

University of Windsor Scholarship at UWindsor

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

2011

An Exploration of Violence in the Self-Governance of Gang and/or Drug Trade Involved Male Youth: A Secondary Analysis of Interview Data

Allen Gnanam
University of Windsor

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd>

Recommended Citation

Gnanam, Allen, "An Exploration of Violence in the Self-Governance of Gang and/or Drug Trade Involved Male Youth: A Secondary Analysis of Interview Data" (2011). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 237.

This online database contains the full-text of PhD dissertations and Masters' theses of University of Windsor students from 1954 forward. These documents are made available for personal study and research purposes only, in accordance with the Canadian Copyright Act and the Creative Commons license—CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution, Non-Commercial, No Derivative Works). Under this license, works must always be attributed to the copyright holder (original author), cannot be used for any commercial purposes, and may not be altered. Any other use would require the permission of the copyright holder. Students may inquire about withdrawing their dissertation and/or thesis from this database. For additional inquiries, please contact the repository administrator via email (scholarship@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone at 519-253-3000ext. 3208.

An Exploration of Violence in the Self-Governance of Gang and/or Drug Trade Involved

Male Youth: A Secondary Analysis of Interview Data

by

Allen Gnanam

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2011

© 2011 Allen Gnanam

An Exploration of Violence in the Self-Governance of Gang and/or Drug Trade Involved
Male Youth: A Secondary Analysis of Interview Data

by

Allen Gnanam

APPROVED BY:

Dr. Daniel O' Connor
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Criminology

Dr. Charlene Senn
Department of Psychology

Dr. Ruth Mann
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Criminology
, Advisor

Dr. Reza Nakhaie
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Criminology
, Chair of Defense

June 13, 2011

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, my thesis does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights and that any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people included in my thesis, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices. Furthermore, to the extent that I have included copyrighted material that surpasses the bounds of fair dealing within the meaning of the Canada Copyright Act, I certify that I have obtained a written permission from the copyright owner(s) to include such material(s) in my thesis and have included copies of such copyright clearances to my appendix.

I declare that this is a true copy of my thesis, including any final revisions, as approved by my thesis committee and the Graduate Studies office, and that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on a secondary analysis of 21 interviews conducted as part of a larger study on youth violence and youth violence interventions in Ontario under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, in which 84 youth recruited in youth correctional sites and high schools shared their experiences and views on youth violence and efforts by various authorities to prevent its occurrence and reoccurrence (Mann, Senn, Girard & Ackbar, 2007). For the thesis I deductively analyzed 21 transcripts of interviews with male youth who self-identified as having participated in youth gang or drug trade activities. Focusing on themes salient to self-governance as advanced in the work of Alan Hunt and Gary Wickham (1994), the thesis addresses questions on how these youth think about, and on how efforts by child protection and criminal justice authorities contribute to their persistent involvement in violence.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the gang and drug trade involved male youth whose transcripts I analyzed, as their stories, insight, adaptive abilities, and experiential knowledge on violence instilled upon me a new reality. It is also dedicated to all the gang and drug trade involved youth who are struggling with peer pressure, who fear getting out of a gang, and who desperately desire a way out of a violence oriented lifestyle as their decisions will be tough. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my God and Saviour Jesus Christ for His guidance, and to my mom, dad, and sister for all their support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I really appreciated the help and support I received from my thesis advisor Dr. Ruth Mann, her patience, timely responses, and genuine effort contributed to my positive experience and successful completion of my thesis. A special thanks also to Dr. Daniel O' Connor for his theoretical insight as his advice enabled me to accurately frame my thesis around the appropriate perspective. I also thank Dr. Charlene Senn and Dr. de Lint for their assistance on the finalization of my proposal, as their insights enabled me to better structure my thesis paper.

I am grateful to Dr. Danielle Soulliere, Dr. David Toews, and Professor Thomas Groulx for their willingness to write reference letters on my behalf, as this contributed to my acceptance into the Criminology Masters program. In addition, I thank Dr. Randy Lippert for presenting the governance principles in his course as I was able to apply this knowledge to my thesis, and Dr. Leslie Robertson for the qualitative research assignments in her course that prepared me for my research analysis. Finally, I give credit to Professor Strba, whose course on Youth in Conflict with the Law influenced my interest on the phenomenon of youth violence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY		iii
ABSTRACT		iv
DEDICATION		v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		vi
LIST OF TABLES		ix
LIST OF FIGURES		x
CHAPTER		
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	4
	Operationalizing Youth Gangs	4
	Criminality, Risk Factors and Instrumental Violence	6
	Pro-Violent Socialization and Violence	8
	Interventions and Canada’s Youth Criminal Justice Act	9
	Conclusion	11
III.	DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	12
	Secondary Data Analysis	13
	Paradigmatic Stance	14
	<i>Constructionist Paradigm and Active Interviewing</i>	14
	Deductive Thematic Analysis	15
	<i>Coding</i>	16
	Conclusion	19
IV.	FINDINGS	21
	The Youth	21
	Violence Narratives	22
	Categorizing violent instances	23
	<i>Expressive Violence</i>	25
	<i>Instrumental Violence</i>	25
	<i>Mixed Violence</i>	26

Values and Violence	27
<i>Toughness</i>	28
<i>Respect</i>	29
<i>Loyalty</i>	29
<i>Connectedness</i>	29
Effects of Violence	30
<i>Positive Self-Worth</i>	31
<i>Social Connection</i>	31
<i>Regret, Depression, Hopelessness</i>	33
Prevention Narratives	34
<i>Children’s Aid Societies (CAS)</i>	35
<i>Youth Justice – Custody</i>	36
<i>Violence Reinforcement</i>	37
<i>The 3-P model</i>	39
Findings Summary	39
V. DISCUSSION	42
Definitional Issues	42
Differentiating Gang Member Violence and Gang Violence	43
Risk Factors and Instrumental Violence	44
<i>Instrumental Violence and the Drug Trade</i>	45
<i>Instrumental Violence and Self-Worth</i>	45
<i>Gang Subcultures – The Culture of Violence Thesis</i>	46
<i>Status and power</i>	47
<i>Pro-violent Values and Environments</i>	47
Interventions and Canada’s Youth Criminal Justice Act	48
Conclusion	50
VI. CONCLUSION	51
Research Strengths	52
Research Limitations	52
Future Research Needs	53
APPENDIX A: TABLES AND FIGURES	55
Table I	55
Table II	55
Figure A	56
REFERENCES	57
VITA AUCTORIS	60

LIST OF TABLES

Table I: Reasons for Violence on Expressive/Instrumental Continuum	55
Table II: Effects of Violence and Reasons for Violence	55

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure A: 3- P Effect Model

56

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is based on secondary analysis of 21 interviews conducted as part of a larger study on youth violence and youth violence interventions in Ontario under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, in which 84 youth recruited in youth correctional sites and high schools shared their experiences and views on youth violence and efforts by various authorities to prevent its occurrence and reoccurrence (Mann, Senn, Girard & Ackbar, 2007). For the thesis I deductively analyzed the 21 interviews conducted with male youth who self-identified as having participated in youth gang activities. Fifteen of these 21 male youth also self-identified as having participated in the drug trade.

The thesis addresses the following three research questions:

1. How do gang and drug trade involved male youth think about violence?
2. How does violence fit into the behavioural practices of gang and drug trade involved male youth?
3. What impact do prevention efforts by criminal justice and child protection authorities have on gang and drug-trade involved youths' violence-related thinking and acting?

My analysis of the interview data draws on principles of governance outlined in Hunt and Wickham (1994). This analytic perspective explores how individuals are governed by others who attempt to shape the conduct and perceptions of populations or sub-populations, for example criminalized youth, and how individuals self-govern or manage themselves through efforts to manage or control their own emotions and behaviours (Hunt & Wickham, 1994, p. 78- 79). I use Hunt and Wickham's principles on

how governance and therefore self-governance operates as sensitizing constructs to make sense of how the 21 youth view and feel about violent practices, and how their views and feelings about themselves as participants in violence contribute to their persistent engagement in violence. My interpretation of the findings draws on existing literature on youth gangs, reviewed in Chapter Two. In particular it draws on previous research and theory on the relevance of status and solidarity to youth gangs as outlined in the works of Hagedorn (2005) Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) and Vigil (2003).

My analysis and interpretation of the data will focus primarily on efforts of these gang and drug trade involved male youth to manage their perceptions of themselves as tough, respected, loyal and socially connected. My central argument is that the 21 gang and drug trade involved male youth persistently and indeed habitually engaged in violence to maintain a positive sense of self-worth and a sense of solidarity with other violent youth. These goals are rooted in the value these youth place on toughness, respect, loyalty and social connection. However, violence provides only a temporary sense of self-worth and connectedness due to ongoing challenges and provocations that the youths believe must be countered with further violence. Moreover, efforts by child protection and criminal justice authorities fail to dissuade the youth from further violence because they reproduce conditions and environments that the youth experience as provoking and requiring violence to maintain their sense of self worth and connection with other violent youth.

In addition to this Introduction the thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter Two reviews the literature on youth gangs. Chapter Three outlines the methodology and analytic framework that guided the analysis and interpretation of the data. Chapter Four summarizes who the youth are in terms of risk factors, criminal justice system

intervention, and child protection services experience, and presents findings relevant to the three research questions outlined above. Chapter Five discusses the findings in light of previous research on youth gangs, reviewed in Chapter Two. Chapter Six concludes with a discussion of the relevance of the thesis to future research on youth gangs.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Scholarship on youth gangs reviewed in this chapter focuses on operationalizations or definitions of a youth gang, risk factors associated with youth gang involvement including criminal justice intervention, the exercise of both instrumental and expressive violence by youth gang members, the relationship between pro-violent thinking or attitudes and violence and impacts of formal interventions. This literature review will identify and synthesize information relevant to my three research questions:

1. How do gang and drug trade involved male youth think about violence?
2. How does violence fit into the behavioural practices of gang and drug trade involved male youth?
3. What impact do prevention efforts by criminal justice and child protection authorities have on gang and drug-trade involved youths' violence-related thinking and acting?

OPERATIONALIZING YOUTH GANGS

At the present time, a significant concern in gang research is the absence of a clear cut and specific operational definition of the youth gang concept (Ball & Curry, 1995; Bjerregaard, 2002; Sanchez- Jankowski, 2003). For example, different arenas within society have formulated their own operational definition of what constitutes a youth gang (Ball & Curry, 1995; Chatterjee, 2006), as academia, law enforcement, society, educational institutions, and professional individuals have varying operational definitions (Ball & Curry, 1995; Chatterjee, 2006). The diversity among definitions can in part be attributed to the fact that researchers, professionals, academia, law enforcement

professionals and others have different research questions or goals that require different operational definitions. Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) states that gang researchers for the most part define gangs as groups of individuals who participate in some form of illegal activity. Bjerregaard (2002) similarly states that a vital common characteristic differentiating non harmful organizations and gangs are criminal activities.

Bjerregaard (2002) one of the few researchers to specifically focus on Canadian gangs, asserts that a major limitation to diverse youth gang operationalizations is comparison inability. This means that the absence of a universal definition impedes efforts to compare contemporary gang research with other past and current research (Bjerregaard, 2002). In relation to qualitative interview research, a solution to the definition problem is to have research participants simply state whether or not they are part of a gang (Ball & Curry, 1995; Bjerregaard, 2002). However, Bjerregaard (2002) also states that this self definitional strategy does have a potential pitfall depending on the research project. For example, a respondent's self definition of a gang may not be consistent with the research study (Bjerregaard, 2002).

Bjerregaard (2002) also points out that another issue in gang research is the researcher's inability to separate gang criminality from gang member criminality (p. 37). Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) similarly observes that it is important to differentiate between gang violence and gang member violence. For Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) gang violence refers to instrumental physical force utilized to a specified outcome that is beneficial for the gang. In contrast, gang member violence refers to acts of violence committed by gang members for their own gains, such as when violence is utilized as a survival tool in an environment characterized by pervasive violence (Sanchez- Jankowski, 2003).

CRIMINALITY, RISK FACTORS AND INSTRUMENTAL VIOLENCE

Research focused on the risk factors associated with youth gang criminality and gang formation draw on different perspectives pertaining to: The gang culture of violence (Hagedorn, 2005), urbanization (Hagedorn, 2005), socioeconomic factors (Sanchez-Jankowski, 2003), life style choice (Taylor, Freng, Esbenson, Paterson, 2008), and urban street socialization (Vigil, 2003). In terms of a gang culture of violence Hagedorn (2005) states that gang oriented rap music propagates ideals and identities linked to violence, and exposes gang members to subcultural identities that are resistant in nature and that act as a strong force against marginalization. Hagedorn (2005) also argues that gang oriented rap music influences the emergence and stabilization of a culture of resistance among youth and their gangs, which in turn glamorizes violence as a tool for resistance/ countering marginalization. In a similar light, Hagedorn (2005) also identifies urbanization due to globalization as a risk factor that increases the propensity towards gang involvement and gang formation, as youth turn to gangs because they feel gangs function as a mouth piece for marginalized groups such as themselves. This argument is consistent with the cultural criminology perspective, as this perspective also frames violence as an expressive tool for resisting domination and oppression rather than a tool for combat and criminality (Presdee, 2004).

In contrast to violence being seen as a form of resistance against marginalization and inequality, Hagedorn (2005), Sanchez- Jankowski (2003), and Vigil (2003) are in agreement that culturally influenced youth violence is not consistently expressive in nature. They argue that youth involved in the drug trade and other illegal economic

activities routinely administer violence as an instrument to stabilize and propagate this economy, when non violent instruments do not bring desired results (Hagedorn, 2005; Sanchez- Jankowski, 2003; Vigil, 2003). For instance, Vigil (2003) states that violence is utilized as a governing instrument when control is desired over illegal economies such as the drug trade. Hagedorn (2005) reiterates the importance of violence as a youth gang instrument for governing the drug trade, as the drug trade is a primary economic activity and a highly valued illegal industry in poor communities due to survival benefits. However, understandings of the relationship between the drug trade and gang membership are ambiguous due to diverse research samples, environments, and populations. For example, research examining juvenile court records in Arizona provide evidence that gang members are no more likely than non gang members to be arrested for drug related crimes (Katz, Webb & Decker, 2005), studies that have examined police data have found criminal youth gang members to be twice as more likely to be arrested for drug related crimes (Katz et al., 2005), and research studies utilizing official data have produced findings that show no link between drug crimes and gang involvement (Katz et al., 2005).

In terms of other instrumental uses for violence, Vigil (2003) argues that gangs and gang-related violence are a natural reaction to specific experiences, and operate as safeguards against dishonor and loss of face. Similarly, Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) asserts that in impoverished environments the adoption of violence is seen to be instrumental to the acquisition of power and status, which youth and adults in low socioeconomic communities lack as a result of marginalization and inequalities. Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) also argues that low socioeconomic environments have conditioned individuals to adopt a violence oriented culture for instrumental reasons, rather than for

expressive reasons linked to a culture of resistance as argued by Hagedorn (2005). With that, Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) argues that the emergence of gangs and the participation in gangs and gang criminality are a result of poverty, stemming from low wage income as well as the absence of opportunities for upward mobility due to negative social factors (Sanchez- Jankowski, 2003).

In contrast to the socio-cultural explanation advanced by Hagedorn (2005), Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) takes a strong socioeconomic approach to explain youth gang formation and criminality. The assertion that violence is an instrument that safeguards an individual from negative feelings such as loss of face, as well as an instrument that can be used to acquire status is demonstrated in this research investigation.

PRO-VIOLENT SOCIALIZATION AND VIOLENCE

The life style choice perspective advanced by Taylor, Freng, Esbensen, & Peterson (2008), identify and discuss risk factors such as criminal opportunity, participation in criminal behaviour, and the availability of drugs and alcohol as factors that instigate gang formation, criminality, and violence. Taylor et al. (2008) conclude that interventions for reducing violent youth victimization and gang formation need to address the routines of gang members relevant to opportunities for crime and the availability of drugs and alcohol. However, Vigil (2003) advances the concept of street socialization to explore youth gang delinquency and gang formation. Vigil (2003) frames street socialization as a significant factor linked to gang formation and the propensity to gang violence or criminality, and focuses on violence resulting from negative urban street socialization (2003). Similarly, Hagedorn (2005) states that youth in urban environments spend a great deal of time on the streets as a result of family dysfunction and related

problems. Consequently, they experience street socialization and adopt pro-violence attitudes and behaviours specific to street life. Merton (1938) also argues out that the social structure an individual is exposed to may foster negative or unconventional norms that can influence the ways individuals attain goals and satisfy needs. In addition, Durkheim (1982) theorizes that the thoughts and propensities individuals exhibit are not a product of their own individual choices but are rather socially constituted. Katz (1988) similarly highlights this perspective. He states that factors such as opportunities and economics are insufficient to account for criminal actions unless the thinking of those involved in crime are addressed, as well as the interpersonal relations of those who engage in crime. Vigil (2003) is also in support of this point of view as he argues that socio- psychological factors need to be explored in order to understand urban youth street delinquency.

Similarly, Karnieli-Miller & Sherer (2004) state that individuals in subcultures that hold attitudes that support violence and aggression when it comes to conflict resolution, are more likely to exert violent behaviour. Furthermore, Bevir and Rhodes (2006) assert that mentalities and practices are connected since behaviours are influenced by thinking.

INTERVENTIONS AND CANADA'S YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

Canada's Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) can be characterized as a managerial strategy of youth justice that relies on statistical assessments of risk factors associated with the likelihood of future offending to manage youth criminality (Muncie, 2005, p. 39; Muncie, 2006, p. 775). This suggests that the goal of the YCJA is more focused on managing crime than on rehabilitating or transforming criminalized youth into law abiding citizens (Armstrong, 2004; Muncie, 2006). Hannah-Moffat (2005) is among

those who note that the YCJA recognizes transformative opportunities as well as opportunities for increased control over marginalized youth and their families (see also Mann et al., 2007). Importantly, the YCJA places the onus on communities and individuals to prevent youth crime by responding to youth who are at risk of offending as well as youth who come into conflict with the law (Hartnagel, 2004; Mann et al., 2007; Muncie, 2005). This has resulted in a diverse array of institutions including the Children's Aid Society, schools and mental health agencies being identified as partners in prevention (Hartnagel, 2004; Mann et al., 2007; Muncie, 2005).

This suggests that prevention initiatives that aim to reduce gang linked violence, victimization and drug trafficking need to provide resources and supports to counteract gang subcultures, as gang related criminality tends to be a result of gang membership (Decker, Katz & Webb, 2008; Katz et al., 2005; Zhang, 1999). Bjerregaard (2003) argues that proactive solutions to the gang problem require both an understanding of the gang culture and gang formation. Similarly, Vigil (2003) states that in order to understand the origins of gang violence it is vital to analyze forces such as poverty, resistance cultures and other correlates of social marginalization – rather than individual level risks. Relevant to this argument, Muncie (2006) notes that the problem with risk assessments is that they do not address issues pertaining to unequal access to opportunity. Importantly, the YCJA relies on risk assessments in determining whether a custodial sentence should be imposed and in determining the appropriateness of restorative justice or other community-based alternatives to custody (Hartnagel, 2004; Maurutto & Hannah-Moffat, 2007). Structural level needs are not considered in these assessments; rather, a key focus is separating low risk offenders from high-risk offenders. At the same time, pre-sentencing reports are used

in determining programming needs relevant to age, gender and criminal history (Maurutto & Hannah- Moffat, 2007).

The above review is relevant to critiques of intervention programs that target risks linked to a substance abuse, lack of parental control and related individual and family level deficiencies rather than structural factors. As reiterated throughout the cited sources on interventions reviewed in this section, these and other presumably non-structural risk factors appear disproportionately present in low socioeconomic communities where youth crime is concentrated. Structural and cultural factors must therefore be addressed in youth justice affiliated gang-prevention and gang-intervention efforts.

CONCLUSION

As the above review of youth gang scholarship demonstrates, the youth gang phenomenon is a complex phenomenon that cannot be easily studied, analyzed, and comprehended. The ambiguity surrounding youth gang definitions and the difficulty in separating gang and gang member violence or criminality highlights the diverse and multilayered characteristics of youth gangs and the extent to which context matters in research. It is important, therefore, to address whether and how youth gang involvement is linked to diverse influences including family influences, peer pressure, pre-existing social bonds, alcohol and drug abuse and involvement with formal intervention services.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis is based on secondary data analysis of a sub-set of data from a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council funded study on youth violence, and intervention initiatives aimed at addressing youth violence under the Youth Criminal Justice Act conducted by University of Windsor professors Dr. Ruth Mann and Dr. Charlene Senn between 2004 and 2007. Mann and Senn conducted in-depth semi-structured active interviews with 46 professionals and 84 youth recruited in youth correctional facilities, community agencies, and schools in an Ontario community (see Mann et al., 2007). The interviews explored the ways youth violence was addressed by intervention partners and how youth themselves experienced both the problem of youth violence and efforts by criminal justice and other authorities to intervene. The semi-structured interview guide included a number of substantive prompts relevant to the broad issues of how youth experienced and viewed youth violence. One of these was a prompt on whether youth gangs are relevant to the issue of youth violence. It was in this context that the 21 male youth whose transcripts I analyzed disclosed their previous or current gang involvement.

The University of Windsor Research Ethics Board cleared my secondary data analysis of the 21 interviews on the condition that youth identifiers, personal characteristics and specific areas of recruitment would remain confidential. This condition was facilitated as the 21 interview transcripts I received did not contain personal identifiers. In the transcripts that constitute my data, pseudonyms are used for all youth participants, communities, streets, schools, friends, siblings, family members, and youth correctional facilities.

SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

A secondary data analysis is a research strategy that re-analyzes data collected from another research study, for the purposes of conducting a research investigation different to that of study in which the data was taken from although related to the concepts of the original study (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002, p. 270- 271). This results in original data becoming the source of information that leads to new research questions being answered (Corti & Bishop, 2005, Sec. 4.3). The benefits of a secondary data analysis are cost efficiency (Corti & Bishop, 2005, Sec. 4.0) and time efficiency (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002, p. 271) as a researcher does not have to fund a new research study, or commit to a long project that will explore concepts similar to a previous study.

Limitations of a secondary data analysis are rooted in the absence of contextualization (Corti & Bishop, 2005, Sec. 5.3; van den Berg, 2005, Sec. 4.0). Researchers reanalyzing data will lack contextual knowledge related to the atmosphere of the interview setting, the mood of the respondent (Corti & Bishop, 2005, Sec. 5.3), the characteristics of the respondents, and the social context respondents were embedded in (Van den Berg, 2005, Sec. 4.0, 5.0). These limitations were minimized in my research since each interview transcript contained notes that documented who conducted the interview – namely a female or male graduate student research assistant or the principle researcher; whether the interview was conducted in a youth correctional facility or high school; the characteristics of the youth interviewed and their demeanor throughout the interview process. Therefore, I was able to counter many of the contextual concerns associated with a secondary data analysis.

PARADIGMATIC STANCE

The constructionist paradigm supports ontological relativism, which asserts that people have multiple realities or ways of understanding that are constructed or formed through their experiences and social context (Guba & Lincoln, 2004, 110- 113). The term construction refers to realities or ways of understanding that are formed through social and experiential influences (Guba & Lincoln, 2004, pp. 110- 113). Guba and Lincoln (2004) discuss the importance of drawing out constructions or ways of understanding through interactive communication between the researcher and the participant (p. 111). Guba and Lincoln (2004) state that under the constructionist paradigm the purpose behind research is to understand and re- organize the constructions conveyed by respondents, in order to identify and discuss commonalities (pp. 111, 113).

Constructionist Paradigm and Active Interviewing

This constructionist paradigm underpins the active interview strategy that Mann and Senn employed in their study. This interview strategy frames the interview as a collaborative data gathering interaction, and conversation styled communicative processes between the researcher and the respondent (Holstein & Gurbrium, 1995, p. 2, 4, 14, 28, 37). This strategy also frames the respondent as a source of topic relevant knowledge due to their specific experiences (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 30- 31).

The main goal of the active interview is not to have respondents answer standardized questions for the purposes of data collection; rather it is to foster an understanding of a topic under study by illuminating a respondent's stories or experiences (Holstein & Gurbrium, 1995). Therefore, the active interview strategy teases out a respondent's experiential knowledge and understandings that are relevant to a research

topic through researcher- respondent interaction and collaboration (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

DEDUCTIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The thesis attempts to construct an understanding of how violence fits into the 21 interviewed youths' efforts to self-govern, as defined by Hunt & Wickham (1994), using their four principles of governance as sensitizing constructs. Hunt and Wickham use the construct governance to refer to activities and discourses that various actors use in their effort to manage or control phenomenon, including efforts by individuals to manage or control their own emotions and behaviours (Hunt & Wickham, 1994, p. 78). Importantly, individuals draw upon existing knowledge on how to think, feel and act in all self-governing activities (Hunt & Wickham, 1994, p. 78). Otherwise stated, there is an intimate relationship between governance efforts of states and various civil society agencies to manage or shape the behaviour of individuals, and efforts by individuals to manage their own thinking, feeling and action (Hunt & Wickham, 1994). As Hunt and Wickham state, 'governing weaves a complex web' (1994, p. 79).

The four principles of governance outlined by Hunt and Wickham (1994, p. 79-97) are: 1) the incomplete or temporary nature of governance including self-governance; 2) the relevance of power and therefore resistance to efforts to govern; 3) the salience of 'already existing' knowledge in the form of ways of thinking and ways of acting to governance; and 4) the salience of social binding or solidarity – either with pro-social or with anti-social others (pp. 79-97). These four principles were utilized as sensitizing constructs in my deductive thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis entails identifying research specific themes or patterns with the aim of addressing one or more research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79- 80, 82). Themes are abstract ideas (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 275) that highlight significant aspects of the research data being analyzed while illuminating significant patterns within research data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79- 80, 82). A deductive strategy approaches data from a specific theory, perspective or framework (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002, p. 22). In this thesis, this deductive analytic strategy allowed for a focused and detailed thematic analysis relevant to self-governance and the four governance principles postulated by Hunt and Wickham (1994).

Coding

Coding is a method of analysis that involves labeling data in order to organize or categorize data for the purposes of illuminating themes (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002, p. 490; Fink, 2000, Sec. 2.5). In this research I coded the 21 interview transcripts in relation to the four governance principles outlined above as follows:

Principle #1: Incompleteness. This principle holds that governance and therefore self governance is always attempted and is always incomplete, and as a result governance is never fully successful or permanently achieved (Hunt and Wickham, 1994, pp. 79-80, 94). Therefore, governance is an ongoing process. Principle #1 lead me to explore how efforts by the 21 youths to manage their sense of themselves as tough, respected, loyal and socially connected are linked to their repeated participation in violence.

Principles #2: Power and Resistance: This principle recognizes that governance is inherently relational and social relations are relations of power and resistance to power, including power exerted by authorities, peers, and selves. Principle #2 led me to explore

how the 21 male youth viewed efforts by criminal justice and child protection authorities to influence them to reject violence.

Principle #3: Knowledge. This principle states that that already existing knowledge is always linked to governance. This ‘always-already available’ (Hunt & Wickham, 1994, p. 93) knowledge determines the objects of governance and therefore self-governance, including feelings, values, and beliefs relevant to action including crime and violence, and also how action, in this case violence, will be enacted (i.e., verbally, physically, sexually, with or without weapons, one-on-one, in the form of ‘jumping’, etc.) (pp. 87- 92). Principle #3 led me to explore ways of thinking, feeling and acting in the narratives of violence that the 21 youth participated in and witnessed, and also ways of thinking, feeling and acting in their narratives of criminal justice system, child protection and other intervention or prevention experiences.

Principle #4: Social Binding. This principle states that all forms of governance are social in that they are connected to and are part of society (Hunt and Wickham, 1994, p. 93). Therefore, governance works to bind individuals and organizations together, including criminal organizations (Hunt and Wickham, 1994, p. 95). Principle #4 led me to explore the ways violence contributed to these youths’ feelings of social connectedness or solidarity with other violent peers.

I coded the data by organizing the data into a six column coding sheet. Excerpts and paraphrases from the data were placed in multiple columns when warranted:

1. Column #1: “Interview”. This column contained the transcribed word-for-word interview.

2. Column #2: “Context”. This column contained contextual information on violent interactions, including whether violence was instrumental or expressive.
3. Column #3: “Power” and therefore “Resistance”. This column documented efforts and pressures exerted by authorities and peers to shape the thinking and behaviour of the interviewed youth, as well as the youths’ responses to these efforts.
4. Column # 4: “Knowledge”. This column documented the reasoning and techniques that the youth drew upon to construct and manage a sense of themselves as worthy – resulting in four key themes, the themes of toughness, respect, loyalty and social connectedness.
5. Column #5: “Incompleteness”. This column documented instances of perceived threats and provocations that these 21 youth described as requiring their recurring participation in violence to maintain or assert a sense of self as tough, respected, loyal and connected.
6. Column #6: “Social binding”. This column documented instances in which youth described feelings of or threats to themselves as connected to other violent youth and to society at large.

Using this strategy I documented patterns, ideas, understandings, and experiences narrated by the 21 youth. I organized the data in the form of working tables that allowed me to document, and organize the number of instances recurring behaviours and ways of thinking about violence and the self were discussed. I also used word searches to count and track instances of violent behaviours and violent thinking associated with instances of

violence across the data set (see Ryan & Bernard, 2003). I used these tables to track whether violent incidents were primarily instrumental, which is to say goal oriented, or expressive, and to track reasons for the violence. Word count analysis in conjunction with the deductively anchored thematic analysis contributed to my identification of reoccurring patterns and themes linked to ways of thinking and acting, and to these youths' persistent commitment to values of toughness, respect, loyalty and connectedness.

Finally, throughout the coding process, I re-read interview transcripts and made notes on my observations – known as 'memoing', an analytic process that documents themes and understandings linked to the data, and uncovers connections among codes and organizes information (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2002, p. 494- 495).

CONCLUSION

My analysis of the interview data draws on principles of governance outlined in Hunt and Wickham (1994). I use Hunt and Wickham's principles on how governance and therefore self-governance operates as sensitizing constructs to make sense of how the 21 youth view and feel about violent practices, and how their views and feelings about themselves as participants in violence contribute to their persistent engagement in violence. My interpretation of the findings draws on existing literature on youth gangs, reviewed in Chapter Two. In particular it draws on previous research and theory on the relevance of status and solidarity to youth gangs as outlined in the works of Hagedorn (2005) Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) and Vigil (2003).

My analysis and interpretation of the data will focus primarily on efforts of these gang and drug trade involved male youth to manage their perceptions of themselves as tough, respected, loyal and socially connected. My central argument is that the 21 gang

and drug trade involved male youth repeatedly engaged in violence to maintain a positive sense of self-worth and a sense of solidarity with other violent youth. These goals are rooted in the value these youth place on toughness, respect, loyalty and social connection. However, violence provides only a temporary sense of self-worth and connectedness due to ongoing challenges and provocations that the youths believe must be countered with further violence. Moreover, efforts by child protection and criminal justice authorities fail to dissuade the youth from further violence because they reproduce conditions and environments that the youth experience as provoking and requiring violence.

Following this introduction the thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter Two reviews the literature on youth gangs. Chapter Three outlines the methodology and analytic framework that guided the analysis and interpretation of the data. Chapter Four summarizes who the youth are in terms of risk factors, criminal justice system intervention, and child protection services experience, and presents findings relevant to the three research questions outlined above. Chapter Five discusses the findings in light of previous research on youth gangs, reviewed in Chapter Two. Chapter Six concludes with a discussion of the relevance of the thesis to future research on youth gangs.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings relevant to the 21 gang and drug trade involved male youths' recurring involvement in violence, and addresses my research questions and my central argument. I have addressed and explored both these through my analysis of the descriptions, stories and explanations for violence conveyed through the 21 interview transcripts, which ranged from 21 pages to 61 pages in length. Each transcript contained research notes that summarized information on the interview encounter, and descriptive data on the characteristics of the youth as evidenced in the interview transcripts and in the youth justice files that Mann and Senn reviewed and that I did not have access to. In this Chapter I describe the descriptive data on the 21 youth, and present my findings in relation to the principles of governance outlined in Chapter Three and published research on youth gangs reviewed in Chapter Two.

THE YOUTH

The 21 youth included in the data set all self-identified as having previously or currently participated in youth gang activities, however only 15 self-identified as having participated in the drug trade. These 21 youth did not participate in a single youth gang; and the majority were interviewed in a youth custody facility (n = 16) and came from communities across the province.

The youth ranged from 16 to 19 years of age (6 age 16, 8 age 17, and 7 age 18-19). The majority are Caucasian Canadian (n = 16), while three identified as African-Canadian and two as Aboriginal. All but two disclosed criminal justice system involvement. The majority (n = 15) had convictions or faced charges for serious assault and/or weapons offences, typically in addition to numerous minor assault charges,

charges for offences against property and breaches (n = 16). Three additionally had convictions or charges for making a death threat or for attempting, assisting in or committing a homicide. Eight had resisted arrest, and six had 'gone AWOL' from an open custody youth facility. Eleven had faced repeated criminal justice system involvement since age 12 or younger. Ten identified one or more family member with a criminal justice record, four of the early onset offenders (age 12 onset or younger) were among these 10.

In addition, 17 of the 21 youth reported Children's Aid Society (CAS) involvement, including four who were Crown Wards. Ten disclosed that they had been violent in a youth justice, CAS or mental health facility, and 12 had been expelled or suspended from school for fighting. Ten had diagnosed mental health problems, typically depression. Nearly all (n = 20) reported that they used or abused alcohol or drugs, and five described their experiences with residential, community-based and/or youth justice substance abuse interventions. Sixteen reported participating in community based anger management programs, 12 of whom additionally participated in anger management and moral reasoning programs while in youth custody.

THE VIOLENCE NARRATIVES

In this section I present the findings in relation to the themes and patterns identified through my deductive thematic analysis, word counts and memoing. Again, my three research questions are:

1. How do gang and drug trade involved male youth think about violence?
2. How does violence fit into the behavioural practices of gang and drug trade involved male youth?

3. What impact do prevention efforts by criminal justice and child protection authorities have on gang and drug-trade involved youths' violence-related thinking and acting?

My central argument is that the 21 gang and drug trade involved male youth persistently engaged in violence to maintain a positive sense of self-worth and to maintain, establish or re-establish a sense of social connection or solidarity with other pro-violent youth. These aims are rooted in the constellation of values that guide these youths' actions, namely the values of toughness, respect, loyalty and connectedness. However, violence only temporarily provides youth with a sense of positive self worth and social connection, as they must constantly or recurrently prove to themselves and others that they are tough, respected, loyal and connected. Moreover, efforts by child protection and criminal justice authorities fail to dissuade the youths from further violence because they tend to reproduce conditions that provoke and, in the view of the youths, necessitate violence.

CATEGORIZING VIOLENT INSTANCES

The 21 youths provided multiple accounts of violent instances, that is, episodes or occurrences of physical violence that they had participated in, witnessed or knew about. In total these youth described 505 instances of violence. Of these, 378 are categorized along an instrumental and expressive continuum of violence based on the contextual information and discussion provided by youth. The remaining instances are not categorized due to a lack of contextual information and description. It is important to point out that reasons youth provided for the 378 instances of violence are not mutually exclusive.

Table I (Appendix A) summarizes my coding of the 378 instances into three overlapping categories. The first category – expressive – captures 120 violent instances that the youths identified as caused by alcohol or drug abuse, a bad mood, anger, frustration, hatred or jealousy in which there is no indication of an individual level or group level aim or goal. The second and largest category – instrumental – captures 225 violent instances associated with gang or criminal activities and violence aimed at personal gain, whether material or emotional. That is, the instrumental category includes violent instances aimed at fostering a positive sense of self worth and a sense of solidarity with other youth. That is, it includes violence aimed at defending or displaying values that the youth associate with these positive feelings – specifically the values of toughness, respect, loyalty and social connectedness. In categorizing values-related instances as instrumental I draw upon social psychology, which defines values as subjective judgments on the importance of something that influence choices or decisions (<http://www.psychologyandsociety.com/valuesdefinition.html>). Finally, the third category – mixed – captures 33 violent incidents associated with alcohol, drugs or negative emotions in which an aim or intent is identified – for example to counter boredom, for fun, to vent anger over a perceived affront, and lastly to display commitment to values that enhance self esteem and connectedness.

Table II (Appendix A) summarizes the ways the youths' identified reasons for violence fit with their multiple and overlapping perspectives on the achieved or intended effects of violence. As this table demonstrates, reasons matter little in terms of the likelihood of youth coming into conflict with formal interventions, which include criminal justice as well as community-based, school-based, CAS and mental health programs and services (73 instances). However, the alcohol, drug and mood related

reasons categorized as expressive or mixed are more consistently associated with feelings of regret, depression and hopelessness (49 instances). In contrast, positive effects in terms of self worth or self-esteem (164 instances) and connection with valued others (52 instances) are dramatically more likely to be associated with gang or crime related and values-related violence.

Expressive Violence

Accounts of violence categorized as predominantly expressive include occurrences associated with alcohol use, drug use, anger, frustration or jealousy (n=120). As demonstrated in the excerpts below, the youths did not associate these incidents with a predetermined purpose or intention, though in some instances being “under the influence” lead to criminal activities.

JETT: Yes, cause my sister's boyfriend was pissing me off, trying to say that he was gonna rap me up, so I put a knife to his neck.

KEN: They just uh, start trying them out from other people that suggest it [doing drugs] or whatever, or come around with it, and say hey man, let's do this and -- they start doing it and just rages them up.

NELSON: Yeah, that's [alcohol and drugs] a huge factor because we don't, we don't think of things. ... we get under the influence of like, you know, coke or X or drinking. You know, we're totally different people. ... I'm in here for you know, armed robbery, so I was out, I was all under the influence of alcohol and ecstasy I never would have thought of picking up a gun and putting it in somebody's head.

Instrumental Violence

The second and largest category captures violence associated with gang and crime related activity and violence associated with efforts to assert or defend a sense of the self or the gang as tough, respect worthy, loyal and connected, as discussed above (n = 225)

The first set of quotes below frame violence as necessary to get paid or to send a message to anyone who might consider attempting a future rip off:

TODD: People getting spotted drugs and then they don't pay the money for em and then they take off and they don't know where they got the drugs and they don't know who I am or don't know if I got money or not so I will just take off and rip them off. It never works. They're always gonna get caught. ... It's a drug deal so people get beat down for it.

MARTIN: Yeah, or somebody got ripped off for drugs, then they have to go beat em up for drugs. You know, take all their money back and then they'll go get their friends, and then it just comes in to a big, big, you know.

BILL: Like, this group of guys think they're real hard. They'll be like, okay, we'll do this then; this like, go like take them you know. And just take them out. Get their money and get their, you know. ... it works that way, yeah, it works that way.

The above excerpts imply that by engaging in violence is expected in these circumstances, and that in engaging in violence the youth are establishing a sense of solidarity through peer involvement by providing backup. At the same time they reinforce their own sense of self- esteem by doing what needs to be done without backing away. This is to say, gang-related and values-related reasons for violence overlap.

Mixed Violence

As outlined above, violence categorized as mixed includes incidents the youths described as stemming from alcohol and drug abuse or from negative emotions in which boredom, desire for fun or anger over a perceived affront played a role. This mixed variety of violence is demonstrated in the excerpts of DEREK and RAY. As RAY makes explicit – the results can be deadly:

DEREK: Because I mean just some people they say oh, I drink whiskey this and then I'll go out and smash somebody and save a buck because I'm pretty straight with vodka and then just by thinking that stuff happens and sometimes it is true, you know? ... And then when you get a whole bunch of

drunk people, a whole bunch of drunk guys walking on the streets, then it gets pretty crazy, so. ... Well it's also their idea of fun man.

RAY: [M]y friend, uh, last year he got killed ... Uh the guy and his girl was having a, an argument and they started making up. And my friend ... he rolls down the window and he's like "oh yeah, do it right here in front of everybody". And the guy got angry. So my friend ... he got out of the car and started beating up the guy. ...

He [*the other guy*] thought "okay, he just went ahead and made fun of my girl. He beat me up in front of my girl. Made me look bad. Okay he's gonna get it." So he goes, he went back, got a knife, went back to the car. My friend was eating a burger. Stabbed him. My friend lost his life because my friend wouldn't keep his mouth shut. And my friend lost his life because some guy couldn't shrug it off and say, "You know what, okay, the guy's being, you know an ass."

VALUES AND VIOLENCE

As stated above, a significant proportion of violent instances were associated with feelings of positive self esteem and connectedness with valued others, and these effects were associated with four key values – specifically the values of toughness, respect, loyalty and social connectedness. These four values operate as subjective judgments that serve as principles that significantly influence choices or decisions on how to respond to situations, and in particular the decision to respond violently. The importance placed on these values enabled these youth to foster a positive sense of self and sense of solidarity when they asserted or defended these values.

In addition, the reliance on violence to foster a positive sense of self-worth and a sense of solidarity coincides with an unwillingness to embrace compromise, consider verbal conflict resolution techniques and walk away from a conflict. It is clear that these values are strong motivational factors that have influenced and sustained the repeated utilization of instrumental violence among these 21 youth. That is, these youths frame violence as the only viable means for producing feelings of toughness, commanding

respect or punishing disrespect, proving loyalty, and establishing or re-establishing connectedness with other violent or criminally involved peers. Excerpts from the interviews with PHILLIP and ELLIOT explicitly underscore the persistent and even habitual reliance on violence described by these 21 youth.

PHILLIP: I'm going through counselling right now and that's what they're telling me, you know. If you get into a conflict try and talk it over or walk away. No, all that does is piss the person off more. You don't want to do that. Seriously, it does not work. I tried it, it does not work. I tried it with my mother, when I argue with her, I walk away. Oh my god, I still never live that down. It, it does not work. Whether in violence, whether it is at school. Just being friends (inaudible) you walk away, it doesn't matter, they don't like it. You walk away, talk about it.

ELLIOTT: There's going to be a fight everyday. You know what I mean. Go to how it just works. I don't know. It's an ongoing problem to me, you know what I mean, it will never, it will never stop, you know. When I get out, I ain't, like no matter what, it's not going to change me ... because I, you have to be unless, I don't know. Like what am I going to do, just go out and be a different person and then you know some people walk all over me and just going to be like "alright, that's cool" you know, keep going.

Toughness

The following excerpts exemplify instances of violence associated with efforts to appear or to feel tough. STANLEY and CHASE are among those who attest to value of toughness that runs through the 21 narratives. Indeed the construct “tough” recurs 130 times in the 21 narratives – attesting to the key importance of this value to these youth.

STANLEY: I think that to some extent, I think people want to make like an image for themselves or something, you know, um, I know for guys, they all want to be the toughest.

CHASE: Well, I think guys are more violent, just because they got the whole gang and the pride thing too. They don't want people showing like belittling them or anything like that, showing that they're not as strong as what they think they are. That's how a lot of fights start and stuff like that.

Respect

JETT and IVAN exemplify the value the youth place on respect, the second key value that runs through the 21 narrative data-set. This construct recurs 49 times in the 21 interviews.

JETT: I just hit him twice in the back of the head. ... Yeah they, she [youth custody staff] was telling me to stop, and I was like, "No." I don't stop for nobody like that. When someone disrespects me, then I'm going to deal with it straight away, like right away.

IVAN: If I was getting picked on, I'd have to fight. ... The bullies'll think different. Even if they do get beat up, the bullies'll think different (inaudible) just leave him alone and .. probably get respect.

Loyalty

SAM and JETT exemplify the value the 21 youth place on loyalty, including the point that loyalty is earned (n = 47 of the 21 youth use 'loyalty' or a related construct during the interview):

SAM: I don't know, I protect my friends most of the time. And, if I'm there, I'm there, I guess. Or jump in if my friend's getting jumped, obviously.

JETT: And like, I don't know, for me though I wouldn't be friends with someone if they bitched down or something like, if someone's like fighting them. And they're getting their ass beat, I'm not even gonna help em if they're not even fighting back or whatever. ... Yeah, cause if not, they're not really like protecting themselves or anything like. They're not, how would I expect them to even protect me if I was in a fight?

Connectedness

NEIL and BILL exemplify the value the youth place on connection with other violent peers, the fourth key value that runs through the data-set, with connection to others explicitly stated or implied 49 times across the interviews NEIL demonstrates the importance of having a close network of peers or friends, and the salience of a pre-existent social bond to group violence. His use of the term 'determined' demonstrates the

salience of a pre- existent social bond that internally influences the youth to behave violently, as opposed to peer pressure that serves as an external influence. In contrast, BILL describes using violence for the purposes of establishing and of re-establishing connections. NEILSON speaks to the importance of this while in custody. Together, these excerpts speak to the youths' persistent reliance on violent solutions and to their common belief that violence is the only tool capable of establishing feelings of peer connectedness.

NEIL: Yeah, like, if they can get away, maybe they have a bigger crew than me or whatever, but if not, then, they're going to get beat up. ...They have more boys or whatever like. I, I have a, a lot of close friends. But, but like, if it comes down to it, if they have more friends, basically they have more backup. ... Cause as soon as you get in a group you get more like determined. Because there's all like, all your close buddies are doing it. So as soon as your buddy throws a punch, you're going to throw a punch. Then everyone else throws a punch.

NELSON: I was in there [secure custody] with a couple guys from this gang for attempted murder and, uh, you know, we stick together. You walk in there and are like: "I'm going to, you know, I can already tell I don't like this guy." Like alright, you know. I'm going to: "You're going to do this and you know we've got your back."

BILL: Yeah. I m-, like, and I did good, you know for say two months, three months, four months. But then, I didn't, I was stuck with that loneliness again, and I let it get to me you know, like oh what am I going to do like, frig I'm bored, you know. I let it get to me." (*I: Uh huh, (laughs)*). So like I, I did it in the wrong way, you know what I mean. But now, obviously I'm smart enough, I'm not gonna do that, like that, the --"

EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE

Youths' persistent engagement in violence has multiple and overlapping effects. These include involvement with the youth justice system and other formal interventions, reported by all 21 youth. More important, it could be argued, are the ways violence impacts youths' views and feelings about themselves and what they "know" other youth will think about them and act towards them.

Positive Self-Worth

Violence produces rewards in the form of positive self-worth or self esteem, especially evident in violence categorized as instrumental, as noted above. The following excerpt from the interview with DREW demonstrates that youth persist in violence to a large degree because it pays off in terms of self-worth or self-esteem. As evidenced in previous excerpts, this payoff is associated with the fact that instrumental violence displays and proves the cherished values of toughness, respect, loyalty and connectedness:

DREW: Months. Every single day. Every single day for like four months straight. The same person did the same things, made fun of them constantly, spread rumours about them. And it just got, the one day they were just like, "Fuck it, I don't care. I don't care what happens, I'm sick of this, I'm not letting them do this to me anymore." And beat the living crap out of the person.

Social Connection

Throughout the above excerpts the youths repeatedly conveyed the idea that pre-existing social bonds with other violent youth reinforced their involvement in both one-on-one fights and group fights. The latter is linked to the sense of togetherness and friendship that existed among peers or group members prior to a fight. Many of the youth also reported joining a one-on-one fight or a group fight simply because their friends were fighting. This was in part because providing protection and backup was something they themselves expected to receive, whether the violence was related to drug-trade or other gang activities, or otherwise. This attests to the ongoing influence of a pre-existing social bond in an environment in which violence is common and in which youth engage in violence for the purposes of demonstrating loyalty and friendship, which is to say

connection. This is to say, social connectedness appears to operate both as a core value that fosters violence and as an impact or effect of violence.

ROGER: Well cause they – it's all your buddies you know, they all think they're gangsters you know, so you wanna be, they wanna be like that so. They just, they want to do what they're friends do so.

With respect to peer pressure, the youth framed peer pressure in the form of ongoing verbal directives as necessitating violence, and associated three main consequences with a refusal or inability to conform with peer pressure. The first relates to the acquisition of negative labels that would result in other youth holding them in disregard (i.e., “bitch” or “pussy” (someone who’s not a man), “bird” (someone who rats or snitches), “goof” (someone who molests children) and so forth), exemplified in another excerpt from the interview with NELSON:

NELSON: I was in there ... “You're going to do this and you know we've got your back.” And from there it's, even if you say you don't want to, you know. You're going to get in. It's going to get peer pressured even more, you know: “You're a bird, you're a goof, you're, you're a bitch, you can't do this.”

Second is that the youth believed they would not receive protection if they got into a fight and needed help, exemplified in an excerpt from the interview with JETT excerpted above in the example for “loyalty”.

Finally, the youth perceived there was a greater likelihood that they would be beaten if they did not maintain violent connections and exhibit the values deemed necessary, exemplified in the following excerpt from the interview with CHASE.

CHASE: Yeah, same like go fight that person or whatever. ... Like somebody soldiers you, which tells you to go fight somebody, that happens a lot in secure custody too. You just like get muscled into going and beating somebody up or whatever. I see that a lot there too.

The youth also talked about non-verbal peer pressure. This was implicit in descriptions on how a strong desire to hang out with a group or gang influenced

engagement in violent actions. That is, youth engage in violence or other criminal acts so as to be accepted by a group or gang they desired to be part of. It is important to emphasise that the belief or knowledge that behaving violently or in otherwise “bad” ways would lead to being accepted or included. This is exemplified in the following excerpt from the interview with SIMON:

SIMON: Uh. Like um I kinda was, I kinda got in trouble, broke the law, I guess um. Uh {sigh} guess, I'm hanging out the back baddest, bad, of the baddest, the baddest crowds. ... I'll follow on towards their behaviour, so. And I'll just go along with it so. That's how it usually all happens and like.

The above examples point to the role of social bonds in a context in which pre-existent, direct and implicit pressure from other youths reinforce values that call for violent actions. Thus, the youth accept and reproduce values that foster violence, “knowing” that violence is the only viable way to defend themselves as worthy of respect, loyalty and connectedness. In essence, these youth view violence as being capable of binding individuals together.

Regret, Depression, Hopelessness

The interviews attest to the fact that youth are also aware that violence has negative impacts. Specifically, in the narratives youth express feelings of regret, depression and hopelessness as a consequence of their past or likely future participation in violence. As discussed above, alcohol and drug related violence was most strongly associated with these negative emotions, while gang and crime related violence and violence associated with toughness, respect, loyalty and connectedness were most commonly associated with positive self-feelings.

The following excerpts from interviews with MARTIN, KEVIN and BILL demonstrate that how violence associated with alcohol and drug abuse and disrupted peer

relations is associated with negative self feelings of regret depression and hopelessness, and also boredom and loneliness:

MARTIN: I was drunk. I was drinking and then it, I, I wasn't thinking straight. Cause I know if I wasn't drinking I wouldn't have did that. I, I'm a lot smarter than that. And I wouldn't have did that ... I mean, that's why, when I get out, I'll get like drug counselling, alcohol counselling, anger management, you know. Yeah I want all that. So I don't end up putting myself back in that position.

KEVIN: She, I don't even want to talk about that. (I: Okay.) She took it rough man. She, she, she just hates when I got in trouble. (I: Sure.) Like me, I feel sorry for her now, cause all the shit that happens to my house, our old house. Like makes me just wanna like, kill somebody. Like you can't, you can't. I don't even live there and you still got, fucked with (inaudible), you know, and I don't (inaudable).

BILL: I got bored again. ... I didn't, I was stuck with that loneliness again, and I let it get to me you know, like oh what am I going to do like, frig I'm bored, you know. I let it get to me.... It was, it was different you know, being with like new people. It's different, complicated.

The above excerpts speak to the interpenetration of values associated with violence, the intended or experienced positive feelings of successful engagement in violence, and the negative consequences of not participating in violence or attempting to desist from violence. These findings are important to the issue of prevention.

PREVENTION NARRATIVES

As noted at the beginning of this Chapter, the 21 youths reported extensive experience with various prevention agencies and programs, including the youth justice system, the CAS and the children's mental health and substance abuse services. These programs and services commonly work in cooperation with the youth justice system, especially under the YCJA (see Mann et al., 2007). The 21 youths' extensive exposure to this range of formal interventions had not prevented persistent and repeat participation in violence and other criminal activities or repeat criminal justice charges. This section

focuses on the youths' perspectives on how and why efforts by child protection and criminal justice authorities had failed to dissuade them from further violence. As I will demonstrate, these interventions fail primarily because, in the view of the youths, they reproduce conditions that provoke and necessitate violence.

Children's Aid Society (CAS)

In Ontario the Children's Aid Society (CAS) is the authority responsible for child protection. As stated in the first section of this Chapter, 17 of the 21 youth reported CAS involvement and four self-identified as Crown Wards (wards of the state). Ten of these 17 youth framed their involvement with CAS as a negative experience, three framed their involvement as a positive or interesting experience and the remaining four passed over or avoided discussing the CAS. The youth who were critical of their CAS experiences blamed the CAS for taking them far away from their families, for indirectly influencing criminal behaviours that made their situation worse, and for fostering a social setting and atmosphere that tackled violence or problem behaviours through discipline and control tactics.

Excerpts from the interviews with ELLIOT and NEIL exemplify the youths' views on why and how the CAS did not benefit them.

ELLIOTT: Cause all that Children's Aid did to me is just bring me to a group home and that's made it worse. And it just made me just say "fuck you all". Just angered, full of anger.

NEIL: I stopped doing drugs but then I got in CAS. I was on the corner of these two streets, and if you're not familiar with that area, that's all prostitution and drug dealing and stuff. So, I was on the corner of that, and you start talking to people in your neighbourhood and then one thing leads to another, start doing drugs again.

Overall, in these youths views the CAS contributes to problems related to their recurring participation in violence and other crime. It is noteworthy that this view was

also held by a youth who recognized a need for the CAS for children and youth whose parents did not want them:

CHASE: Yeah, I used to be in CAS too when I was younger... I didn't like it. I just wanted to be at home. ... if you don't have a family or your family doesn't want you I think it's really good. Because they can help kids out so they don't grow up having a hard life. Right, so they go get the proper support or whatever, that they need.

Youth Justice - Custody

It is important to highlight that though the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) which came into effect in 2003 reduced the likelihood a youth would be sentenced to custody or serve time in pre-trial detention, this legislation reserves custody and detention for youth found guilty or charged with serious violent offences (Mann et al., 2007). As stated at the beginning of this Chapter, all but two the 21 youth whose narratives are analyzed in this thesis had convictions or faced charges for violence and the vast majority had convictions and/or faced charges for serious assaults and/or weapons offences up to and including murder (n = 15). Typically serious convictions and charges were in addition to numerous minor assault charges, property offences and breaches (n = 16) Moreover, many of the interviewed youth had served time under the previous Young Offenders Act (YOA). Moreover, 11 of the 21 youth had experienced repeated criminal justice system involvements since age 12 or younger.

Multiple and repeat experiences with the youth justice system generally and youth custody in particular influenced these youth to implicitly and explicitly frame custody as a non-beneficial intervention, that many suggested actually prevented them from turning away both from the values that foster violence and from violence itself. This is to say, the use of custody as a prevention strategy, as intended under the YCJA (Mann et al., 2007), contributes to the persistence of pro-violent values and violent actions by reproducing

situations and the “mentality” that fosters violence. The following excerpt from NELSON and ROGER makes this explicit – reputations must be protected, whether on the street or in youth custody:

NELSON: I was in there with a couple guys from this gang for attempted murder and, uh, you know, we stick together. ... You're going to get in, it's going to get peer pressured even more, you know? You're a bird, you're a goof, you're, you're a bitch, you can't do this. (I: Yeah.) So plus you just try to you know, be cool too.

ROGER: It's basically the same as in the community but in a place like secure custody, or whatever or the other secure centre, or whatever, the mentality is like a jail mentality. It's starten to hit the street ... there's always gonna be people that are, that are like that and have that mentality. They're gonna be the ones goin' back to jail all the time.

Violence Reinforcement

As demonstrated above, the youths exercised violence in an attempt to display and feel tough, respected, loyal, and connected. These values anchored their efforts to experience positive self-worth and connection with peers who shared these values. However, since permanent control over actions and feelings is impossible (Hunt & Wickham, 1994), attempts to establish a positive sense of self through violence must be repeated every time the positive sense of self that depends upon putting these values into action is challenged. That is, the youths will likely continue to persistently engage in violence until and unless they adopt a values constellation that prioritizes an alternative to toughness.

Two reasons for why violence produces only temporary feelings of self worth are that confrontations and circumstances recurrently provide new opportunities for the youth to prove toughness and loyalty, and the fact that violence does not provide immunity against these threats or challenges. The point I would like to emphasis is the youth are unable to establish permanent control over their sense of positive self worth and

connectedness with other violent peers through violence. As long as the values constellation of toughness, respect, loyalty and connectedness to other violent youth prevails, violence is likely to recur.

The following excerpt from interview the interview with ELLIOTT illustrates the importance of recurring confrontations that, in the views of the youth, necessitate violence.

ELLIOTT: There's going to be a fight everyday. You know what I mean. Go to how it just works. ... It will never, it will never stop, you know. When I get out, I ain't, like no matter what, it's not going to change me, like. ... I don't want to, but, you know what I mean. Like how, like my older brother got stabbed in the neck in a bar fight.

Elliot's observation is consistent with the point, discussed above, that violence produces feelings of regret due to its negative impacts in terms of criminal justice system involvement. This suggests that over time youth become more amenable to alternative values constellations and actions. Excerpts from interviews with COLIN and MARTIN gave voice to these sentiments.

COLIN: Now I just like think, I'm eighteen now and I'm just like ain't worth it like some would like "oh let's fight" or whatever. It's not even worth it. I'll just turn away cause I don't feel like going no like pen or like an adult records. It just messed me right up. ... Yeah it took me a long time to realize like it ain't even worth it though.

MARTIN: Yeah, cause I just listened to the people I shouldn't have listened to. ... Like uh, like I went downtown and my buddy's like, yeah let's go downtown, let's go and like fight or whatever. ... So I went downtown, and then I ended up fighting. And then I ended up getting arrested. Yeah, and I shouldn't of did that.

Salient to prevention, DEREK and DREW describe violence as necessary only as long as youth or by implication adults who engage in violence accept it as necessary, that is until violence "gets old":

DEREK: Yeah, keeps going, keeps going and until it gets old, you know. ... Yeah, keeps going, keeps going and until it gets old, you know. ... if you're too lazy or whatever.

DREW: Yeah, it's like people hold grudges more. Somebody gets beat up and that person's mad because they got beat up, and they want to get revenge and they want to beat everybody up. ... One person has to eventually go: "Hey, whatever." (I: You won, I'm done kinda thing?) Not even, just like, who cares.

The persistence of violence is arguably due to the centrality of toughness to respect, loyalty and connectedness for these youth, to the persistence of provocations, and to their participation in formal prevention efforts that reproduce environments which elicit a perceived need for toughness and thus violence.

The 3-P model

The interplay of persistent provocations and the failures of preventative measures combine in ways that mutually reinforce violence. That is, interventions reinforce rather than provide alternatives to the constellation of values that foster violence, and place youths in environments in which willingness to engage in violence is constantly challenged. Figure A (Appendix A) provides a graphic representation of the combined effects of the persistence of values that reinforce violence, recurring provocation or challenges, and ineffective prevention (see Figure A, Appendix A)

FINDINGS SUMMARY

To reiterate, this thesis addresses how gang and drug trade involved male youth think about violence, how violence fits into their behavioural practices, and what impact prevention efforts by criminal justice and child protection authorities have on their violence-related thinking and acting.

The 378 instances of violence described in the interviews can be categorized as falling on an expressive instrumental continuum, with some instances best characterized

as mixed. Youths' reasons for violence vary along this continuum, as do the intended and unintended effects of the violence as described by the youth. Overall, the youth appear to view violence as a viable and necessary behaviour, indeed as central to establishing and maintaining or reestablishing feelings of self worth and social connectedness. Connected to these aims is the values constellation of toughness, respect, loyalty and connectedness, which in the view of these youth can only be demonstrated through violence. In a social context in which willingness to participate in violence is constantly challenged, this values constellation operates as a set of guiding principles. By displaying commitment to these values or principles the youth avoid acquiring negative labels, feel confident they will be backed up when they get in a fight, and feel they can avoid being subjected to physical violence and bullying.

Importantly, the youths act on the basis of shared knowledge that violence is “the way” to assert or defend self worth and remain not only connected but safe. It is as a consequence of this shared knowledge that toughness, respect, loyalty and connectedness come together to “work” for these youth. This points to the significant influence that knowledge of values plays in youths decisions and behaviours, consistent with Hunt and Wickham's argument on the importance of attending to knowledge and its role in binding people to each other (1994, pp. 89- 90).

Related to this, the youths' knowledge that toughness, respect, loyalty and social connection matter is a product of their social group and their collective and individual place in society. This is a consequence of peer pressure and a preexisting social bond, which add to and consolidate the knowledge they rely upon. As stated above, violence is likely to reoccur unless these youth experience alternative ways to build a positive sense of self and a sense of social connection with others – in particular non-violent others –

and this depends upon a fundamental change in the environment or society in which the youth live. This is to say, prevention efforts need to address the constellation of values that foster and reinforce violence, in particular toughness, the provoking situations that foster violence and the environmental conditions that make violence necessary.

To conclude, the data suggest that youth recurrently engage in violence to maintain a positive sense of self-worth and a sense of solidarity with other violent youth. These goals are rooted in the value these youth place on toughness, respect, loyalty and social connection. However, violence provides only a temporary sense of self-worth and connectedness due to ongoing challenges and provocations that the youths believe must be countered with further violence. Moreover, efforts by child protection and criminal justice authorities fail to dissuade the youth from further violence because they reproduce conditions and environments that the youth experience as provoking and requiring violence to maintain their sense of self worth and connection with other violent youth.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This discussion Chapter situates the findings in relation to existing literature on youth gangs as outlined in the works of Hagedorn (2005), Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) and Vigil (2003). A key focus is the connection between my research findings and existing youth gang literature on the instrumental nature of violence and the influence of toughness and other values to recurring violent involvement. First, however, the Chapter will address the lack of a universal gang definition and other definitional issues salient to the youth gang literature and the contributions of my research.

DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

As a result of the active interview strategy used in the Mann and Senn study on youth violence, a distinct operationalization of the youth gang concept was not formulated. Rather, Mann and Senn study encouraged interview participants to discuss how they viewed the relationship between gangs and violence. The youth were not directly asked whether or not they were involved in a gang or the drug trade, though involvement in one or both of these activities was sometimes identified in the file data. For the most part the youth voluntarily self-identified as gang or drug trade involved. Allowing youth participants to self define as gang or drug trade involved is consisted with the strategy put forth by Bjerregard (2002) and Ball & Curry (1999). This self-definitional strategy generated rich qualitative data that facilitated the achievement of my research purpose -- to understand how youths involved in gang and drug trade activities view violence, to understand how violence fits with behavioural practices, and to understand how, in their view, interventions do and do not work to help them desist from violence.

Despite the absence of a universal definition of the youth gang concept (Ball & Curry, 1995; Bjerregaard, 2002; Sanchez- Jankowski, 2003), Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) assert that researchers commonly define gangs as groups of individuals who are involved in illegal activities (p. 191). Bjerregaard (2002) also asserts that a common characteristic of a gang is the involvement in criminal activities (p. 32). Furthermore, gang researchers are in agreement that gangs exercise violent behavioural practices (Bjerregaard, 2002, p. 39). The interviews that were analyzed in my research provided insight into how the term gang is perceived by youth. They defined or portrayed gangs as a group of friends, a group of known individuals, or a social group rather than a group oriented towards fighting and propping up a gang name. In addition, they provided examples and scenarios in which individuals as a group engaged in criminal activities associated with gang or crime related violence.

DIFFERENTIATING GANG MEMBER VIOLENCE AND GANG VIOLENCE

The distinction between gang member violence and gang violence is an important issue that is relevant to my research, as the 21 youth discussed both individual acts of violence and group acts of violence. First, Sanchez- Jankowski's (2003) definition of gang violence was not consistent with the ways in which male youth portrayed gang or group violence. Sanchez- Janowski (2003) stated that gang violence is exerted in order to ensure that the gang as a whole benefits. However, the youth in my study described gang or group violence as acts of violence that benefited them selves. Specifically, they described group violence as an opportunity to prove themselves to their group or gang peers. The fact that buddies would jump in helped individual group members to deal with people who ripped off drugs, for example.

This supports Bjerregard's (2002) assertion that gang researchers are unable to distinctly separate gang criminality and gang member criminality (p. 37). This could be related to the different vantage points gang members may have take when interpreting the benefits of gang violence or criminality, and the ways in which gang members conceptualize the term gang. For example, in my study the youth viewed group violence as an advantageous opportunity to prove themselves as tough, respected, loyal and connected. This may be linked to the fact that they defined a gang primarily as a social or peer group. Consequently, Sanchez- Jankowski's (2003) definition of gang member violence is more consistent with the ways the youths in my study described violence that they participated in and witnessed. Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) defined gang member violence as acts of violence committed by gang members for their own purposes (p. 207-208). The youth in my study described violence in terms of acts directed towards another individual with the intent to cause pain or harm and to acquire benefits – regardless of whether the violence was gang, group or individually perpetrated.

RISK FACTORS AND INSTRUMENTAL VIOLENCE

In relation to risk factors, the data on youth summarized at the beginning of Chapter IV speak to the intensive mental health and substance abuse challenges faced by the youth, and to the extensive involvement of child protection services in their lives. The data do not, unfortunately, provide the same level of consistent information on the structural conditions in which these individual level risks are situated. However, the youth do routinely make reference to the impoverished urban and rural communities they live in, and also to the constant presence of youth delinquency, youth violence, family dysfunctionality and drug and alcohol abuse and use in their family and neighborhood environments. These qualitative data can be interpreted as evidence of low socioeconomic

status. As Taylor et al. (2008) and numerous other gang researchers reviewed in Chapter III have noted, economic risk factors at community levels, as well as at individual and family levels, must be addressed in any effort to provide a comprehensive analysis of why and how youth become caught up in gang related crime and violence (see also Hagedorn, 2005; Sanchez- Jankowski, 2003).

Instrumental Violence and the Drug Trade

Salient to this structural level risk, the 21 youth discussed violence as an instrument for controlling the drug trade, which served as a major source of income for many of the youth. Many stated that violence was utilized for retaliating against those who ripped off drug money or drugs, for the purposes of sending a message or for getting money or drugs. All of this makes reference to the normality of violence in drug trade activities. This finding is consistent with Hagedorn (2005), Sanchez- Jankowski (2003), and Vigil (2003), who state that violence is a widely accepted instrument used to govern illegal economies among youth involved in the drug trade.

Instrumental Violence and Self-Worth

In addition to economic aims associated with drug trade involvement and other criminal activity, the 21 interviewed youths identified violence as necessary to assert and defend their self-worth and connectedness to peers. Their commitment to a constellation of values in which toughness plays a central role emerges as a primary source of the frequently expressed belief that participation in violence is necessary to establish, maintain or reestablish positive self worth and a sense of connectedness with peers. In fact, the youth used violence instrumentally to counter negative self feelings and denigration by peers, and to reduce or prevent the likelihood of being a target of violent

bullying. That is, the youths used violence to ward off images of weakness, disrespect, disloyalty and social isolation, and to prove – to themselves and peers – that they are tough, worthy of respect, loyal and connected to and valued by others who draw upon these values as a guide to action in a life world where violence is pervasive.

GANG SUBCULTURES – THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

A key theme in the reviewed literature is the culture of violence theme (Hagedorn, 2005) and the role of urban street socialization in reproducing this culture (Vigil, 2003) that reproduces. Hagedorn (2005) identifies gang oriented rap music as a contributor to this culture of violence, in that rap exposes potential gang members to subcultural identities that are resistant to mainstream values and that act as a strong force against marginalization. In a similar light, Hagedorn (2005) also identifies urbanization due to globalization as a risk factor that increases the propensity towards gang involvement and gang formation, as youth turn to gangs because they feel gangs function as a mouth piece for marginalized groups such as themselves. This argument is consistent with the cultural criminology perspective, as this perspective also frames violence as an expressive tool for resisting domination and oppression rather than a tool for combat and criminality (Presdee, 2004).

It is also important to note that Hagedorn (2005) linked violence to rap music, which he argues plays an important role in propagating a culture of violence, and links this to resistance to social marginalization. Such a connection between rap music and resistance to mainstream culture was not discussed by the 21 youths in my study. However, many supported the broad idea that the media glorifies violence and that the media in general makes a person who engages in violence look cool and tough or “hard”. At the same time, few believed that the media generally or rap in particular were a major

influence on their beliefs and actions. Rather, from the perspective of the 21 youths, violence was more something that they lived and practiced than something that they modeled.

Status and power

Importantly, the youth made it clear that violence provides them with status and power. They acquire this status and power through violence and solidarity with others who value the constellation of pro-violent values that situate toughness as essential to respect, status, loyalty and inclusion. Power here is a reference to group protection and backup during fights, which these youth feel they will have only if their commitment to engage in violence when these values are challenged is demonstrated again and again. Status here is a reference to having the perception that one is regarded as tough, loyal, respected and connected which in turn provides power. These findings are consistent with the findings of Vigil (2003) and Sanchez- Jankowski (2003). Vigil (2003) stated that gang related violence is a safeguard against dishonor and loss of face (p. 228- 229). Similarly, Sanchez- Jankowski (2003) stated that in low socioeconomic environments violence was a tool used to acquire power and status.

Pro- violent values and environments

Findings from this thesis demonstrate that the violence exercised by the 21 youth was fostered by both pro-violent values and by the pro-violent environments the youth were exposed to. In relation to environment, the youths viewed Children's Aid Societies interventions as making their situation worse because the CAS placed them in street and group home settings that required the exercise of violence – both for peer respect and therefore self-respect and for self-protection. Similarly, the youths viewed youth custody as requiring violence for the same reasons. In essence, these youth viewed their

commitment to violence as essential to their social, emotional and physical survival. This view was a response to the pro-violent environments in which they lived – that is to the street, CAS and youth custody contexts in which they found themselves.

Numerous studies cited in the literature review report similar findings. For example, Vigil (2003) argued that negative urban street socialization influenced violence, and it was necessary to explore both the psychological and social factors linked to urban youth delinquency in order to understand it. This experiential outcome is also supported by Hagedorn (2005), as he asserts that due to an increase in the amount of time spent on the street as a result of family problems, youth have experienced street socialization and have adopted pro violence thinking and behaviours linked to street life. Katz (1988) also highlighted the connection between thinking and crime (e.g. Violence), as he stated that factors such as economics and opportunities were unable to analyze crimes influenced by thinking. Bevir and Rhodes (2006) also asserted that thinking patterns and behaviours are connected as thinking patterns influences behaviours.

INTERVENTIONS AND CANADA'S YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

The youth 21 youth whose interviews are analyzed for this thesis had extensive experience with the youth justice system and various agencies that partner with youth justice, in particular the CAS. As discussed in Chapter II, the YCJA places the onus on communities and individuals to prevent youth crime by responding to youth who are at risk of offending as well as youth who come into conflict with the law, as much as possible in community rather than custody settings (Hartnagel, 2004; Mann et al., 2007; Muncie, 2005). This strategy is relevant to research on gang prevention (Decker, Katz & Webb, 2008; Katz et al., 2005; Zhang, 1999). Bjerregaard (2003) argues that proactive solutions to the gang problem require both an understanding of the gang culture and gang

formation. Similarly, Vigil (2003) states that in order to understand the origins of gang violence it is vital to analyze structural forces such as poverty, resistance cultures and other correlates of social marginalization – rather than individual level risks alone. Ideally, community services should be well positioned to address these structural or community level risks.

Relevant to this argument, Muncie (2006) notes that risk assessments do not address issues pertaining to unequal access to opportunity, and that the YCJA relies on risk assessments in determining whether a custodial sentence should be imposed and in determining which criminogenic needs to address through court mandated counseling and treatment (Hartnagel, 2004; Maurutto & Hannah- Moffat, 2007). Structural level needs are not considered in these assessments. Rather, a key focus is separating low risk offenders from high-risk offenders, while programming needs are assessed in terms of a youth's age, gender and criminal history (Maurutto & Hannah- Moffat, 2007).

The above is relevant to critiques of intervention programs that target risks linked to a substance abuse, lack of parental control and related individual and family level deficiencies rather than structural factors. As reiterated throughout the cited sources on interventions, these and other presumably non-structural risk factors appear disproportionately present in low socioeconomic communities where youth crime is concentrated. Structural and cultural factors must therefore be addressed in youth justice affiliated gang-prevention and gang-intervention efforts. In my study it was clear that only individual level needs are addressed in interventions that the youth identified as not appropriate to their needs. Indeed, in the view of the youths, rather than address and ameliorate structural conditions, CAS and youth justice custody centers reproduce these.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, my findings are broadly consistent with existing literature on youth gangs. As in many other studies, I work with a self-definition of gangs and gang involvement, based on the youths' subjective understandings of themselves and the world they live in. It is not surprising that the pro-violent values shared by these youth significantly influence how they act, and that the reproduction of the structural and cultural conditions that foster these values impedes the likelihood of prevention efforts effectively assisting these youth to desist from violence in the future.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study is based on a secondary analysis of qualitative interviews with 21 male youth who self-identified as being currently or previously involved in gang or drug trade activities. The key aim was to construct an understanding on how these youth view and experience violence and how they view and experience efforts by formal interveners who work in partnership with the youth justice system to assist them to desist from violence.

Based on a deductively anchored thematic analysis that draws on Hunt and Wickham's (1994) theoretical work on self-government, the study found the 21 youths were committed to demonstrating values of toughness, respect, loyalty and solidarity through the exercise of violence. Indeed, the youth seemed to view violence as they only viable means of asserting their commitment to this constellation of values, and more importantly, of defending their sense of self worth and connectedness to other youth whose respect they valued. These values were based on the youths' shared knowledge as participants in a range of pro-violent environments where toughness in particular had to be demonstrated. The youths' knowledge that toughness was essential to respect and that only those who demonstrated toughness could depend upon the loyalty of peers and thus connection to peers motivated these youths, as did their knowledge that not demonstrating toughness would result in them being a target of bullying and violence. Consequently, their sense of self as worthy depended upon their willingness and ability to respond violently in the face of provocations, including perceived disrespect.

In brief, the youth repeatedly engaged in violence to maintain a positive sense of self-worth and a sense of solidarity with other violent youth. However, violence only provides a temporary sense of self-worth and connectedness due to ongoing challenges

and provocations that the youths believe must be countered with further violence. Efforts by child protection and criminal justice authorities fail largely because they reproduce conditions and environments that the youth experienced as provoking and requiring violence to maintain their sense of self worth and connection with other violent youth.

RESEARCH STRENGTHS:

This research investigation has contributed to Canadian academic knowledge on violence in the lives of gang and drug trade involved youth. This research makes several contributions. First, this study has generated Canadian centered knowledge on a topic that has not received ample Canadian research attention – the topic of youth gangs. Second, beyond Canada, this study contributes to understandings on how gang and drug trade involved male youth experience and perceive not only violence but also efforts by formal interveners to prevent their future participation in violence. The study generated deeply qualitative insight into the ways youth who participate in gangs and the drug trade view and experience violence in their relationships and environments. It takes the voices of youth seriously, with the aim of understanding how the youth view themselves, each other and their broader world where interpersonal violence is glamorized and yet elicits the harshest condemnation and punishment. This is a rare approach to the study of youth gangs, as evidenced in the literature review.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS:

This research investigation has four major limitations. First, this research primarily focused on demonstrating connections between feelings of self worth, social connectedness and violence. The thematic analysis identified values as key, indeed, the values of toughness, respect, loyalty and connectedness operate as not simply guiding principles, but almost like a mechanism that triggers and inspires violence. That is, these

shared values and knowledge seem to significantly “cause” the youths to engage in repeated violent behaviors, despite the youths’ regretting the effects this has on their immediate and anticipated future lives, in which recurring experiences of custody are likely unless they desist from violence and other criminal activities. One negative result of this focus on values and knowledge is that the thesis directs little attention to other contributors to violence, in particular structural determinates. This is a major shortcoming of the study.

A second limitation is that the study does not explore whether and how the constellations of values and actions found in this study are unique to youth who participate in youth gang and drug trade activity. Otherwise stated, it is not clear to what extent these are simply masculine norms. Indeed, a limitation of the study is a failure to examine how the findings fit with research on masculinities, as advanced, for example in the work of R. W. Connell and James Messerschmidt (2005), who draw attention to the need to explore the ways ‘resistant’ (p. 841) masculinities, found disproportionately at the social and economic margins of society, fuel crime and violence.

Two more minor limitations are a lack of gender breadth, as this research focuses solely on gang and drug trade involved males, and the difficulty of comparing the findings of this study with gang research that relies on a more structured definition of youth gangs, as discussed in Chapter V.

FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDS

In addition to exploring how the patterns identified in this study fit with research on masculinities, future gang research needs to explore in far greater depth how interventions can assist gang and drug trade involved youth to embrace other values and actions while building a viable sense of themselves as respected and connected to others

who matter to them. In particular, future research needs to explore whether and how gang intervention programs that address more structural level concerns work better to assist youth in making the transition of a life that does not require violence.

APPENDIX A

TABLES AND FIGURES

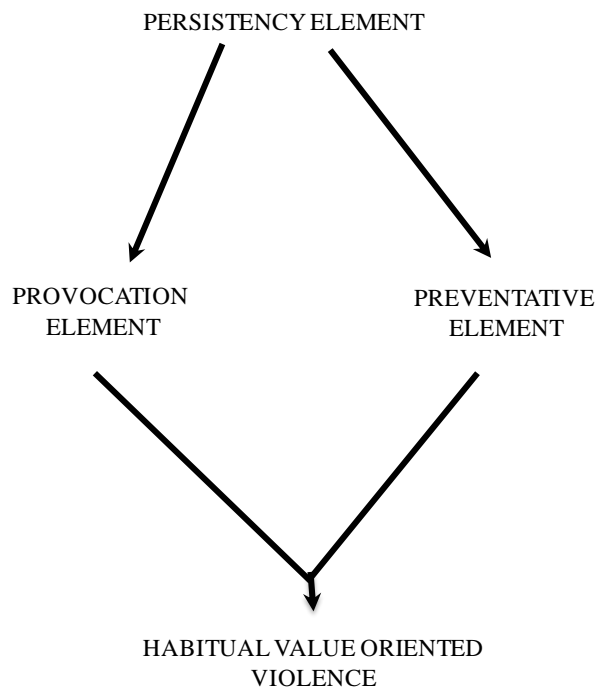
Table I:
Reasons for Violence on Expressive/Instrumental Continuum

	Expressive	Instrumental	Mixed
Alcohol/Drug/ bad mood related	80	0	5
Gang/Crime related	40	61	24
Values related (toughness, respect, loyalty, connection)	0	164	4
Categorized instances	120	225	33

Table II
Effects of Violence and Reasons for Violence

	Formal interventions (Youth justice, CAS, other)	Regret depression and hopelessness	Positive Self-Worth	Social connection
Alcohol/Drug/ bad mood related	30	28	1	0
Gang/Crime related	27	11	45	14
Values related (toughness, respect, loyalty, connectedness)	16	10	118	38
Reported effects	73	49	164	52

Figure A: The 3-P Model



PROVOCATION ELEMENT:

- (a) Persistent reliance on values of toughness, respect, loyalty and connection
- (b) Persistent influence of a preexisting social bond and peer pressure
- (c) Persistent challenges to self-worth and social connectedness

PREVENTION ELEMENT:

- (a) Persistent exposure to Children's Aid Society intervention
- (b) Persistent exposure to Youth Custody

REFERENCES

- Babbie, E., Benaquisto, L. (2002) *Fundamentals of Social Research*. Scarborough: Thomson Nelson
- Ball, R. A., & Curry, G. D. (1995). The Logic of Definition in Criminology: Purpose and methods for defining “gangs.” *Criminology*, 33, 225-245.
- Bevir, M., Rhodes, R. (2006) *Governance stories*. London: Routledge
- Bjerregaard, B. (2002). Self-definitions of Gang Membership and Involvement in Delinquent Activities. *Youth & Society*, 34, 31-54.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- Chatterjee, J. (2006) *A Research Report on Youth Gangs: Problems, Perspective, and Priorities*. Research and Evaluation Branch of the RCMP.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender & Society*, 19, 829-859.
- Corti, L. & Bishop, L. (2005). Strategies in Teaching Secondary Analysis of Qualitative Data. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6, Article 47.
- Fink, A. S. (2000). The Role of the Researcher in the Qualitative Research Process. A Potential Barrier to Archiving Qualitative Data. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1, Article 4.
- Emile Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Ed. Steven Lukes. Trans. W. D. Halls. New York: The Free Press, 1982.

- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (2004) Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (1st ed., p. 105-117). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Hagedorn, J. M. (2005). The Global Impact of Gangs. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 21, 153-169.
- Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. (1995). *The Active Interview*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Hunt, Alan and Gray Wickham. (1994). *Foucault and the Law: Towards a Sociology of Law as Governance*. London: Pluto Press.
- Karnieli-Miller, O., & Sherer, M. (2004). Aggression and violence among Jewish and Arab youth in Israel. *International Journal of International Relations*, 28, 93- 109.
- Katz, J. (1988). Seductions and repulsions of crime. Ch. 16 in Eugene, M., Huges, G., Muncie, J., *Criminological Perspectives: Essential Readings Second Edition*. P. 167- 181. Sage Publications Ltd.
- Katz, C. M., Webb, V. J., & Decker, S. H. (2005). Using the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program to further understand the relationship between drug use and gang membership. *Justice Quarterly*, 22, 58-88.
- Mann, R. M., Senn, C. Y., Girard, A., & Ackbar, S. (2007). Community-based Interventions for At-risk Youth in Ontario under Canada's Youth Criminal Justice Act: A Case Study of a "Runaway" Girl. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 49, 37-73.
- Merton, R. (1938) Social structure and anomie. *American Sociological Review*, 3 (5), 672- 682
- Presdee, M. (2004) Cultural Criminology: The Long and Winding Road. *Theoretical Criminology*, 8, 275- 285

- Ryan, G., & Bernard, R. (2003) Data management and analysis methods. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (2nd ed., p. 259- 309). London: Sage Publications
- Sanchez-Jankowski, M. (2003). Gangs and Social Change. *Theoretical Criminology*, 7, 191-216.
- Taylor, T. J., Freng, A., Esbensen, F.-A., & Peterson, D. (2008). Youth Gang Membership and Serious Violent Victimization - The importance of lifestyles and routine activities. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 23, 1441-1464.
- Van den Berg, H. (2005). Reanalyzing Qualitative Interviews from Different Angles: The Risk of Decontextualization and Other Problems of Sharing Qualitative Data. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6, Article 30.
- Vigil, J.D. (2003). Urban Violence and Street Gangs. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 32, 225- 242.

VITA AUCTORIS

Allen Gnanam began his university education at the University of Windsor in September of 2005, where he studied Forensics and Criminology with a minor in Psychology. After the completion of his undergraduate degree he was accepted into the Criminology Masters program at the University of Windsor. The completion of this thesis on gang and drug trade involved male youth violence has provided Allen with knowledge that he hopes he and others will utilize in future work in the areas of youth, crime and criminal justice.