economic factors as an influence on youth gang involvement. The increasing marginalization of inner-city youth and the perpetual cycle of poverty in many communities have created, for many adolescents, an inability to perceive economic and social opportunity through legitimate social institutions (Goldstein, 1991; Jankowski, 1991; Spergel, 1964). There is some evidence that low socioeconomic status is associated with gang membership among girls and boys (Burriss-Kitchen, 1997; Dukes, Martinez, & Stein, 1997; Molidor, 1996; Moore, 1991). For many adolescents, gangs—through participation in illegal activities (e.g., selling drugs)—may provide access to money and material possessions not available through conventional employment (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Jankowski, 1991; Klein, 1995; Padilla, 1993; Taylor, 1990; Yablonsky, 1997).

Researchers have also pointed to needs for safety and protection as motivating factors for youth gang involvement (Calabrese & Noboa, 1995; Dukes et al., 1997; Friedman et al., 1975; Klein, 1995; O'Hagan, 1976). More specifically, it has been reported that Mexican American girls may join gangs because of the “desire for the protection that the male gang will provide” (Calabrese & Noboa, 1995, p. 230).

Psychosocial factors. Finally, there has been little exploration of the psychosocial advantages that gangs may provide. There has been some speculation that females are drawn to gangs because of the desire for friendship, excitement, and the sense of belonging that gangs provide (Brown, 1977; Calabrese & Noboa, 1995; Harris, 1988; Joe &

Chesney-Lind, 1995; Molidor, 1996). Findings from interview and survey data indicate that male gang members often cite companionship, excitement, and heterosexual contacts as the primary advantages of gang membership (Friedman et al., 1975; Hochhaus & Sousa, 1988; Jankowski, 1991; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Klein, 1995). There is also evidence that adolescents join gangs to compensate for low self-esteem (Dukes et al., 1997; Herrmann, McWhirter, & Sipsas-Herrmann, 1997; Yablonsky, 1997).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to seek information with regard to youth perceptions about risk factors for female gang involvement. Particular focus was placed on the roles of the family, neighborhood, friends, and identity issues. Because the intent of this study was to learn more about the factors that *lead* to gang involvement, an a priori decision was made to assess youth who were at risk for gang involvement but not yet involved. In this way, rather than assessing retrospective explanations from active gang members, more might be learned about the internal motivational processes of youth who may be attracted to gangs at a time when they are vulnerable to such influences.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Participants in this study were recruited from an alternative school in a high crime, urban neighborhood with high levels of youth gang activity. It was an all-female school and enrollment targeted girls judged to be at high risk for delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and gang membership. Students were referred to the school either through the juvenile justice system, social service agencies, or the public school system. All students who desired to take part in the study and who returned signed parental consent forms were included in the sample. As a result, the ethnicity and age distribution of the sample are reflective of the student body of the school. Due to concerns about confidential-

ity and the participants' willingness to disclose, no identifying information was collected and demographic information was limited to the participants' age, ethnicity, reason for referral into the alternative school, and degree of association with gang members.

Thirty-one females comprising 78% of the student body were interviewed. The sample was composed of 26 African American, 2 Jamaican American, and 3 Hispanic American youth, ranging in age from 12 to 17 years ($M = 14.79$, $SD = 1.34$). The majority of the students (64.5%) had been referred into the intervention program as a result of school-related conduct problems (e.g., fighting, disruptive behavior, truancy). The remaining students reported that they were referred by the court system, social workers, or relatives. The majority of the participants reported direct personal experience with adolescent gangs, either through previous gang membership (16.1%) or through friendships with gang members (61.3%).

PROCEDURE

Prior to data collection, a series of pilot interviews was conducted to compile a list of potential risk factors for adolescent gang involvement. First, two groups of Hispanic American adolescents (three students in each group ranging in age from 13 to 17; 50% female students) participated in an open-ended discussion about reasons for joining a gang. The participants in the group interviews were recruited from a community-based delinquency prevention program in a predominantly Hispanic, low income neighborhood. Second, a series of individual interviews were conducted with five African American female students at the alternative school from which the final sample was drawn. Based on information from these interviews and the literature reviewed above, 24 potential risk factors for gang involvement were identified and grouped into four broad categories: family (7 items), neighborhood (6 items), friends (i.e., peers; 6 items), and self (i.e., identity issues; 5 items).

Each of the 31 participants took part in an individually administered, two-part, audiotaped interview. The first part involved a short series of open-ended questions with regard to descriptions of gangs, their activities, and the dynamics of gang organization and structure.

This portion of the interview was aimed at building rapport with the participants and was not included in analyses. The second part of the interview consisted of a detailed exploration of the reasons that adolescents join gangs and served as the core of this study.

In the second part of the semi-structured interview, participants were presented with each of the aforementioned four broad categories and asked to choose which one they felt had the strongest influence on female gang involvement (e.g., family factors). Participants were then asked to list more specific reasons related to that category, which they believed might lead girls to join gangs (e.g., no father in the home, parents too lenient). As participants listed these specific reasons, they were encouraged to describe how or why it might lead to gang involvement. For example, if in the course of discussing the broad category of "Family" risk factors a participant said, "living in a single-parent family," the interviewer would ask, "What is it about living in a single parent family that would make a girl join a gang?" In an effort to make the interview as comprehensive as possible, participants were first encouraged to offer responses without prompting from the interviewer. After discussing all factors that they could independently proffer, if a participant had not brought up one of the predetermined items, the interviewer would suggest it herself (e.g., "Some people think that girls join gangs because . . .") and ask the youth about her own opinion. Finally, the items within the category, including any novel responses offered by the participant, were rated on a 5-point scale of influence ranging from 0 (*doesn't matter*) to 4 (*matters a lot*). This process was then repeated for each of the remaining three broad categories. In the end, all youth ranked the four broad categories and rated all 24 predetermined items. Some youth also volunteered novel ideas or explanations that were not captured by any of the 24 predetermined items, and so were rated separately. Finally, in addition to rating these items, in most cases, the participants also provided more detailed, qualitative information with regard to the basis for their opinion and rating.

An additional goal of this study was to determine whether girls feel they join gangs for different reasons than do boys. Information with regard to such gender differences would be valuable in designing effective prevention programs aimed specifically at girls. Therefore, at the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked to discuss the reasons boys join gangs. Participants were again presented with the

four broad categories and asked to choose that which they felt had the strongest influence on male gang involvement. However, in the interest of time, the items within each category were rated on the 5-point scale but were not discussed individually.

It is important to note that at no time were participants provided with a definition of youth gangs. In fact, at the beginning of the interview, each participant was asked to give her own definition of a gang. The primary reason for allowing self-definition was to prevent restricting the amount of information that participants could provide. Furthermore, given that gang members do not define themselves based on researchers' criteria, self-definition seems to be the most appropriate measure (Bjerregaard & Lizotte, 1995; Harris, 1988; Horowitz, 1990).

ANALYSES

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the analysis of the data. Although this may seem unusual, it seemed justified by the nature of the data. One of the primary goals of this study was to explore why African American and Hispanic girls think that girls join gangs. As mentioned previously, 24 potential risk factors were identified in the pilot study and in the literature. Of these, some may be thought to have a significantly greater impact on gang involvement than others. Without quantitative analysis, differences in the impact of each risk factor cannot be assessed. Therefore, repeated-measures ANOVA was used to investigate differences in the rankings of the four broad categories (i.e., family, neighborhood, friends, and self), although *t* tests were used to compare the ratings of the items within each category.

A second aim of this study was to explore the processes through which risk factors lead to gang involvement. When rating each of the items, different participants often gave different reasons for their rating. For example, when asked how father absence might lead to gang membership, some participants replied that girls might join gangs because they feel emotionally abandoned. Others, however, replied that mothers are incapable of raising children effectively on their own. To assess these differences, qualitative analysis was conducted on the responses. Thus, the audiotaped interviews were transcribed and seven

of the transcripts were randomly selected and read to identify key themes among the participants' explanations. Then, using a coding software package (ATLAS/TI), each of the 31 transcripts was read and relevant quotations were coded. It should be noted that the initial seven transcripts were selected because they constituted approximately a quarter of the interviews and thus were thought to be a reasonable representation of the data. The themes identified in these interviews were simply used as a starting point for the coding system. As new themes emerged, they were added to the coding system.

It should be noted that there was a great deal of variability in the degree and relevance of responses given. Although all of the participants rated each item, some participants did not state a rationale for their rating of some items. Therefore, there was no standard number of quotations coded for each participant or for each item. To maintain consistency in the coding process, one person coded all interviews. Finally, all quotations were rechecked to ensure their relevance and correct placement in the coding system.

RESULTS

FEMALE GANG INVOLVEMENT

As indicated in Table 1, among the four broad categories, friends were ranked as the biggest influence on female gang involvement, followed by neighborhood, family, and self, respectively. Results of a repeated-measures ANOVA revealed a significant overall difference between categories, $F(3, 90) = 6.57, p < .001$. Post hoc analysis indicated that friends were rated as a significantly greater influence on female gang involvement than the other three categories, Neighborhood $t(30) = 3.03, p = .005$; Family $t(30) = 3.25, p = .003$; and Self $t(30) = 4.15, p < .001$.

As mentioned previously, although each of the 31 participants ranked each of the four categories and rated each of the 24 items, the number of participants providing explanations for each item varied widely, ranging from a minimum of 7 responses to a maximum of 22 ($M = 14.04, SD = 4.59$).

TABLE 1
Means and Standard Deviations of General Categories

Category	Female		Male	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Friends	1.71	1.10	1.71	0.94
Neighborhood	2.68	1.11	2.45	1.31
Family	2.77	0.96	2.90	0.98
Self	2.90	0.94	2.94	0.77

NOTE: Means reflect ranking of categories in terms of relative influence (1 = *most important*, 2 = *second most important*, etc.).

Friends

A separate repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted on the individual items in the Friends category. The results detected a significant overall difference within the Friends category, $F(5, 150) = 4.96, p < .001$. As indicated in Table 2, post hoc comparisons noted significant differences between several of the variables. Within the broad category of peer-related issues, female gang membership was perceived to be largely attributed to factors such as peer pressure, the desire for group affiliation, excitement, and moneymaking opportunities within gangs. Opportunities for heterosexual contacts and “going along with the crowd” were viewed by the participants in this study as weaker influences on gang involvement.

Peer Pressure. In addition to the ratings, 19 of the study participants gave qualitative explanations about how peer pressure might influence a girl’s decision to join a gang. Of the 19 participants who offered explanations, 26.3% stated that girls might feel obligated to join gangs to keep their friends. As one participant put it,

If the friend get in the gang she probably might turn against her. If she don’t join, she might turn against her and break their friendship. Or the other gang members might call her, you know, her friends might call her a chicken, you know, because she is not in a gang. Especially if they are your true friends, they don’t want to see their friends go to waste so they probably follow their friend’s footsteps.

TABLE 2
Results of *t* Tests Comparing Items
Within the Friends Category for Girls

Variable	Mean	SD	<i>Way to Meet</i> Guys (p)	<i>Everyone Is Joining</i> Gangs (p)	<i>Kids in Gangs Make</i> Money (p)	<i>Excitement</i>	<i>Want to Make</i> Friends
Other people pressure them to join gangs	2.42	1.57	< .001	.003	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
They want to make friends or join a group	2.19	1.66	.002	.030	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	
Excitement	1.90	1.54	.004	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>		
Kids in gangs make money	1.68	1.62	.041	<i>ns</i>			
Looks like everyone else is joining gangs	1.48	1.34	<i>ns</i>				
It's a way to meet guys	0.97	1.25					

NOTE: Means reflect rating on scale ranging from 0 (*no influence on gang involvement*) to 4 (*big influence*).

An additional 26.3% felt that, although initially firm, some girls eventually succumb to pressure to join gangs because their resistance wears down.

Their friends might influence them. Their friends might already be in a gang and they might want their friend to be in it and they keep pressuring her, pressuring her until she says, "Yes, I'll join the gang with you."

Other participants felt that girls join gangs to be popular. For example, one participant responded, " 'cause they see their friends in a gang. They probably get a lot of attention; people notice them. They get popular, I guess, from being in the gang 'cause of the names they got."

Make friends/join group. When asked why the desire to make friends might influence a girl to join a gang, 72.7% of the 11 participants who provided additional qualitative explanations stated that being in a gang is a way to fit in:

Sometimes like they think "I'm just a regular person. I don't got no friends or nothing. I think I can meet some girlfriends that love me and stuff if I get in a gang."

Maybe some people think they're lonely and they ain't got nobody and they would want a gang. They would join a gang. They think the gang members will be their friends and wouldn't turn their back on them or nothing. They think they'll make friends easy by them being in a gang.

The remaining participants who provided qualitative explanations for their rating of this item stated that, for some girls, the gang serves as a substitute family, as one participant stated, "'cause everybody's close to everybody and stuff. That's your family."

Excitement. As indicated in Table 3, excitement was rated by the participants in this study as having moderate influence on whether girls get involved in gangs. Of the 22 participants who provided qualitative responses to this item, 68% believed that the activities that gangs participate in provide adventure:

If you've never robbed anybody before or shoot or whatever and if you join a gang, automatically you know you're gonna have to get into that kind of lifestyle. And if that's what excites them, they're gonna automatically join that.

Money making opportunities. Similarly, it was believed that the illegal activities that gang members participate in provide them with moneymaking opportunities not available elsewhere. Seventy-six percent of the 17 participants who offered qualitative explanations to this item replied in the following manner:

If they are staying in a low class neighborhood and they seeing their friends in a gang with nice Tommy Hillfiger clothes and Polo and all this they are going to feel like "Well, I got to get what they've got to make myself look good."

When a gang robs people or they jack somebody, then they make a lot of money and they pawn stuff. That's a way for them to get extra money without really having to work so many hours.

TABLE 3
Results of *t* Tests Comparing Items
Within the Family Category for Girls

Variable	Mean	SD	<i>Not</i> <i>Enough</i> Money (p)	<i>No</i> <i>Father</i> Around (p)	<i>Not</i> <i>Strict</i> Enough (p)	<i>Too</i> <i>Strict</i> (p)	<i>Not Good</i> <i>Role</i> Models (p)	<i>Family</i> <i>Fighting,</i> Arguing
Parents don't care about their children	2.87	1.28	< .001	.001	< .001	.015	.031	<i>ns</i>
People in the Family fighting, arguing	2.77	1.48	< .001	.003	.003	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	
Parents aren't good role models	2.13	1.38	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>		
Parents are too strict	2.10	1.66	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>			
Parents aren't strict enough	1.58	1.50	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>				
There is no father around	1.55	1.50	<i>ns</i>					
Family doesn't have enough money	1.48	1.50						

NOTE: Means reflect rating on scale ranging from 0 (*no influence on gang involvement*) to 4 (*big influence*).

Heterosexual Contacts. Within the Friends category, participants rated the opportunity for heterosexual contacts as the weakest influence on female gang involvement. The 17 qualitative responses offered for this item were mixed. As shown by the statement below, 29% of the participants believe that guys are not attracted to girls in gangs:

I think that a guy wouldn't want to be with a woman that done joined a gang or that is in a gang because they think that they gone steal from them or try to hurt them or something.

Along similar lines, 17.6% of these participants believe that girls are not attracted to guys in gangs. Although heterosexual contacts had the

lowest rating within the Friends category, 23.5% of these participants nevertheless believed that at least some girls might join gangs because there are more opportunities in gangs to meet guys. For example,

Like if they're good girls and they're always in school, they're not really gonna go through the things that they go through so they meet a lot of people and they know a lot of people that they wouldn't know naturally, without the gang.

Neighborhood

Within the neighborhood category, a repeated-measures ANOVA conducted on the individual items also resulted in a significant overall difference, $F(5, 140) = 4.75, p < .001$. Results of post hoc analyses comparing the individual items are detailed in Table 4. The need for protection and living in a high crime neighborhood were rated as significantly higher than lack of opportunity, living in a run-down neighborhood, or poverty. The presence of gangs in the neighborhood was also rated significantly higher than living in run-down or poor neighborhoods. Poverty was seen as the weakest influence. As before, although all 31 youth rated all items, some provided additional qualitative explanations for their ratings.

Safety. When asked how the need for safety might influence a girl's decision to join a gang, 70% of the 20 participants who provided qualitative explanations stated that gang members provide protection for one another and are willing to fight for each other:

Rules of the neighborhood. Like where I stay at, if you get in a fight you gone die. So if you get in a fight, you gone join a gang so you'll have people to back you up.

If a person know you in a gang, they won't mess with you cause they know if they mess with you they gone have to deal with the other people in the gang.

High crime rates. Similar responses were given when the participants were asked how living in a high-crime neighborhood might in-

TABLE 4
Results of *t* Tests Comparing Items
Within the Neighborhood Category for Girls

Variable	Mean	SD	<i>Poor</i> Neighborhood (p)	<i>Run- Down</i> Neighborhood (p)	<i>No Other Opportunities</i> (p)	<i>Gangs in Neighborhood</i>	<i>Crime in Neighborhood</i>
Provides protection/ safety from others	2.74	1.48	.002	.002	.045	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
There's a lot of crime in their neighborhood	2.61	1.50	.001	.004	.023	<i>ns</i>	
There are gangs in their neighborhood	2.38	1.37	.013	.019	<i>ns</i>		
There aren't any other opportunities	1.94	1.41	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>			
They live in a run-down neighborhood	1.48	1.39	<i>ns</i>				
They live in a poor neighborhood	1.39	1.36					

NOTE: Means reflect rating on scale ranging from 0 (*no influence on gang involvement*) to 4 (*big influence*).

fluence a girl to join a gang. Of the 19 participants who offered qualitative explanations, 26.3% felt that girls join gangs because they have been or are scared that they might be victimized.

If they live in a neighborhood with a lot of crime, they probably scared that something bad might happen to them if they don't get in a gang. So they need protection.

They're probably scared that they're gonna get violated instead of them violating someone else. If they have a gang, then no one will really want to violate them.

However, the remainder of the participants who responded qualitatively to this item (73.7%) felt that girls become involved in gangs because they are modeling the criminal activity that they have been exposed to throughout their lives.

I think the neighborhood cause it's what you see around you. You have to learn from your surroundings. You learn from what you see around you. Like I see a kid that's like 3 or 4 years old. If he grows up in the city and he sees people get shot everyday, it's going to be like an 80 or 90% chance that he's going to be in a gang 'cause he's seen it all his life. So I think it's the neighborhood.

Presence of gangs. The theme of protection is also visible in the participants' explanations of why the presence of gangs in the neighborhood might prompt a girl to join a gang. Of the 11 qualitative responses offered for this item, 54.5% felt that females join gangs because of the need to defend themselves against other gangs in the neighborhood.

If you not in a gang, some gangs will pressure you to be in gangs. Or, you know, if you don't be in gangs with them, they'll fight you and probably kill you.

Family

A repeated-measures ANOVA was also conducted on the individual items in the family category, resulting in a significant overall effect, $F(6, 180) = 5.62, p < .001$. As shown in Table 3, affective characteristics of the family (e.g., "parents don't care about their kids" and "people in the family fighting, arguing") were rated significantly higher than those items pertaining to parenting styles (i.e., strictness) or family poverty.

Lack of parental concern/involvement. The participants' explanations of why lack of parental affection or involvement might lead to gang involvement were varied. Of the 21 qualitative explanations offered, one third stated that girls may join gangs to seek their parents' attention: "Some parents don't care about their kids so the kids go out and join a gang to get attention." Another third of the participants who responded felt that girls may join gangs to replace the attention and care that they are not getting at home.

When your parents don't care, that mean you don't have no love there. So they feel that when they join a gang, that's love and attention. That's

what makes them feel like they something, they part of something and they belong. That's what that means.

It's like you can't love a child too much and you can't love a child too little. You got to give just the right amount. And if you don't love a child, they're gonna go astray and find somebody else who will love them.

Family discord. When asked how fighting and arguing in the household might influence a girl to join a gang, participants' responses fell into two categories. Approximately half of the 11 participants who provided qualitative responses (54.5%) believed that girls joined gangs to escape from their families. One participant stated, "I wouldn't want to stay in the house if my family was constantly arguing. I'd want to get away." The remaining 45.5% of the participants who provided qualitative responses felt that girls may join gangs because they are modeling the fighting that they see in their families.

If people in the family are violent, then they tend to want to be like them or it just comes naturally to be like them. They don't want their family to see so they join the gang. It's just natural to be violent.

Poor parental role models. The theme of modeling was also repeated in the participants' explanations of why the lack of role models might lead a girl to join a gang. Approximately 92.9% of the 14 participants who offered qualitative explanations replied in this manner:

Sometimes if your parents aren't good role models, if they don't teach you what's wrong, how are you gonna know? Cause your parents are supposed to teach you and tell you stuff. If you see your mother smoking pot, of course you gone do it cause you gone think it's right. You gone say "Oh, my mom's doing it too so why shouldn't I?"

One participant felt that girls might join gangs not to model their parents' behavior, but because they believe they can find better role models in gangs: "Cause some parents are on drugs and they [the kids] want somebody to look up to that's not on drugs."

Parental strictness. Parental strictness was rated by the participants in this study as being a relatively moderate influence on female gang membership. Half of the 22 participants who responded qualitatively to this item believed that girls might try to rebel against strict parents by joining gangs.

The parents don't want to let them do anything. Like if you don't let a child do, not what they want to do, but give them space or whatever. If you're too strict about everything, they're going to sneak behind your back and do it anyway.

Other participants, however, felt that parental strictness was not a factor in female gang involvement. In fact, 40.9% stated that being strict is a parent's way of showing affection and that parents should be strict. "No. Their parents ain't too strict cause they know what they're doing. They're doing something that's good for their children."

It should be noted that there was no statistically significant difference between ratings for "Parents being too strict" and "Parents not being strict enough." Furthermore, although participants also rated parents not being strict enough as a moderate influence on female gang membership, all of the 7 participants providing qualitative explanations for this item felt that lack of parental strictness is equivalent to lack of guidance: "If your parents aren't strict enough, you just do what you want to do 'cause a gang do what they want to do."

Father absence. The participants' explanations of how father absence might affect a girl's decision to join a gang were also mixed. As shown by the statements below, of the 13 participants who offered qualitative explanations for this item, 38.5% felt that the presence of a father in the home is unnecessary.

Well, I mean, with some girls, I guess. I mean cause some mothers strong enough where they really don't need a father. I'm not gone say people don't need a father but it's like it really don't matter.

Sometimes girls or boys don't need no father as long as they got a mother or a grandparent, somebody like that who'll love them.

However, other participants (30.8%) believed that the presence of a father in the home is important because mothers may not be strong enough to raise their children on their own.

Some of them probably don't have a father figure in the house. Most of them don't have a father figure to tell them "Hey, you know what is right from wrong." And I think the mother is the weakest hand in the family so I think they need a father . . . a more upperhanded person to tell them more about being up there and doing stuff they ain't suppose to be doing. I think a father figure is the most important thing that a child should have.

There were several other explanations given as to why father absence might influence a girl to become involved in a gang. One participant felt that girls join gangs because the male members may serve as father-figures: "Most gangs have boys that are older than girls and they look up to the boys." Another participant felt that female gang involvement may result from a girl's anger that she has no father around.

They join gangs when there's no father in the home because maybe they might be mad. Maybe they might want to hurt somebody because their father died because of a certain reason or because of somebody. They feel like they got to go out in the world and make it even or make it right or make them feel good because they think they're helping their father out.

Family poverty. Within the Family category, family poverty was rated as the weakest influence on female gang membership. However, 10 participants offered explanations of how family poverty might influence a girl to join a gang. All of the responses given stated that females might join gangs to get money. Eighty percent of the participants replied that girls want to make money to get things for themselves.

They probably see their friends nicely dressed and they probably feel like, you know, "My friend has got this; I want to be wearing that too." I think that got something to do with it.

The remaining 20% of the participants who responded felt that girls join gangs to make money to provide assistance to their family: "They'll probably join a gang to get some money for their family."

Novel responses. Several participants also offered novel responses within the Family category. Five participants believed that females often join gangs because of abuse. Each of these participants rated abuse as having a very large influence on gang involvement (each gave this the maximum rating of 4.00). When asked to explain how abuse might lead to gang membership, two of these participants stated that girls join gangs to escape from their abusive families: "If people have an abusive family, whether verbally or physically, they're gonna be detached from their family and they want to have a family who doesn't abuse them so they want to join a gang." Another participant stated that girls join gangs to protect themselves from abuse from family members: "She probably got raped [by a family member]. She probably think she got to protect herself."

Another novel response offered by 3 of the participants was that girls might join gangs because they are modeling other family members (particularly older brothers or sisters) who are in gangs. For example, one participant stated: "A person in your family could just be in a gang and they could just come and they could just give them a little confidence to make them join the gang too."

Self

The results of a repeated-measures ANOVA did not indicate an overall significant difference between items within the Self (personal identity issues) category, $F(4, 120) = 1.79, p = .136$. Thus no post hoc comparisons were made between items. The means and standard deviations of the items comprising this category are indicated in Table 5. Each of the items within the self category was rated as having a moderate influence on female gang membership.

Individual items in this category dealt with respect, feelings of importance and belonging, personal satisfaction, and self-confidence. However, through the qualitative analysis of participants' explana-

TABLE 5
Means and Standard Deviations of
Items Within Self Category for Girls

<i>Item</i>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>SD</i>
It's a way to get respect	2.65	1.56
Being in a gang makes them feel important	2.26	1.46
It makes them feel like they belong	2.03	1.49
It makes them feel good about themselves	2.03	1.33
It builds their self-confidence	2.00	1.59

a. Means reflect rating on scale ranging from 0 (*no influence on gang involvement*) to 4 (*big influence*).

tions of these items, fear—fear of others or others' fear of them—quickly emerged as a common theme across several items. This may, in part, explain the lack of significant differences in the ratings. For example, when asked how joining gangs might be a way to get respect, all of the 15 participants who provided qualitative explanations stated that people obtain respect through fear:

It's a big part getting respect because probably if they probably tell the person to jump; a person in a gang says "Jump," and the person might say, "Well, how high?" They probably feel like "Yeah, you know, now I can tell somebody . . . now I can pull out a gun and tell somebody to jump and give me their money." Yeah I think it is a way to get respect.

The theme of fear was also present in the participants' explanations of how being in a gang might make someone feel important. Of the 13 responses given, 38.5% of the participants believed that girls feel important when they join gangs because people fear them. As one female participant stated, "They think that people will respect them more if they're in a gang. People won't try to fight them. People won't try to hurt them because they'll be scared that they in a gang."

Finally, some answers paralleled family responses. For example, when asked why being in a gang might make someone feel like they belong, 69.2% of the 13 females who gave qualitative responses said that gangs serve as substitute families:

They make them feel like they belong. Like if they don't have no love and attention at home, they feel like they being a part of something that they haven't got at home.

It makes them feel like they're a part of the gang or they're a part of the family—somebody they can talk to if they need to, somebody they can hang out with, somebody they can be cool with, do all kind of things with and just know that they are there for them.

MALE GANG INVOLVEMENT

These analyses—with the exception of the qualitative analysis of explanations that were not obtained—were then repeated using female participants' ratings of why boys join gangs. First, an overall significant difference was found between the four broad categories, $F(3, 90) = 7.31, p < .001$. Results of post hoc analysis indicated that friends were rated as a significantly greater influence on male gang membership than Neighborhood, $t(30) = 2.14, p = .041$; Self, $t(30) = 4.39, p < .001$; or Family, $t(30) = 5.32, p < .001$.

Friends

Results of a separate repeated-measures ANOVA indicated a significant difference among the individual items in the Friends category, $F(5, 150) = 2.88, p = .016$. As shown in Table 6, no differences were noted among the following factors: moneymaking opportunities in gangs, everyone else joining gangs, excitement, peer pressure, and the opportunity for heterosexual contact. However, whereas the desire to make friends was rated as being very influential in female gang involvement, these girls felt it played much less of a role for boys. The remaining factors were not viewed as differing from one another.

Neighborhood

Within the Neighborhood category, a separate repeated-measures ANOVA also revealed a significant difference between the individual items, $F(5, 135) = 4.34, p = .001$. The results of post hoc analysis,

TABLE 6
Results of *t* Tests Comparing Items
Within Friends Category for Boys

Variable	Mean	SD	<i>Want to Make Friends (p)</i>	<i>Way to Meet Girls</i>	<i>Other People Pressure Them</i>	<i>Excitement</i>	<i>Everyone Else Is Joining Gangs</i>
Kids in gangs							
make money	2.77	1.48	.002	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Looks like everyone							
else is joining gangs	2.65	1.38	.002	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	
Excitement	2.61	1.71	.013	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>		
Other people pressure							
them to join a gang	2.45	1.50	.043	<i>ns</i>			
It's a way to meet girls	2.19	1.64	<i>ns</i>				
They want to make							
friends or join a group	1.81	1.35					

NOTE: Means reflect rating on scale ranging from 0 (*no influence on gang involvement*) to 4 (*big influence*).

shown in Table 7, revealed differences between several items. According to the girls in this sample, neighborhood factors such as the need for protection, presence of gangs, and high crime were significantly greater influences on male gang involvement than was poverty.

Self

Unlike results based on the ratings for why girls join gangs, a significant overall difference between the individual items within the Self category was found for the ratings of why boys join gangs, $F(4, 120) = 5.48, p < .001$. Results of paired *t* tests comparing the individual items are shown in Table 8. The desire to feel important and the need for respect were rated as the greatest influences on male gang involvement.

Family

Finally, results of a separate repeated-measures ANOVA conducted on the individual items within the Family category revealed a significant overall effect, $F(6, 180) = 4.35, p < .001$. As shown in Table 9,

TABLE 7
Results of *t* Tests Comparing Items
Within the Neighborhood Category for Boys

Variable	Mean	SD	Poor	Run-Down	No	Crime	Gangs
			Neighborhood (p)	Neighborhood (p)	Other Opportunities	in Neighborhood	in Neighborhood
Provides protection/safety from others	2.97	1.22	<.001	.003	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
There are gangs in their neighborhood	2.93	1.27	.001	.010	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	
There's a lot of crime in their neighborhood	2.90	1.49	.002	.012	<i>ns</i>		
There aren't any other opportunities	2.39	1.58	.042	<i>ns</i>			
They live in a run-down neighborhood	2.00	1.48	<i>ns</i>				
They live in a poor neighborhood	1.71	1.51					

NOTE: Means reflect rating on scale ranging from 0 (*no influence on gang involvement*) to 4 (*big influence*).

post hoc analysis revealed several significant differences. Lack of display of parental affection, family discord, and father absence were viewed as having the greatest influence on male gang involvement.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

A series of analyses was also performed to examine possible differences in the ratings given by these female participants as to why girls versus boys join gangs. First, an analysis was performed to examine gender differences in the rankings of the four broad categories (peers, family, neighborhood, and self). Note again that all participants were female—the gender difference is in girls' ratings of why boys versus girls join gangs. This analyses found no gender differences in the rankings of the four broad categories, $F(1, 30) = 1.00, p = .325$.

TABLE 8
Results of *t* Tests Comparing
Items Within Self Category for Boys

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Builds Self-Confidence (p)</i>	<i>Feel Like They Belong (p)</i>	<i>Feel Good About Themselves</i>	<i>Way to Get Respect</i>
Being in a gang makes them feel important	3.13	1.26	< .001	.009	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
It's a way to get respect	3.10	1.47	.005	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	
It makes them feel good about themselves	2.94	1.34	.001	<i>ns</i>		
It makes them feel like they belong	2.55	1.50	<i>ns</i>			
It builds their self-confidence	2.19	1.38				

NOTE: Means reflect rating on scale ranging from 0 (*no influence on gang involvement*) to 4 (*big influence*).

TABLE 9
Results of *t* Tests Comparing
Items Within Family Category for Boys

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Not Strict Enough (p)</i>	<i>Too Strict (p)</i>	<i>Not Enough Money (p)</i>	<i>Not Good Role Models (p)</i>	<i>No Father Around</i>	<i>Family Fighting Arguing</i>
Parents don't care about their kids	3.10	1.22	< .001	.003	.022	.027	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
People in the family fighting, arguing	2.71	1.49	.003	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	
There's no father around	2.61	1.65	.009	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>		
Parents aren't good role models	2.42	1.43	.003	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>			
Family doesn't have enough money	2.35	1.62	.015	<i>ns</i>				
Parents are too strict	2.10	1.60	<i>ns</i>					
Parents aren't strict enough	1.55	1.59						

NOTE: Means reflect rating on scale ranging from 0 (*no influence on gang involvement*) to 4 (*big influence*).

A second series of analyses compared the ratings of the individual items within each of the four broad categories and found 8 of these 24 comparisons to be statistically significant. Note that because the ratings on the individual items were not used to create the overall rankings (which were not significantly different), this is *not* simply a subanalysis of the previous test. For example, the girls might rank the overall influence of peers identically for boys and girls (hence no difference), but they might rate all or some of the individual items as being more influential on boys than girls. In fact, that is exactly what happened: As shown in Table 10, in each case where there was a gender difference in ratings, these female participants rated the item as having a greater influence on male gang involvement than female gang membership. This difference may indicate that the girls in this study believe boys are more likely to join gangs for a wider variety of reasons, a possible explanation of the gender disparity in rates of gang involvement.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to assess adolescent girls' perceptions of risk factors for female gang involvement. Somewhat surprisingly, the participants in this study believed family dysfunction was not the single or overwhelming catalyst of female gang involvement. In fact, based on the opinions of these at-risk African American and Hispanic adolescent girls, family relationships, which are given a great deal of weight in the literature, are viewed as having a more modest role as a motivator for female gang involvement. This is not to say, however, that family relationships were thought to be insignificant. The female participants in this sample viewed affective characteristics of the family, such as parental display of affection and family discord, as having a significant influence on a girl's decision to join a gang. Specifically, they believed that for some girls, becoming involved in gangs might draw the attention, albeit negative, of emotionally distant parents. For others, gangs were thought to provide refuge from unsatisfactory home environments or the opportunity to act out violent behavior patterns learned in the family. On the other hand, according to the participants in this study, father absence alone and parenting strategies have

TABLE 10
Gender Differences in Ratings for Individual Items

<i>Item</i>	<i>Male Mean</i>	<i>Female Mean</i>	<i>t Value</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Friends</i>				
Everyone else is joining gangs	2.65	1.48	4.23	< .001
Excitement	2.61	1.90	2.79	.009
It's a way to meet guys/girls	2.19	0.97	4.19	< .001
Kids in gangs make money	2.77	1.68	3.77	.001
<i>Family</i>				
There's no father around	2.61	1.55	2.94	.006
Family doesn't have enough money	2.35	1.48	2.87	.007
<i>Self</i>				
It makes them feel good	2.94	2.03	3.37	.002
It makes them feel important	3.13	2.36	3.06	.005

less of an influence on female gang membership. In other words, at least in the eyes of these at-risk adolescents, it appears that the emotional quality of parent-child interaction is more important than the number of parents in the home or the level of parental control.

In contrast, peer relationships were perceived to be a much more significant determinant of female gang membership. However, there was some suggestion that a girl's decision to join a gang does not simply reflect "going along with the crowd," nor does it result from the desire for heterosexual contacts as previous research suggests (e.g., Jankowski, 1991; Thrasher, 1927/1963). Rather, it was believed that in many cases, gang involvement was a conscious and deliberate decision that often involved weighing several alternatives: losing friends versus keeping them or belonging to a group versus being an outsider. Alternatively, the girls in this study believed that many girls might find themselves presented with an ultimatum: Join the gang with me or we can no longer be friends. For girls, this may represent a particularly strong pull. There is evidence from Carol Gilligan's (1982) work on female moral development that girls are likely to view moral dilemmas in terms of conflicting responsibilities—the responsibility to remain true to oneself and the responsibility not to hurt others. Decision

making, then, involves a type of cost benefit analysis—*What is the cost of being in a gang?* versus *What is the cost of losing my friend?*

Furthermore, according to these participants, gangs may provide the basic means for survival in threatening environments. The need for protection and living in neighborhoods with high levels of criminal and gang activity were viewed as significantly greater risk factors for female gang membership than poverty or lack of opportunity. These results suggest that to some degree, gangs may serve an adaptive function for their members. Specifically, these students believed that girls might become involved in gangs because of previous experiences of victimization or fears that they might be victimized in the future. In addition, girls may find that the only way to protect themselves from gangs in their neighborhood is to become affiliated with gangs.

Finally, the participants in this study believed that gang membership might aid in the formation of identity by providing status and a sense of belonging. It was thought that some girls might view gang membership as a way to get respect. However, this particular application by these youth in this context differs from the traditional societal connotation in that it involves a strong component of fear and intimidation. It is unclear how this additional usage has come about. However, it might best be explained in the words of one participant who states, "You have to be rough to get respect from some people." In addition, the participants felt that gang membership promises advantages that more legitimate societal institutions cannot: excitement and money. The illegal activities that gangs often engage in provide adventurous, moneymaking opportunities not available elsewhere.

Regardless of the broad topic area, there were several themes that continued to surface throughout the interviews. As mentioned previously, gangs were often viewed as sources of protection. According to the participants in this study, gangs provide protection from other gangs as well as protection from community violence. In addition, gangs were also believed to provide refuge from abusive family environments. This information differs drastically from the prevailing societal view that teenagers join gangs to victimize other people. Rather, it suggests that at least some adolescents may initially join these organizations to prevent becoming victimized themselves.

Another recurrent theme present in the interviews was the concept of modeling. The participants' responses often reflected their beliefs that gang membership may result from adolescents modeling maladaptive behavior patterns learned in their families and neighborhoods. Specifically, they felt that girls who are exposed to family violence and neighborhood crime might join gangs to imitate these behaviors. As one participant so deftly put it, "They see violence, they gon' do violence."

In general, although the girls in this study viewed male and female gang membership as resulting from similar factors, there were significant gender differences. Boys were thought to be more likely to join gangs for moneymaking opportunities, excitement, and heterosexual contacts. In addition, father absence was perceived as having more influence on male gang involvement than female gang involvement. The existence of gender differences indicates that intervention services designed for boys may not be addressing issues that are particularly salient for girls. Differential risk factors necessitate intervention programs that are tailor-made to the specific needs of the populations being served.

In summary, according to the views of these 31 at-risk African American and Hispanic girls, female gang membership is not a random phenomenon but is believed to result from numerous factors. In part, gang membership may reflect the growing importance of the peer group to adolescents. These adolescents believed that many girls may feel compelled to join gangs because of external pressures from peers or because of internal desires to fit in. The excitement and moneymaking opportunities provided by the activities that gangs participate in were also perceived as presenting powerful incentives to adolescents. In addition, it was thought that girls might turn to gangs when traditional societal institutions prove incapable of protecting them from threatening environments, namely neighborhood crime and abusive families. Finally, gangs were viewed as a place of refuge to girls attempting to escape from unsatisfactory home environments.

Although providing valuable, albeit preliminary, information on this understudied issue, several limitations must be noted. First, the sample in this study is small and composed of ethnic minority girls. Given the relatively low rates of gang involvement and problem behavior in general among girls, and the low availability of referral and

intervention services for this population, the difficulties associated with recruiting a substantial sample of at-risk female participants are quite considerable. Furthermore, conducting qualitative analyses on a much larger sample would have been difficult, if not impossible, and would have thus potentially detracted from the richness of the interview data obtained here. With regard to the ethnicity of the sample, despite a recent increase in the number of White youth involved in gangs, gang involvement remains largely a problem among urban minority adolescents. Data from the 1996 National Youth Survey indicate that approximately 90% of gang members are African American or Hispanic American (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998). The ethnic distribution of this sample, therefore, mirrors that of the population that is most likely to join gangs.

A second limitation of this study is that the data presented here are strictly based on youth self-report of their perceptions of risk factors for gang involvement. Given that the goal was to assess internal motivational factors for female gang involvement among the population that appears to be most at-risk, self-report data were the logical, necessary first step. Alternative sources such as parents, police, or social workers, might provide different information with regard to *their* impressions as to why youth join gangs, but to understand the internal processes occurring within youth at a time at which they are vulnerable to gang involvement, one must ask youth themselves. It is important to recognize, however, that these are simply the *perceptions* of a small group of ethnic minority female participants and are thus limited in their generalizability. More research is needed to tap into the perceptions of risk factors for female gang involvement among other populations (for example, girls who are or have been actively involved in gangs). Such research could provide a valuable contribution to scholars' understanding of the causes of youth gang involvement.

In spite of the limited generalizability of this study, however, these findings are noteworthy in that they provide a stepping stone for future research and intervention efforts. The participants in this study have assisted us in highlighting some of the possible risk factors for female gang involvement. Further research is needed to examine the relations, if any, that exist between these factors and female gang involvement. Moreover, these findings may serve as preliminary guid-

ance for the development of intervention and prevention programs for girls who are at-risk for or who have a history of gang involvement. As indicated previously, the female participants in this study believed that girls might join gangs for different reasons than boys. If this perception is accurate, it suggests that intervention programs designed for boys may be ineffective for girls. To prevent female gang membership, then, it will be necessary to focus attention on the specific forces that shape it.

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