

Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

---

Sociology Dissertations

Department of Sociology

---

Fall 12-13-2021

## Set Trippin': An Intersectional Examination of Gang Members

Lea Marzo

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/sociology\\_diss](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/sociology_diss)

---

### Recommended Citation

Marzo, Lea, "Set Trippin': An Intersectional Examination of Gang Members." Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2021.

doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/26676509>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Sociology at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gsu.edu).

Set Trippin': An Intersectional Examination of Gang Members

by

Lea Marzo

Under the Direction of Wendy Simonds, PhD

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2021

## ABSTRACT

Typically, when most people hear the word “gangs,” the usual connotation is that of boys and men. However, recent studies show that women and girls make up about 30% of the gang population and that most gangs are mixed-gender (Curry 1998, Miller and Brunson 2000, Sutton 2017). The experiences of gang-affiliated women remain under-theorized and understudied. Moreover, studies in criminology often dehumanize gang members and advance archaic ideas of inherent criminality. By utilizing a critical race theory (CRT) framework, I analyze how gang membership results from the intersection of racist practices and U.S. laws (Bell 1995, Crenshaw 1995, Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995, Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso 2000). This exploratory study demonstrates the complexities of how minoritized neighborhoods create a climate ripe for gang membership. By centering gang narratives, I highlight the myriad ways that people living in Southeast San Diego navigate gang culture and identity, gender expectations, and criminalization. Through a feminist standpoint lens, I employ the “docent method,” a qualitative place-based approach, to accompany 30 men and women gang members and affiliates on a walking or driving interview (Chang 2017). My work challenges the one-sided, male-dominated research seen in gang literature. Black women gang members use their gang-affiliated identities as a tool to navigate violence within their neighborhoods. I argue that place-identity, shared gang identity, and "Black extraordinary adolescent trauma" bonds young men and women into "gang kinship networks." In addition, I offer alternative narratives to the stereotype of violent gang members. While on the one hand, there are instances where men gang members adopt conventional patriarchal norms of masculinity, on the other hand, they can exhibit caring attitudes towards people within their gang kinship network. Finally, I argue that low-income minoritized youth are subject to “legal violence” routinely practiced by local law enforcement

(Menjívar and Abrego 2012). The legal jurisdictions of gang documentation, gang injunctions, and policing practices interlink with social conditions to cause social suffering (Menjívar and Abrego 2012). These punitive laws create additional barriers for documented gang members, trapping them in the cycle of re-offending, and blocking Black and Latinx youth from upward mobility.

INDEX WORDS: Intersectionality, Critical Race Theory, Gangs, Neighborhood Effects, Hyper-Masculinity, Black Extraordinary Adolescent Trauma, Gang Kinship Networks

Copyright by  
Lea Terese Marzo  
2021

Set Trippin': An Intersectional Examination of Gang Members

by

Lea Marzo

Committee Chair: Wendy Simonds

Committee: Rosalind Chou

Tomeka Davis

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Services

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

December 2021

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my grandmother, Dardana Omega Arce, may she rest in peace. She was a resident of Southeast San Diego for 58 years. She passed away on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at the age of 97, two days before my 36<sup>th</sup> birthday. Although, she will never get to see me “walk across that stage” or officially become a “doctor,” I know that she would have been so proud. She was the most kind and loving person I have ever known. She was strong, courageous, and adventurous. She helped raise me and my siblings and I will hold her close to my heart. As a first-generation student, I started this journey with her blessing, and I could not have done half of the things I’ve accomplished without her support and unwavering belief in me. I finish my doctorate degree knowing that her legacy lives on inside all of her descendants.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study could not have been completed without the participation of all the gang members and affiliates that so graciously allowed me to peek inside their lives for a day. I thank them for sharing their stories and I challenge them to continue fighting against injustice and to have courage in the face of adversity.

I extend my deepest gratitude to my mentor and chair of my committee, Dr. Wendy Simonds. I will be forever grateful for all your help and support during this journey. I would not have chosen to this topic without your enthusiasm and belief in me. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Tomeka Davis and Dr. Rosalind Chou, for their guidance and mentorship. My graduate school experience has been challenging but wonderful, and I owe much of that to all the amazing academics at Georgia State University and the friends I've made throughout this process.

I would like to give a special thanks to my mother, Lauriana Arce, who has always encouraged me to pursue my goals and has supported me throughout every step of this journey. I thank my husband, Antwain Bogard, for being my rock and for his unwavering encouragement. I thank my daughter Brooklynn, for being understanding about the late nights and missed mother/daughter time. She has been by my side throughout my entire academic career, this is just as much her accomplishment as it is mine.

Finally, I thank my colleagues and friends that have supported and encouraged me. To all the friends that helped me prepare for an exam, a presentation, edited a paper, or listened to me complain: Thank you from the bottom of my heart!



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....		<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....		<b>IX</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....		<b>X</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....		<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Background</b> .....		<b>4</b>
<b>1.2 Statement of the Problem</b> .....		<b>7</b>
<b>2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b> .....		<b>15</b>
<b>2.1 Gangs and Identity</b> .....		<b>19</b>
<b>2.2 Gang Membership and Family</b> .....		<b>23</b>
<b>2.3 Race and Hyper-segregation</b> .....		<b>28</b>
<b>2.4 Gangs and Policing</b> .....		<b>32</b>
<b>2.5 Broken Windows and Neighborhood Effects</b> .....		<b>36</b>
<b>2.6 Creation of Alternative Masculinities</b> .....		<b>38</b>
<b>2.7 Girls and Gangs</b> .....		<b>43</b>
<b>2.8 Gangs and Sex Work</b> .....		<b>49</b>
<b>3 METHODS</b> .....		<b>54</b>
<b>4 GANGS AND IDENTITY FORMATION</b> .....		<b>61</b>
<b>4.1 Internalization of Gang Identity</b> .....		<b>62</b>
<b>4.2 Internalized Identity: Self-Determination</b> .....		<b>70</b>

4.3	<b>Contextual: Dualism</b> .....	75
4.4	<b>Collective: Black Extraordinary Adolescent Trauma</b> .....	81
4.5	<b>Collective: Black Girl Gang Membership as Familial</b> .....	86
4.6	<b>Discussion</b> .....	90
5	<b>GANGS AND GENDER</b> .....	91
5.1	<b>Familial: Girls/women Gang Membership</b> .....	94
5.1.1	<i>Jessica’s story: Mother/Daughter Relationships</i> .....	95
5.2	<b>Maria’s Story: Gang Kinship Networks</b> .....	99
5.3	<b>Girl Fighters</b> .....	108
5.4	<b>Gender: “Pimps and Hoes”</b> .....	113
5.5	<b>Manhood and Masculinity among Black Gang Members</b> .....	122
5.6	<b>Discussion</b> .....	127
6	<b>CRIMINALIZATION OF GANG MEMBERSHIP</b> .....	128
6.1	<b>High Crime and Victimization</b> .....	131
6.2	<b>Legal Violence and Gang Documentation</b> .....	136
6.3	<b>Gang Documentation</b> .....	138
6.4	<b>Victimization by Police</b> .....	140
6.5	<b>Probation and the Cycle of Reoffending</b> .....	146
6.6	<b>Discussion</b> .....	148
7	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	149

**REFERENCES..... 156**

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 3.1 Participants racial breakdown..... 59

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 2.1 CalGang Criteria 2018 (CalGang 2018)..... 21

## 1 INTRODUCTION

People beam at me with envy after I tell them I grew up in beautiful southern California. San Diego's year-round warm weather, beautiful beaches, and laid-back culture attracts millions of tourists and transplants every year. However, "American's Finest City" is also home to approximately 91 gangs and over 4000 gang members (Burks 2014). That was my lived reality growing up in Southeast San Diego. In my neighborhood alone, there are approximately 15 different gangs within a 10-mile radius. Growing up, I knew several young men and women who died or became incarcerated as a result of gang-related violence.

When I moved away from San Diego to work on my doctorate, I was hoping to escape that life and embrace a new chapter. However, after reading Victor Rios's *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, I was inspired to do my dissertation on San Diego gangs. . . Something Rios wrote shook my core. As he reflects on his ethnography of gangs in Oakland, California, he writes, "One of my graduate-school professors warned me, 'Go native, but make sure to come back.' When I returned from the field, I told him, 'I took your advice and went native in the academy, but I made sure to go back to the community where I come from.'" (Rios 2011:15). Being disconnected from my neighborhood allowed me to reflect. I no longer wanted to escape; instead, I yearned to be engaged in the community with the hope of affecting change. In this moment I realized that becoming a sociologist is not just a personal goal but can also be a vehicle through which I enrich my community.

Although I write this work and submit it to the academy, I want it to be accessible for mass consumption. I write this work for my participants. My hope is to be the vehicle through which my participants tell their stories. Being back in my community has allowed me to reflect on the importance of empowering others and keeping the door open for those behind me. The purpose

of this study is to challenge the governing narratives, to challenge those in power who label these young men and women, and to allow their stories to be told from their standpoint.

San Diego's low murder rate is attributed to a decrease in gang violence, community policing, and the imprisonment of known gang members (Winkley and Gilchrist 2015). Out of 39 homicides in San Diego in 2013, three were gang-related (Winkley and Gilchrist 2015). These numbers, however, have been contested. Bishop Bowser, former San Diego gang member and current gang intervention worker, reports that the street data show a different reality, with 15 gang-related homicides in 2013 (Burks 2014). Compared to other cities like Los Angeles, this might not seem like much, but to the residents living in Southeast San Diego it is a warning to families that gangs are claiming victims. Nationally, the numbers share the same story. The National Youth Gang Survey reports that the numbers of gangs and gang-related homicides increased in 2012, yet local districts reported a decrease in gang activity that year (Franzese, Herert and Menard 2016).

In accordance with street-level mores, police are often not aware of gang-related deaths, due to gang members' adherence to the "code of the streets" -- not informing on others' criminality (Anderson 2000). A snitch, someone who provides information to the police, commits a grave offense among gang members, and often suffers serious, even violent consequences (Anderson 2000, Durán 2013, Goffman 2014, Rios 2011, Venkatesh 2008). Knowledge about gang-related activity and membership is shared only among those that are a part of the community (Anderson 2000; Rios 2011; Venkatesh 2008). Anderson argues that young men and women construct a system of accountability that governs the social life in urban areas (Anderson 2000). This system involves putting on a "tough front" and avoiding vulnerability by engaging in violence and/or criminal activity (Jones 2010).

Reports suggest that the number of gang members in San Diego is declining (Howle 2016). However, because I grew up in this community and remain connected to people, I believe that, based on the work of other scholars studying gangs, gang membership numbers are not on the decline, but are steadily growing (Franzese, Herert and Menard 2016, Rios 2011, Towns 2007). In fact, before conducting my second round of interviews, several shootings occurred between two rival gangs. As a result, people abruptly stopped responding to me or contacted me to cancel their interviews, and my community liaison advised me to avoid interviews with active members.

The history of gang-related scholarship in areas like San Diego is a complex story. Sociologist William Sanders conducted a twelve-year study on San Diego gangs. Reflecting on his experience, he writes: “In 1978, I called the police to get some information about gangs in San Diego. The response was that San Diego had no gangs. There were street groups and other delinquent groups, but there were no gangs. The official policy was to deny that San Diego had a gang problem. In part, the police reluctance to acknowledge gangs may have been due to San Diego’s multimillion-dollar tourist industry” (Sanders 1994:5). San Diego’s slogan as “America’s Finest City” would be in jeopardy if a gang problem was apparent. More recently, the city agreed to a 1.5-million-dollar payout after being sued for a civil rights lawsuit in federal court for wrongfully incarcerating two men, Rapper Brandon “Tiny Doo” Duncan and Aaron Harvey, under a controversial gang conspiracy law. The two men argued that the San Diego police department violated their First Amendment free-speech rights, falsely incarcerating them (Garrick 2020). The law states that individual gang members can be prosecuted for crimes committed by the gang as a whole, as long as the individual knowingly benefits from the crime (Garrick 2020). The case was dismissed in 2015, and Harvey and Duncan filed a lawsuit against the city in 2017 (Garrick 2020). These cases show that multiple interests in San Diego play a part



in dealing with the city's "gang problem." It also illustrates the lengths to which city officials will go to protect the city's image and to distance San Diego from the stigma of gang violence.

## **1.1 Background**

Southeast San Diego and Mid-City residents are primarily low-income minorities. There are sections of North Park located in the Mid-City area that have become gentrified within the last ten years, transforming them into hip urban areas attracting middle class whites (Huard 2019). However, between 1980 and 2000, this area was primarily Black, Latino, and Southeast Asian (Cambodian, Filipino, Laotian, and Guamanian). The demographics of Southeast San Diego are very similar: primarily Black, Latino, and Southeast Asian, with groups typically concentrated in overlapping ethnic enclaves (Guevarra 2012).

According to the 2018 U.S. Census, Black residents make up only 5.5 percent of the San Diego population, compared to 34 percent Hispanic or Latino, 12.6 percent Asian, and 45.2 percent white (Bureau 2018). Even though Black residents make up a small percentage of the total population of San Diego, most reside in the southeastern part of the city. In addition, the median household income in the city of San Diego is \$65,753, based on estimates between 2010 and 2014 (Bureau 2014). According to Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Living Wage Calculator, it takes at least \$66,045 a year for a family of four to meet the minimum living wage standards in San Diego. For one adult and one child, earnings must meet or exceed \$52,895, or \$26,462 for one adult, to meet the minimum living wage standards before taxes. The median household incomes in the ZIP codes in this study range from \$28,185 to \$57,287; a vast majority live below the minimum standard. To give some context, in wealthier areas of San Diego (Rancho Santa Fe, La Jolla, and Carlsbad), the median household incomes range from \$95,306 to

\$119,939 between the same years. Since the cost of living in San Diego is elevated, it is challenging for low-income residents to meet the minimum living wage standards.

Rudy Guevarra (2012) takes an in-depth look at San Diego's immigration history. In his book, *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego*, he traces the immigration of his Filipino and Mexican ancestry in San Diego and portrays a story of mutual co-existence with other minorities in the area, including African Americans, Chamorros, and Southeast Asians (Guevarra 2012). Because of segregation and racism, minorities were pushed to live in the Southeast and Southbay sections of San Diego. The interdependence of these communities illustrates a complex story of overlapping histories and reconceptualizes the identities of these communities, especially between Filipino and Mexican families, whom Guevarra coins "Mexipinos" (2012).

Guevarra's book resonates with my upbringing; he even writes about my Filipino grandparents owning Luzon Café on Market Street when describing the sociohistorical background of Filipino and Mexican communities. These groups created safe spaces where they could congregate and socialize without the fear of racism. In addition, they also started "social clubs," which I argue were early formations of youth gangs. Growing up, I remember several conversations about social clubs with my aunts and uncles. They told exaggerated tales of these groups of teenagers that would hang out together, go to dances, and work on cars. During one of my visits back home, I was at a family gathering discussing my dissertation topic on gang membership. Some of my aunts (very proudly) proceeded to tell me how they were in "socials" or "gangs" when they were younger. They were socializing most of the time, but they did recall stories of holding pistols in their purses and razor blades in their hair for their brothers or boyfriends.

My maternal grandmother is Native American, and my grandfather was Filipino. This cultural mixing created a uniquely multiethnic family. Guevarra's participants reminisce about growing up in this multicultural community and being more accepting of people from other cultures (Guevarra 2012). Being raised in such a multiethnic family and community sheltered me from racism. I was raised by a single mother of four; her two oldest sons – children from her first marriage - were 18 and 19 when my older brother PJ was born. I was born a year later. We lived in the heart of Southeast San Diego in a Black and Asian Blood gang territory. My mother, fearing the public schools in our area were not “good schools,” enrolled us in a white Catholic school 20 minutes from our home. Along with financial aid, she called bingo every Friday night at the church to reduce the cost of tuition. I was not fully aware of race until I this school and experienced microaggressions firsthand.

One incident resonated with me during my early years at the Catholic school. My brother, David's wife, is an African American and Latina woman named Cherelle. When I started fifth grade, their son (my nephew) started kindergarten. One day after school, as I was picking up my nephew from his classroom, several of my white classmates stopped us and said in a rude and derisive manner, “How can you be his auntie if he's Black?” I was stunned and defensive. My peers could not understand how I could possibly be related to a Black person, let alone how I could be his aunt. At the time, I did not understand why they were so mean to us; their harsh tone and delivery made me feel like an outsider.

After this incident, I became more aware of how people treated me, leading to many arguments and altercations. I learned to adopt a “tough front” persona. This would continue throughout adolescence when I received a scholarship to a Catholic high school on the other side of town. It took me two hours on public transportation to get to school in the morning. As I rode

the trolley from my neighborhood through downtown and up the coast to the north side of San Diego, I could see the neighborhoods transform from graffitied walls to freshly painted storefronts and manicured lawns. I was distinctly aware of my “othered” status at school, whether I was “poor,” “ghetto,” or “hood,” and I learned to use this perception of me as a form of protection from bullies and disrespect.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Typically, when most people hear the word “gangs,” the usual connotation is that of boys and men. However, recent studies show that women and girls make up about 30% of the gang population and that most gangs are mixed-gender (Curry 1998, Miller and Brunson 2000, Sutton 2017). Early researchers of women and girls in gangs argued that their participation within gangs was that of a subordinate status, either seen as “sex objects” to male gang members, or the “tomboy:” rough and tough girls who participated in violent behaviors or had unfeminine qualities (Batchelor 2009, Brown 1977a, Campbell 1984a, Sutton 2017, Whyte 1943). In addition, research suggests that girl gangs are “sister” gangs to already established boy gangs (Hagedorn and Devitt 1999) and that girl members are less likely than boy counterparts to participate in serious violent crimes (Brown 1977a, Esbensen et al. 2010, Miller and Brunson 2000, Sutton 2017). Although young women constitute a small number of gang members, other studies argue that they commit equally as violent acts as their male counterparts (Wing and Willis 1999:5). Sociologist Tara Sutton argues that the view that women are subordinate to men in gangs is “founded in sexist beliefs of women as passive, subservient, weak and dependent on men, even when it comes to their involvement in crime” and calls for additional research using a feminist framework (Sutton 2017:145). With this study, I answer the call for additional research on gang membership that uses a feminist perspective to explore gang culture.

James Diego Vigil maintains that gangs are the result of marginalization: “the relegation of certain persons or groups to the fringes of society, where social and economic conditions result in powerlessness” (Vigil 2002:7). He posits those individuals in street gangs experience “multiple marginalities” or oppression from multiple directions. At any given time, they face economic insecurity, lack of opportunity, family instability, racism, and cultural repression (Vigil 2002:7). Therefore, a structural perspective provides gang literature more nuance. In addition, Vigil argues that identity formation among adolescents from marginalized backgrounds stems from “the psychosocial need for peer affirmation, convention, and support” (Vigil 1988:421). He claims that a “youth’s self-identity is inspired and affirmed by commitment to and identification with the gang[...]Roles provided by the gang, and the symbols and rituals by which these roles are enacted, reinforce this identity” (Vigil 1988:424). The gang provides a way for youth to associate their identity as “tough” or “hard.” In other words, gang membership is a response to the powerlessness of adolescents growing up in marginalized communities.

Many of the studies conducted on gang membership are written by criminologists. I find this work problematic because it pathologizes gang membership. Existing scholarship depicts gang members as violent criminals in need of saving. I argue that gang members are not only intelligent and empathic, but they also have the capacity to be upstanding citizens. While many scholars focus on the violence and overall criminality of youth gangs, I situate my work in a feminist intersectional framework, which allows me to address the limitations of previous gang-related research (Crenshaw 1989).

The experiences of gang-affiliated women remain under-theorized and understudied. Moreover, studies in criminology often dehumanize gang members and advance archaic ideas of inherent criminality. For instance, some scholars argue that gang membership is linked to

genetics (Barnes, Boutwell and Fox 2011, Connolly and Beaver 2014). Studies specifically on women in gangs use individual-level analysis and the “culture of poverty” argument to stress promiscuity, and refer to girls/women as “beyond risk” (Valdez 2007). My work offers an alternative view of gang affiliation by setting aside the presumptions of criminality and highlighting the lived experiences of how men and women navigate gang culture.

In contrast to scholars who dehumanize gang members in their work, scholars such as Victor Rios (2011), Elijah Anderson (2000), Nikki Jones (2010), and Sudhir Venkatesh (2008) consider the structural limitations of inner-city residents (concentrated poverty, violence, racism) and explain how these issues contribute to gang membership and inner-city violence. One of the earlier works on gang membership by Joan Moore looks at the Chicano gang population in prisons in Los Angeles and focuses on how structural barriers and poverty lead to gang membership (Moore 1978). Her study uncovers the subculture of Chicano gangs and their involvement with what she calls the “barrio economy,” or the drug market and other illegal enterprises (Moore 1978). James Diego Vigil takes the structural argument a step further, and provides a multiple marginality analysis of gang membership using a cross-cultural examination to highlight how different ethnicities experience gang membership (Vigil 2002). These studies address the intersectional aspects of gang membership, but few studies account for the important intersections of race, class, and gender. Women and girls who grow up in concentrated poverty are enmeshed in violence and subjugation perpetrated by the men in their lives. The bulk of gang-related research focuses on the experiences of Black and Latino men, leaving the experiences of gang member/affiliated women largely unexplored. I seek to bridge the gap between on-the-ground experiences and sociological discourse, particularly for women whose experiences are overlooked.

I utilize critical race theory (CRT) as the overarching theory that drives this study. CRT uses narratives from disenfranchised groups to expose racism while also validating their experiences (Bell 1995, Crenshaw 1995, Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995, Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso 2000). CRT scholars employ several different principles for addressing social inequality; however, Solórzano et al. argue that there are five main elements (Solórzano, Ceja and Yosso 2000). These include: “(a) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the transdisciplinary perspective” (Solórzano et al. 2000:63). Advocates of CRT focus on the idea of using the storytelling and the “voice” of oppressed people to highlight their realities: “Stories by people of color can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism” (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995:59). CRT researchers are skeptical of grand theories and single-axis analysis and draw from multiple theories to promote the idea of praxis (Wing and Willis 1999). CRT will add nuance to the research on gang membership by centering storytelling as a means of combating racism, sexism, and economic injustice. Storytelling and identity-making go hand in hand and provide a way for gang members to present and reinforce their identities. This will help researchers to understand members as both individuals and a part of a collective. While some sociologists situate gangs as territorial subcultures that center on violence, I argue that violence is a symptom of oppression rather than a subcultural phenomenon (Sanders 1994).

The amalgamation of multiple theories must be utilized to understand the multiple dynamics at play while discussing gang culture. Researchers must remember that gang members are not one-dimensional. Color-blind racism and the “imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy” facilitates the criminalization of Black and Latinx people, as well as relentless

policing, gentrification, and institutional violence (Bonilla-Silva 2014, hooks 2004b). Moreover, color-blind racism frames racism as a problem of the past and denies its existence in contemporary society while denying the existence of systemic racism (Bonilla-Silva 2014). From the view of law enforcement, Black and Latinx gangs are violent members of society who commit crimes, so they should be punished by the full force of the law. The criminal justice system operates under color-blind ideology to incarcerate young Black and Latinx men and women. Laws such as “stop and frisk” are employed more heavily in low-income neighborhoods, and statistics show that police imprison Black and Latino men at a higher rate than white men (Alexander 2012). Numerous gang scholars frame gangs as a “problem” while failing to examine the societal root causes that force Black and Latinx youth into gangs in the first place.

By departing from essentialist notions of inherent criminality and incorporating an intersectional perspective, I am optimistic that my research will deliver evidence to further support structural explanations of gang formation. This study addresses gang membership as a structural problem, not one of “problem” individuals. A critical component of this project is to empower the community. I strive to depict a more accurate representation of gang members through their narratives in hopes of shifting the public perception of women and men gang members as having a one-dimensional story of criminality. I hope that my contribution to the sociological and feminist epistemological research disrupts the imbalances of the one-sided, male-dominated research that comprises most of gang literature – a literature that is mostly written by and focused on men. Providing women gang members the opportunity to share their stories facilitates reclaiming their identities and formulating their narratives. This study is participant-led and written by someone from the community who understands the nuances of



living in a hyper-segregated area and with firsthand knowledge of the harm that criminalization does to this community. My goal is to deconstruct deviant stigmas that minoritized groups face, illustrating how violence is rooted in a capitalist society and not in individuals (Massey and Denton 1993).

Utilizing the philosophies of CRT, I employ several sociological frameworks to analyze gang membership. Because patriarchal, structural, and economic violence result in different life experiences for men and women of color, I draw on feminist standpoint theory to center the focus on gang members through an intersectional lens (Collins 2008, Harris 2000, Hunter and Davis 1992, Jackson II and Dangerfield 1997). With this study, I attempt to decenter whiteness and show the value of gang-affiliated groups' knowledge through narratives and storytelling (Collins 2009). "Intersectionality," coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), defines how people experience oppression along intersecting identities of race, class, and gender. Crenshaw argues that Black women experience marginalization by being both women and Black and that being a Black woman from the working class adds another level of oppression. The experiences of people of color cannot be understood wholly without considering the convergence of race, class, and gender (Crenshaw 1989). By acknowledging different intersecting points of identities, more people can understand why being low-income, a person of color, male, *and* a gang member would doubly compound one's stigma within society. This level of analysis highlights patriarchal power. The additional axis point of being a woman adds more nuance and shows how these categories of discrimination overlap.

My work unpacks how policy implementation and mechanisms of oppression prevent stigmatized gang members from procuring access to jobs, education, and upward mobility. Currently, gang members in San Diego have become active in local politics -- reclaiming their

narrative and resisting the image of criminality. Hamilton, one of the gang-leaders-turned-activists, argues: “It is not illegal to be a gang member; it is illegal to commit crimes.” Using gang enhancements, which are added sentences to crimes, and obscure laws, prosecutors and local law enforcement are under fire for abuse of power, wrongful arrests, and harassment. This abuse of power has become a catalyst for activism in the community, resulting in several lawsuits against the police department and ballot measures challenging the CalGang documentation database, a state-funded database collecting information on suspected gang members (Howle 2016). More recently, the Los Angeles police department has suspended the use of the CalGang database after they revealed that they were investigating officers for falsifying information (Chabria and Miller 2020).

By analyzing gang members’ sense of identity, I bridge the gap between on-the-ground experiences and the discourse on systemic racism. Joe Feagin writes that the United States was founded on oppression:

Racial oppression makes the United States very distinctive, for it is the only major Western country that was explicitly founded on racial oppression. Today, as in the past, this oppression is not a minor addition to U.S. society’s structure, but rather is systemic across all major institutions. Oppression of non-European groups is part of the deep social structure. Beginning with the genocidal killing off of Native Americans and the theft of their lands, and the extensive enslavement of African as laborers on those stolen lands, European colonists and their descendants created a new society by means of active predation, exploitation, and oppression. (Feagin 2006:2)

Feagin underscores the reality that people of color living in the urban ghetto are made poor. Centuries of systemic racism creates generational economic oppression, which results in our poverty. Without this recognition, we cannot fully understand the hardship and obstacles that

people of color face, nor can we fully understand the privileges that whites gain from institutionalized racism.

I utilize the idea of hegemonic masculinity, defined as the power held by white, heteronormative men. Hegemonic masculinity describes a dominant type of masculinity usually possessed by white men with access to power and wealth, legitimated and reproduced through institutionalized patriarchy and white supremacy (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Harris 2000, Mayeda and Pasko 2011). This dominant ideology of masculinity in the United States characterizes men as strong, rational, white, heterosexual, wealthy, and powerful (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). I juxtapose this concept with Angela Harris's definition of "hypermasculinity" as the convergence of violence and masculinity: "a masculinity in which the strictures against femininity and [LGBTQ] are especially intense and in which physical strength and aggressiveness are paramount" (Harris 2000:793). In this case, hypermasculinity is often used to describe Black and Latino men who use violence and "machismo," or manliness, as self-defense. (Erlanger 1979:237).

This study asks the following empirical questions: (1) How do racial, gendered, and classist factors contribute to gang membership? And (2) How do Black men and women use their gang-affiliated identities to navigate and challenge social inequality within their communities? The following chapters cover selected literature, starting with classical theories on deviance and crime. I delve into a range of studies that highlight the gang member experience along the lines of race, gender, and class. Next, I outline the methods applied to conduct this study, combining a place-based docent method and snowball sampling. In Chapter 4, "Gangs and Identity Formation," I examine identity formation nuances among gang members utilizing the three identity theory traditions: individual internalization, contextual performance, and collective

mobilization. In Chapter 5, “Gangs and Gender,” I delve into the experiences of girls and women gang members and affiliates and gender formation. In Chapter 6, “Criminalization of Gang Membership,” I discuss the process of crimination of gang membership as a neighborhood effect. Finally, I conclude this study with an in-depth discussion of my findings, a discussion of the limitations of my project, and suggestions for future directions.

## 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Understanding classical theories of deviance provide a strong foundation for gang research. By building upon these classical theories, gang scholars can provide rich narratives that reinforce or debunk previous theories. As previously mentioned, the bulk of research conducted on gang membership draws from the theoretical foundation of criminology and deviance studies. While we do not traditionally think of Marx and Engels as criminologists, they do provide significant arguments for the relationship between crime and capitalism. David Greenberg argues that Marx and Engels characterize crime as a “form of rebellion, a refusal to conform to the established order” (Greenberg 1981:40). During early capitalism, industries bought communal property and turn it into private property, forcing feudal people into proletariats with no other choice but to sell their labor for wages. Marx and Engels contend that poverty ultimately leads to crime because a demoralized worker will have no other choice but to turn to criminality for survival.

Friedrich Engels wrote:

Immorality is fostered in ev

ery possible way by the conditions of working-class life. The worker is poor; life has nothing to offer him; he is deprived of virtually all pleasures. Consequently, he does not

fear the penalties of the law. Why should he restrain his wicked impulses? Why should he leave the rich man in undisturbed possession of his property? Why should he not take at least a part of this property for himself? What reason has the worker for not stealing? (Greenberg 1981:48).

Engels reasons that an underpaid worker would resort to crime as a means of survival. Under conflict theory, people compete with their neighbors for resources. Ultimately, working-class people sell their labor on the market for low wages. They understand that society is stacked against them.

While sociologists focus on the class conflict between the bourgeoisie and proletariat, Marx and Engels also classify another group which is not widely known. They coin a term for the most impoverished class of society -- the "lumpenproletariat." This group makes up the poorest of the poor, beggars, criminals, and prostitutes. Marx and Engels claim that criminals in this group created jobs, arguing that the criminal justice system would not exist if there were no crime. Criminals are the great equalizer; "crime takes off the labor market a portion of the excess population, diminishes competition among workers, and to a certain extent stops wages from falling below the minimum, while the war against crime absorbs another part of the same population" (Greenberg 1981:53). From this perspective, criminality is inherent under capitalism because the class inequality creates social conditions that force the lumpenproletariat to resort to crime, while at the same time pitting both the proletariat and bourgeoisie against them. Marx and Engels contend that there is a nefarious relationship between crime and capitalism on both ends of the spectrum. On the one hand, the bourgeoisie exploit workers and keep the poor in a subordinate position. On the other hand, the *lumpenproletariat* commits crimes while simultaneously creating jobs for the proletariat and bourgeoisie.

Robert Merton models his functionalist theory of deviant behavior by analyzing cultural motives and social norms. His idea of “anomie” examines the conflict between cultural expectations and institutional means (Merton 1938). Using the example of the “American Dream,” the idea that anyone in the United States can pull themselves up by their bootstraps and achieve upward mobility, Merton explains that individuals blocked from institutional means of achieving these goals encounter anomie or strain (Featherstone and Deflem 2003). This idea would become the cornerstone of Merton’s strain theory of deviance: those experiencing strain would resort to crime to achieve cultural goals. Merton argues that there are five ways of responding to this type of cultural strain: conformity, wherein individuals conform to cultural goals and the institutional means to achieve such goals; Innovation, wherein individuals conform to the cultural goals but do not have institutional means, so criminal behavior forms in order to reach cultural goals; Ritualism, in which individuals do not comply with cultural goals, but they abide by the institutional means even if they are unobtainable; Retreatism, wherein individuals prefer to be passive toward both cultural goals and institutional means; and Rebellion, in which individuals reject both the cultural goals and institutional means of obtaining them, but instead of retreating they work to replace them (Featherstone and Deflem 2003:479). Like Merton, Hagan and McCarthy (2001) argue that criminals are innovative and must have specialized skills and knowledge in order to be successful criminals. This theory comes from the idea that being a criminal is hard work, and one must have criminal social capital to be successful at organized crime.

Howard Becker, taking a symbolic interactionist position, claims that “deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an ‘offender.’ The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been

applied; deviant behavior is the behavior that people so label” (Becker 1963:9). Becker’s labeling theory posits that those in power make the rules, and those same people have the power to place the stigma of a deviant label on other groups. Once one is given the label as deviant, it becomes their master status. We see this deviant stigma overwhelmingly placed on Black and Latino men. According to the NAACP, Black men and women are imprisoned five times more than whites. In Michelle Alexander’s (2010), *The New Jim Crow*, she asks, “Where have all the Black men gone?” The mass incarceration of Black and Latino men is achieved through social stigma and the practice of racist policies. Alexander argues that the practice of over-policing people of color (traced back to Nixon’s War on Drugs policies) are ways to funnel Black and Latino men into the prison system (Alexander 2012). Alexander writes: “The absence of Black fathers from families across America is not simply a function of laziness, immaturity, or too much time watching Sports Center. Thousands of Black men have disappeared into prisons and jails, locked away for drug crimes that are largely ignored when committed by whites” (Alexander 2012:180). As in Becker’s theory of deviance, Alexander shows how Black men and women have been stigmatized by those in power and labeled as deviants. White men receive lesser sentences than Black men charged with the same offenses.

Criminologist Edwin Sutherland (1947) argues that delinquency is based on society’s propensity towards conflicting norms and behaviors; an increase in conflicting norms leads to higher crime rates. He calls this symbolic interactionist approach “differential association” (Sutherland 1947). For example, if a group, such as peers or family members, places value on delinquency, an individual who frequently interacts with this group will also learn the values, attitudes, and motives for criminal behavior. Criminal behavior is a learned communication

process from intimate personal groups that teach each other techniques for committing crimes and the rationalizations to justify these crimes.

Another classical theory of crime and deviance derived from Travis Hirschi claims that crime occurs when one's social attachment to society is weakened. His research on the "social control theory" of crime suggests that people with stronger social bonds to family, school, and community are less likely to commit crimes (Hirschi 1969). Hirschi (1969) identifies four key elements of social bonds: attachment to significant others, commitment to conventional behavior, involvement in conventional activities, and belief in society's normative system. When these social bonds deteriorate, individuals will be more likely to be involved in delinquent behavior.

## **2.1 Gangs and Identity**

According to James Diego Vigil (2002), gangs can be traced back to the 1930s. He maintains that gangs are the result of marginalization, "the relegation of certain persons or groups to the fringes of society, where social and economic conditions result in powerlessness" (Vigil 2002:7). Like Hirschi, Vigil is concerned that family, schools, and law enforcement have lost social control over marginalized youth, leading them to street socialization or learning the culture of low-income neighborhoods (Vigil 2002:15).

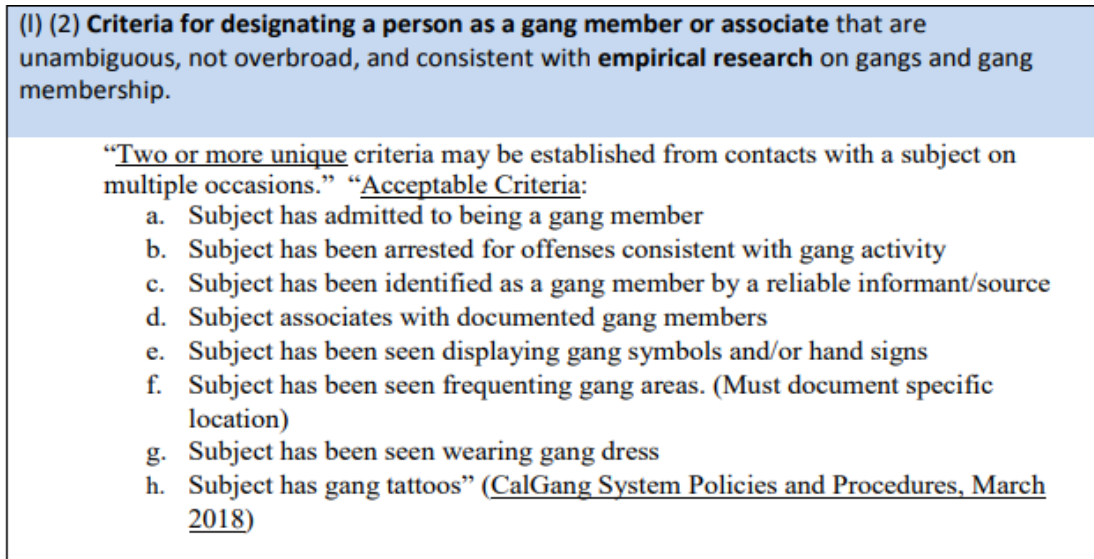
Gang initiation is very different from portrayals on television, that show members being "jumped in" or girls being "sexed in," or having sex with different members. Most older members do not have to go through an initiation process, unlike the younger generation (Moore 1991:49). Typically, memberships are granted due to familial association, and initiation consists of being asked to perform a criminal activity (Durán 2013, Jones 2009). Many gang members grew up in "gang families"; so being part of the gang is normalized and routine. According to



Vigil, families involved in gangs are one of the major push factors for youth joining gangs, while Durán argues that friendships are the major pull factors for gang membership (Durán 2013, Vigil 2007).

Joan Moore's seminal book illuminates the inner workings of the familial culture of Chicano gang members (Moore 1978). She argues that Chicano gangs form a kin-like obligatory network of gang members and their families. She writes: "When a younger brother of a barrio friend and gang member shows up to prison, he becomes the charge of the older pinto [convict]" (Moore 1978:99). In other words, the new prisoner becomes the responsibility of the older prisoner, making sure he is safe, offering advice, introducing him to prison culture, and providing him with small necessities (Moore 1978:99). I also found that gang members place a high value on these duties within the gang community. There is an unspoken expectation of loyalty; gang members care for one another and help each other in times of need.

There is much debate about *who* decides what constitutes a gang. The word "gang" has become synonymous with "crime," and most of our definitions of gangs come from law enforcement, criminologists, and governmental agencies. For example, the National Gang Center tries to capture the different delineations of gangs and appeals to researchers and law enforcement agencies to define youth gangs as a "group of youths or young adults in your jurisdiction that you or other responsible persons in your agency or community are willing to identify as a gang" (NGC 2019). CalGang, the statewide gang database in California, defines gang members as having two of the following criteria in Figure 2.1 below.



*Figure 2.1 CalGang Criteria 2018 (CalGang 2018)*

According to these definitions, anyone living in a neighborhood with a significant gang presence and seen associating with documented gang members would be considered a gang member. In fact, in a 2016 California State Audit Report, Elaine Howle criticizes CalGang, writing that the database does not comply with policy and is full of inaccuracies (Howle 2016). She found that 1) there is a lack of transparency without state oversight; 2) the database fails to ensure the privacy rights of those documented as gang members; 3) more than 600 people listed in the database were supposed to be purged after five years and were still included in the CalGang database; and 4) local agencies failed to notify parents with enough information to contest a juvenile’s designation as a gang member (Howle 2016). Since then, CalGang agencies have been under fire. The *Los Angeles Times* published an article in August 2016 stating that the audit “found the names of 42 people whose birth dates indicated they were one year of age or younger at the time they were entered into the database, 28 of which were entered for ‘admitting to being gang

members” (Winton 2016). In addition, the database audit also reports that documented gang members were overwhelmingly men -- at 93 % -- and disproportionately minority -- 64.9% Latino and 20.5% Black (Winton 2016). The CalGang database is further evidence of what Michele Alexander calls “The New Jim Crow,” the war on low-income men of color, and the culmination of agencies organized to incarcerate Black and Latino men (Alexander 2012).

Gang members, their families, and their communities resist the label of criminality among gang members and their associates. For instance, Mike, a gang member turned activist, is working with the Southeast San Diego community to “reclaim their narrative.” I revisit his earlier argument,

Being a gang member is not illegal. It’s illegal to commit crime. And I think that people should be proud of where they’re from. That’s why I *do* identify as a gang member, but Imma be the first gang member to graduate from law school. So I feel like we’ve been told what a gang member is, but we were never able to define for ourselves what a gang member is.

This idea of self-determination came up quite frequently in the interviews I conducted. Somers argues that our governing narrative is the overarching narrative placed on us by our community and society (Somers 1994). She emphasizes the idea of place and social location, “All of us come to *be* who we *are* by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives *rarely of our own making*” (Somers 1994:606). In this case, gang members are given a governing narrative of criminality. The state, law enforcement, and their community label gang members as “bad boys/girls,” “thugs,” and “criminals.” There is immense power in the ability to determine the master status of a whole group of young men and women who are primarily low-income people of color (Becker 1963). Ultimately, those in control make the rules and apply them to those labeled as deviants (Becker 1963).

For youth living in the segregated ghetto, gang membership is not just normalized and entrenched in the culture, but it is a way for young men and women to make money and receive protection (Del Carmen et al. 2009, Goldman, Giles and Hogg 2014, Moore 1978, Venkatesh 2008). Goldman et al. analyze gangs utilizing social identity theory. They argue that gangs provide individuals with a sense of belonging:

Because of their vulnerable age, youth are especially susceptible to the allure of what gangs have to offer: a peer group of which they can be a part, a clear personal and social identity, increased autonomy from parents or guardians, a “path to manhood” (albeit violent), and the means by which to improve their social status. (Goldman, Giles and Hogg 2014:817)

According to researchers, youth tend to join gangs (Bliss-Holtz 2011, Goldman, Giles and Hogg 2014) for two overarching reasons: social – someone they know is already a member, or for protection, – youth feel like if they are part of a gang they will be protected from rival gangs and show less vulnerability.

## **2.2 Gang Membership and Family**

While many gang scholars find that street socialization happens outside of the family among friendships, some argue that gang-involved families are the strongest predictor of youth joining gangs. Applying Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas of *field*, *habitus*, and *cultural capital* helps explain the socialization process of individuals within their environment. Bourdieu’s definition of field is the “space in which cultural competence, or knowledge of particular tastes, dispositions, or norms, is both produced and given a price... A field is not universal; many fields exist” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Bourdieu 1986, Winkle-Wagner 2010). A field is class-based and often takes the objectifiable form of a school, ethnicity, or family. “It is only within a particular field that cultural capital holds value, produces an effect, or even exists” (Winkle-Wagner 2010). Field, for

Bourdieu, means a concrete social situation (Trueba 2002). On the other hand, habitus functions below the levels of consciousness and language (Bourdieu 1979). It is the “cumulative collection of internalized dispositions, norms, and tastes” (Bourdieu 1979). Habitus is an “embodied class” and presents as automatic gestures, language, and physical attributes (Winkle-Wagner 2010). One’s habitus, disposition, or “lifestyle” acts as a form of currency in social relationships, which is rewarded or sanctioned in a specific field (Winkle-Wagner 2010). In conjunction with cultural capital, these concepts are Bourdieu’s premise for “social reproduction theory.”

Cultural capital consists of cultural traits that one learns to use as a form of exchange in a field with which they are unfamiliar. Sociologists typically use cultural capital in the educational setting when describing students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who have learned to navigate a primarily white, middle-class space. This idea is critical in studying the effects of concentrated poverty as well as cultural reproduction. By linking Bourdieu’s social reproduction theory with Massey and Denton’s construction of the “segregated ghetto,” I examine how gang members are positioned in their social location and use cultural capital outside of their field as agency (Massey and Denton 1993). I use this concept to analyze how gang members use cultural capital to gain upward mobility.

Family is the first field in which we encounter in the socialization process. For most gang members, gang life is familial. In fact, many of their first introductions to gang cultural capital was through familial relationships. The idea that gang membership is inherited from older family members is known as having an “in-house influencer.” Older members in the family who are both gang members and well known are considered OG’s (original gangsters). Having OG’s as family gives younger gang members status. OGs provide the younger members an identity and culture which inform their early interpretations of the world. Inevitably, the gang culture

becomes their habitus. Gang members learn specific cultural traits from their families that are assets in the streets. I argue that learned gang cultural capital can be useful in urban communities. I see this idea as taking “street smarts” a step further. Gang cultural capital is knowing which areas or people to avoid, knowing how to read subtle body language, making sure to scan the area while outside, and always being on alert for a possible threat.

Moore’s work among Latinx gang members in Los Angeles depicts gang membership as an extension of the family, rather than as inherited from older family members, while Durán argues that friendships are the strongest indicator of gang membership (Durán 2013:140, Moore 1978). Additional studies done by earlier researchers show that friendship networks are a stronger indicator of gang membership than familial ties (Moore 1978, Moore 1991, Valdez 2007, Zatz and Portillos 2000). Moore claims that the idea that gang membership is “inherited” from parents is a myth (Moore 1991:49).

Vigil compares gang and non-gang families in East Los Angeles (Vigil 2007). He claims, “Families of gang participants are poorer, have more children, and have less social capital than those of non-gang families. Furthermore, the gang family household head in intensive interviews voiced a greater need for counseling, parenting training, and family therapy” (Vigil 2007:3). Vigil uses two frameworks to analyze why some low-income families are more susceptible to gang membership than others. He utilizes a macro-level framework of “multiple marginalities,” or the idea that several larger social issues such as unemployment and racism are impacting gang membership. He couples this with a micro-level analysis of “social control theory,” which suggests that smaller social mechanisms such as family, friends, and churches have lost the ability to control the youth (Vigil 2007:4).

Vigil maintains that there are several familial factors that can lead to juvenile delinquency. He conducts his research in Pico Gardens, a neighborhood of East LA primarily comprised of low-income Latinx families. He identifies 28 families that community researchers observed as exhibiting a “ganging pattern.” Vigil explains, “A ganging pattern would include early street socialization and bonding among young children; close associations with similarly street-socialized friends in public school; and identification with older street role models, learning and acting out the habits and customs of the street gang” (Vigil 2007:26). Vigil’s findings indicate that gang families show an “intergenerational ganging pattern (two or more siblings or two or more generations in the gang, or rarely, members of different gangs)” (Vigil 2007:26). In addition, heads of households among gang families were less likely to have a high school diploma; members in the household were less likely to earn a regular wage or salary in the formal economy, and were less likely to own a car (Vigil 2007:35). While everyone in Pico Gardens experienced socioeconomic disadvantage, gang families were more significantly disadvantaged than their non-gang family counterparts.

As such, Vigil’s study identifies a class component to gang families. Vigil points out that gang families in Pico Gardens were much more disadvantaged than non-gang families, most headed by single mothers -- similar to *lumpenproletariat*. While much social science of the past warns us of the breakdown of the family when not headed by a two-parent household, Vigil cautions that although women headed these families, they were “not necessarily ineffectual,” challenging the high value placed on the patriarchal family (Vigil 2007:130). Feminist sociologists argue that this type of rational puts blame the mother. Vigil maintains that men in these families often do more to harm the family than good. “The strict patriarchy that manifests itself in the form of machismo in the dominant culture of the projects has many dangerous

consequences... Coming from an impoverished background, many of the fathers had current or past drug problems, criminal records, and poor job histories and had proved to be a bad example at best, and a grave danger at worst” (Vigil 2007:130). Patriarchal norms relegated men in these families to make all the decisions and prevented women and girls from becoming empowered to expand their worldviews. Furthermore, abusive fathers passed down the *machismo* culture, creating adolescent males who did not respect their mothers' authority. Those taught by their fathers that being in a gang was a rite of passage to manhood looked to the streets for familial masculine bonds, repeating the generational gang family (Vigil 2007:130-31).

To add an additional gendered layer to gang families, Avelardo Valdez analyzed Mexican American girls and gang violence in San Antonio, Texas. Valdez labels gang-affiliated girls and women as “beyond risk,” as if these girls and women are predisposed to criminal behavior (Valdez 2007). Valdez frames these girls as having no hope for what he calls a “normative life trajectory,” which should “include such stages of life as completing school, dating, finding employment, getting married, and becoming a mother, all at appropriate ages” (Valdez 2007:3). He argues, “A major reason for these girls’ behavior is that they are engaged in personal relationships with gang members, friends (male and female), acquaintances, and family members who are involved in behaviors such as fighting, drug use, and having sex with multiple partners” (Valdez 2007:180). The tone and framing of his book reinforce patriarchal norms, pitting the idea of pious and virtuous girls against gang member girls who are sexually promiscuous.

Valdez explores the connection between family and the “beyond-risk” behaviors of low-income Mexican American girls attracted to the *cholo/a*, Mexican American gang, lifestyle (Valdez 2007). More specifically, he investigates the role of the family in the development of Mexican American girls concerning substance abuse, risky behavior, and victimization. He



claims that risky behavior is linked to serial residency or when a girl moves to and from numerous friends' and relatives' houses. Valdez's research attributes housing instability to one or more of the following factors: having an incarcerated parent, underage pregnancy, or parental substance abuse (Valdez 2007:81). Valdez argues: "This type of residential instability increases her risk for violence perpetration and victimization, exposing her to predatory adults and high-risk situations where there is excessive drinking and drug use" (Valdez 2007:82). The girls in his study were kicked out of their family homes due to delinquency or they ran away from home to escape an abusive adult. Valdez writes that girls with an unstable homelife are less likely to develop attachments to positive social institutions such as school, church, or non-delinquent peer groups.

In contrast, utilizing the Mother-Daughter Relationship Scale (MDRS), Valdez found that girls with a close relationship with their mothers were less likely to have issues with substance abuse. The MDRS scale measures the "absence or presence of open communication, uncertainty, and ambiguity in defining an adolescent's relationship with her mother [and] conceptualizes a mother's influence [...] direct influences include the mother's role as information source and social supervisor and indirect influences include her role as a source of socioemotional support and as a role model (Valdez 2007:74)." His research indicates that a positive mother-daughter relationship served as a protection from harmful influences, even if the girls were involved with *cholo/a* street life or had a single-mother-headed household.

### **2.3 Race and Hyper-segregation**

Residential segregation serves as the foundation of inequality and perpetuates generational and concentrated poverty. It contributes to the racial subordination of minorities, primarily African Americans (Massey and Denton 1993). The urban poor results from compounding

economic restructuring, civil rights policy, and historical practices of racism (Massey and Denton 1993). During the Industrial Revolution, many southern African Americans migrated from the rural south to northern cities trying to find work and escape persecution. Massey and Denton explain that, by the 1920s, approximately over 800,000 Blacks had relocated to northern cities like Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit (1993). Due to the economic collapse of southern agriculture, the need for rural workers declined, which coincided with a need for factory workers in the north.

As a result of white supremacy, riots and hate crimes against Black residents in the North increased. Racial violence pushed Blacks into isolated neighborhoods, which ultimately led to predatory lending, redlining, and the creation of the Black ghetto. By the 1960s, “white flight,” or the movement of whites to suburbs on the outskirts of cities, was occurring. This left Blacks concentrated in city centers, starting the process of ghettoization in urban cities (Massey and Denton 1993, Shapiro 2004).

Black coalitions centered on economic and social justice sparked the civil rights movement. The 1968 Fair Housing Act gave Black families hope for desegregation. The new law banned discriminatory practices in the renting and selling of houses that contributed to segregation (Farley et al. 1994:750). Massey and Denton argue that, during the early 1970s, there was increased Black economic stability and social mobility, which led to a movement of Blacks into suburbs. However, with the recession of 1973, segregation and inequality worsened (1993). The decline of manufacturing jobs left many Black men out of work. The suburbs replicated the inner cities by segregating Blacks and whites, which led to large metropolitan areas becoming “hyper-segregated.” Massey and Denton argue that the disinvestment in Black neighborhoods, the rhetoric of the culture of poverty, prejudicial lending, unequal access to employment, and

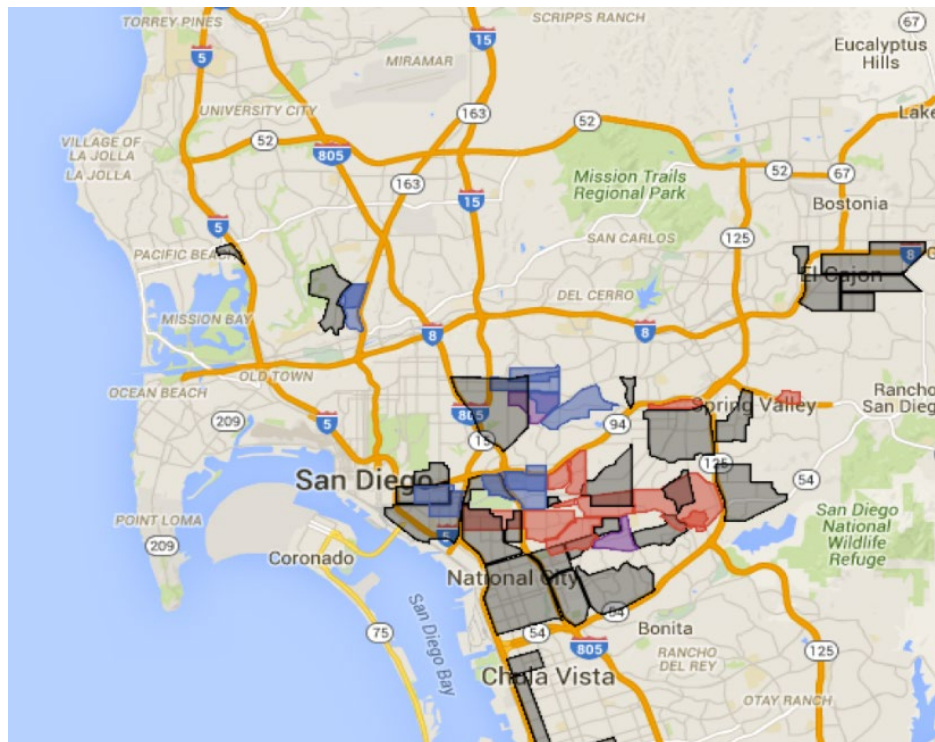
poorly educated communities help to perpetuate poverty (Massey and Denton 1993, Shaprio 2004).

Furthermore, the hyper-segregation of the urban ghetto severely limits access to quality education, employment, and mainstream cultural norms (Massey and Denton 1993). Those living in concentrated poverty are unlikely to have social contact or form friendships with anyone who is not poor and Black unless they happen to work outside of their neighborhood. The spatial and social isolation causes children living in the ghetto to lack the mainstream cultural capital that allows them to gain access to the white middle-class culture needed to perform well in school and the workforce. The Black English vernacular that developed independently from standard English has its own dialect and colloquialisms (Fernandez-Kelly 2015). When children growing up in ghettos enter schools where standard English is the main medium of instruction and communication, they experience a culture shock. Poor children are further stigmatized as illiterate and may lose the confidence and self-esteem necessary to perform well in school (Fernandez-Kelly 2015, Massey and Denton 1993).

Racial segregation, combined with concentrated poverty, creates the urban poor and an oppositional culture (Massey and Denton 1993; Rios 2011). Massey and Denton claim, “By concentrating poverty, segregation simultaneously concentrates male joblessness, teenage motherhood, single parenthood, alcoholism, and drug abuse, thus creating an entirely black social world in which these oppositional states are normative” (Massey and Denton 1993:170). Men in the urban ghetto find themselves competing over resources, proving masculinity, and seeking validation. Rios argues that youth trapped in the urban ghetto adopt beliefs and practices of resistance as they strive for their dignity which is in response to punitive social control, cruel treatment, stigmas, and lack of resources (Rios 2011).

Nevertheless, concentrated poverty often coincides with gang activity. In the map below (Figure 2), the southern sections of San Diego, where gang territories currently exist are highlighted. Going further north, the median household incomes increase. The areas I am focusing on lie in between the 5, 94, 54, and 125 freeways. This area contains all five dimensions of hyper-segregation: evenness, exposure, concentration, centralization, and clustering (Massey and Denton 1993). The areas of the map in Figure 2 outlined in red are notorious areas of gangs known to be affiliated with Bloods; the blue areas are affiliates of Crips; the black areas are Surenos/Hispanic gangs, and the purple is neutral or Southeast Asian groups that have formed their own gangs. Most of the Blood and Crip gangs are Black, yet some are Southeast Asian. Vigil argues that “group terminology reflects a sense of emotional attachment,” and the gang can be seen as the primary group for which members’ identities are formed (Vigil 1988:433). He claims that for gang members, the neighborhood or gang name is a “symbol for the group ideal ...members who share a similar background identify with one another under the group label and begin to treat one another as close friends because of the identification” (Vigil 1988:434). Although minorities living in this area struggle financially, they take pride in representing the “Southeast San Diego” identity. Being from the “Southeast” gives one status, regardless of whether one is gang-affiliated.

*Figure 2.2 Map of Gang Territories in San Diego*



## 2.4 Gangs and Policing

The rise in street gangs started in the late 1970s and early 80s because of the de-industrialization process that closed access to blue-collar employment (Venkatesh and Levitt 2000). Disinvestment in low-income communities coupled with the push for the “War on Drugs” and “War on Gangs” initiatives ramped up policing, leading to our current situation of police brutality against unarmed Black men and women (Venkatesh and Levitt 2000). Young men turned to the underground economy to find ways to survive -- fixing cars, selling drugs, pimping, day laborer positions, and providing protection (Venkatesh 2008). McCorkle and Miethe claim that there was no gang problem before the 1980s (McCorkle and Miethe 2002). The moral panic surrounding the threat of gangs was a combination of exaggeration and sensationalizing by the media, state and local law enforcement seeking funding and organizational power, and career

advancement for academics focusing on gangs (McCorkle and Miethe 2002). The fear-mongering around drugs, crime, and gangs and the dismantling of welfare programs fueled the mass incarceration of Black and brown bodies (Alexander 2010).

Criminalization is in the fabric of everyday life in urban ghettos; the prison becomes an extension of the neighborhood (Wacquant 2000). Rios calls this system the youth control complex (Rios 2011). He posits that young men are constantly policed, harassed, and stigmatized. Rios argues that the criminal justice system works with community institutions within urban ghettos to reproduce the school-to-prison pipeline; men of color are at the center of Michel Foucault's (1977) *panopticon*, constantly under surveillance. Rios maintains that the state has not abandoned the poor, but rather, the state has become embedded in their everyday lives through punitive social control. The criminalization of youth by all major institutions within their lives creates feelings of hopelessness and neglect (Rios 2011).

High incarceration rates strengthen and expand street gangs (Durán 2013). Being incarcerated gives individuals credibility for being criminals and provides networking inside and outside prisons. By the 1990s, the Clinton administration had instituted harsher sentences on street gangs. Gang enhancements on sentencing expand the reach of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act (RICO), gangs were no longer seen as the "youthful play group" (Durán 2010). RICO is a federal law passed in 1970 under Richard Nixon to help bring charges against large "criminal enterprises" (Durán 2013, Venkatesh 2008). The law was used on the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang in 1979 in Oakland, California. In 1990 it was used against the Five Mafia families in New York to break up large mob groups and give them harsher sentences (Koppel 2011). RICO is now widely used to prosecute street gangs and to increase the sentences for convicted gang members in leadership positions involved in the underground economy. The

US Department of Justice has aggressively used RICO against gang members in San Diego. I grew up with several young men who have been sentenced to prison under RICO for leadership roles involving sex trafficking and prostitution, housing loan scandals, and drug trafficking.

Technology changes the face of the underground economy because criminals use more advanced methods. Instances of hacking, wiring money, and criminal networking through social media are now utilized by street gangs. Larger street gangs no longer just participate in blue-collar crime and utilize technology to gain access to wealth.

Not only has law enforcement adopted policies that have increased the sentencing for street gangs, but it also utilizes more invasive methods as extensions of their controversial “stop-and-frisk” methods, such as the CalGang database. In 2015, Babe Howell described the addition of 300 new police officers to the New York Police Department’s Gang Division, even though gangs ranked last among the reasons for murder, and despite a class action lawsuit for stop-and-frisk (Howell 2016). Howell argues,

The gang narrative, however, is essentially the same as the narrative used to justify both the overuse of stop-and-frisk itself and the racial disparities that flowed from stop-and-frisk. Rather than requiring actual criminality, each narrative turns on two core concepts—place and person... Instead of characterizing neighborhoods as “high-crimes,” the NYPD now indicates that an area has a “gang-problem.” No criminal conduct whatsoever is required to be identified as a gang member. The gang allegation provides a facially race-neutral means for policing the usual suspects in the usual way. However, because gang databases and intelligence are secret, this policing avoids both public and judicial scrutiny. (Howell 2016:3-4)

Howell argues that the NYPD uses gang hysteria as a scare tactic to promote criminal narratives of Black and Latinx youth. In other words, law enforcement criminalizes low-income Black and Brown people to justify racial profiling.

In addition to ideology, law enforcement agencies employ new technology to promote and justify racial profiling. The Los Angeles Police Department became the test site for mathematical algorithms to pinpoint hot spots of crime. Funded by governmental agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, the Office of Naval Research, and the Army Research Office, mathematicians from the University of California, Los Angeles, Georgia Institute of Technology, University of California Irvine, and Santa Clara University used mathematic modeling to create the predictive policing software “PredPol,” which is being used in LAPD’s divisions (Mohler et al. 2015, Wolpert 2015). The software, launched in 2011, analyzed crime trends in Los Angeles county and predicted where major crimes would occur (Wolpert 2015). Testing involved sending officers to the locations that the model predicts as “hot spots,” showing a reduction of 7.4 percent in overall crime and an estimated cost savings of \$9 million per year (Wolpert 2015).

The problem with this type of software is that the developers do not take into consideration that there are humans behind these numbers. “Predpol” has be criticized for overwhelmingly targeting Black and Latinx residents. From an exhaustive amount of social science research, we know that crime is elevated in low-income communities of color. Furthermore, studies show that machine learning technology replicates human behaviors and, in this case, biases (Caliskan, Byrson and Narayanan 2017). Because the crime data used to create the model reflects the city, it will continue to predict crime in impoverished areas. However, because this technology is backed by government funding with *expert* knowledge, the LAPD can justify over-policing these areas with the full protection of “colorblind” technology. Caliskan et al. argue that in order for machine learning technology to have as little prejudice as possible, development must be done



with long-term *interdisciplinary* research such as sociology to elucidate on the structural mechanism of racism (Caliskan, Byrson and Narayanan 2017).

## 2.5 Broken Windows and Neighborhood Effects

Each gang has a “set,” or neighborhood location where a gang is founded and where they congregate and hang out. The title of my dissertation, *Set Trippin’*, refers to when two or more neighborhood gangs are in conflict. In other words, when someone says they “are set trippin’” they mean that there is conflict on the rise between gangs. It could stem from a territorial dispute, a rival gang member in the wrong “set,” or two gangs are in a neutral area such as the beach. Tita, Cohen, and Engberg argue that gang studies are left out of the “neighborhood effects” literature. They find that diminished social control was the main factor indicating “set space” (Tita, Cohen and Engberg 2005). These social controls consisted of the absence of capable guardians and the physical abandonment of housing and buildings in the area.

In 1982, George Kelling and James Q. Wilson published an article in *The Atlantic* titled “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety.” This article established their famous *broken windows theory* and heavily influenced social sciences on neighborhood effects, policing, and criminal behavior. They suggest that broken windows in any neighborhood, affluent or not, signify urban decay. Kelling and Wilson argued that a neighborhood in disrepair is “uncared for” (Kelling and Wilson 1982). Criminal behavior connects to a physical disorder such as dilapidated buildings, broken windows, and graffiti. Kelling and Wilson argue that the foot patrol programs in the 1970s maintained order. Residents felt safer even if crime rates did not decrease because the police were able to control non-violent people in the streets -- such as addicts, rowdy teens, and loiterers (Kelling and Wilson 1982). Foot patrol police knew who the regulars were and would punish those who did not follow the informal rules of the neighborhood. As such,

residents tended to have a more favorable opinion of the police. Since then, this type of community policing has shifted to a more impersonal and hyper-surveillant approach.

William Julius Wilson (2016) argues that segregation between middle-class and working-class Black people limits the opportunity for Black people living in concentrated poverty. He argues that joblessness in the Black community deprives the neighborhood of key resources such as churches, schools, and thriving businesses:

Indeed, it is easier for parents to control the behavior of the children in their neighborhoods when a strong institutional resource base exists and when the links between community institutions such as churches, schools, political organizations, businesses, and civic clubs are strong or secure. The higher the density and stability of formal organizations, the less likely illicit activities such as drug trafficking, crime, prostitution, and the formation of gangs can take root in the neighborhood (Wilson 2016:1451)

Like Hirschi, Wilson argues that the weak institutional resource base within one's community leads to lax attitudes toward crime. Neighborhoods with instability and a significant unemployment rate are susceptible to organized economic crimes such as prostitution and drug trafficking. Without community-based institutions that offer resources for struggling families or youth programs to combat the lure of gang membership, it is easier for people to go into survival mode and resort to criminality.

Rashad Shabazz perceives neighborhoods as carceral power in *Spatializing Blackness: Architectures of Confinement and Black Masculinity in Chicago* (2015). He argues that Chicago's South Side is built on racism. Mechanisms such as architecture, urban planning, and policing confine and control neighborhoods, creating a prison-like environment (Shabazz 2015:2). Shabazz argues that the carceral power of the neighborhood has a significant impact on

the formation of Black masculinity. In his analysis, Shabazz argues that the Black migrants of the early 1900s were forced to live in tiny one-room apartments known as kitchenettes.

For these men, the cramped, confining forms of housing they lived under not only illuminated their social position but also helped give rise to anger, resentment, hostility, violence, and a desire to flee their confines... Rather than operating on a larger scale, as police power did, carceral power in the kitchenette was scaled down, bringing it into the domestic lives of Black Chicagoans. Under this new regime, Blacks did not have to encounter the police to experience the power of prison; instead, prison power was part of their housing. (Shabazz 2015:32,49)

The prison becomes an extension of the neighborhood. As in Foucault's theory on discipline, prisons have the ultimate ability to control and punish (Foucault 1977). Shabazz uses this concept to further the idea of extending punishment to spaces in everyday life, while departing from Foucault's "European race-neutral focus" (2015:5). Shabazz highlights the way carceral power informs and shapes one's identity, especially Black masculinity.

## **2.6 Creation of Alternative Masculinities**

The industrialization era between 1920 and the early 1970s was also called Fordist, after Henry Ford (Patton, Eschmann and Butler 2013). As Massey and Denton explain, this period of stability allowed a low-skilled workforce to make a decent living and achieve a version of the American Dream (1993). After deindustrialization or the post-Fordist period, the conditions of the American workplace drastically changed. "These developments affected masculine identity profoundly. Almost overnight, many blue-collar men who embodied the American work ethic faced unemployment, severely damaging many urban men's self-images and representing an identity shift (Patton, Eschmann and Butler 2013:57). The "bootstrap" work ethic was no longer achievable, and men could no longer attach traditional employment to their masculinity.

The move toward a neoliberal, free-market, and service-oriented economy left many urban men without the cultural capital to survive. Between 1965 and 1985, feelings of powerlessness

pervading low-income areas contributed to a new type of masculine identity that followed deindustrialization (Patton, Eschmann and Butler 2013). In addition, hegemonic masculinity has increasingly become tied to economic success. Because many men of color during this time were low-skilled workers living in areas of concentrated poverty, it was difficult for them to meet this expectation. In response to this environment, men radically embraced *alternative masculinities* with oppositional values to hegemonic masculinity (Patton, Eschmann and Butler 2013). Men at the bottom rung of this ladder developed identities in response to their feelings of powerlessness. “While wealthy men can prove their masculinity through the ability to make money and consume products that make them ‘manly,’ poor young men use toughness, violence, and survival as a means of proving their masculinity and resilience” (Rios 2011:132). Young men growing up in concentrated poverty are still expected to aspire to traditional ideals of masculinity. When these ideals cannot be met, cultures and attitudes of resistance emerge.

Proving one’s manhood and living up to the hegemonically masculine ideal involves securing a good job and excelling at school. However, racism, social isolation, and disinvestment in low-income communities have made traditional “manhood” unattainable. “Removing poor blacks from job networks and limiting their exposure to people with stable histories of work and family formation isolates them from the mainstream of American society. Young blacks who grow up in areas of concentrated poverty are much less likely to learn how to get and keep a job or to advance in school” (Massey and Denton 1993:140). Street gangs arose in response to the social, economic, and political climate. Forming street gangs was one way that the youth could find dignity and power in a world that strips them of resources on a continual basis.

Harris maintains that hypermasculinity refers to a type of masculinity resulting from being denied access to hegemonic masculinity (Harris 2000). Working-class men who lack the power

and educational training to exhibit intellectual prowess resort to hypermasculinity to gain social status (Harris 2000:785). This behavior includes exaggerated displays of physical strength, personal aggression, and sexual prowess. “Masculinities of all varieties share in common the requirement that men establish themselves on the ground of what they are not ... individual men resort to violence when other men or women threaten their masculinity ... using violence in the service of masculine gender performance” (Harris 2000:785-91). Harris argues that hypermasculinity describes the behavior of men who use violence as a means to achieve manhood. She describes hypermasculinity in several groups, including police officers, street gangs, fraternities, and hate groups (Harris 2000).

In response to this definition of hypermasculinity, Richard Pitt and George Sanders call for a reexamination of the definition and use of the term. Pitt and Sanders contend that the use of hypermasculinity in academic literature is problematic because it is used to portray Black and Latino masculinity rather than white, working-class masculinity.

In itself, this categorizing/reifying process is not problematic. However, when the term relies on pre-established representation of nondominant actors in a society in order to create the term’s meaning, the end result is the perpetuation of stereotypes: the Black male’s threatening sexuality, the Hispanic’s temperamental and abusive nature, the gay man’s contrived and inauthentic masculine performance. All of these tropes have long histories that have been used to legitimate the perceptions that Whites are essentially different from Blacks; straights are essentially different from gays and so forth. This reification of social categories also serves dominant groups’ interests [...] The term hypermasculine is thought to lie beyond the norm of what is meant by masculine. But what are the normative boundaries of the terms masculine? (Pitt and Sanders 2010:42)

Pitt and Sanders challenge the use of the term “hypermasculinity” to refer to marginal masculinities. I argue that hegemonic masculinity is more destructive to society because it is masked and seen as natural. Hegemonic masculinity is normative; therefore, the violence is further reaching. For example, when men perform hegemonic masculinity they delineate women to an unequal status. The violence against women is on a much larger scale and harder to

confront. Hypermasculinity in the context of this study describes any behavior of someone who uses violence to perform masculinity.

The ways young men seek meaningful identities reflect where they are situated among the race, class, and gender hierarchies. Angela Harris argues that Black men are materially and culturally “emasculated” by white supremacy, by being denied the privileges of hegemonic masculinity (Harris 2000:783):

Materially, emasculation means that African American men have been denied the privileges of hegemonic masculinity, including patriarchal control over women, jobs that permit one to exercise technical mastery and autonomy, and the financial and political power that enables control over others. Culturally, African American men have been stereotyped by whites as docile and child-like in antebellum times, and in postbellum times as violent, unable to control their physical and sexual urges, and unintelligent.

Harris argues that Black men have adopted a rebellious form of manhood that places a high value on respect, dignity, and pride because they are aware of the subordinate class position within Anglo-American culture. As Rios (2011) has argued, men in the urban ghetto -- especially gang members -- often pay a high price in search of dignity and respect.

Armond Towns suggest that street gangs became a way for young men raised by single mothers to seek *masculine fatherly love* (Towns 2007:47). Traditional ideas of what a “family” is — a white picket fence and the American Dream — can be a sore reminder to poor urban youth of how they are different. Single-parent homes, lack of income, and lack of educational resources plague the urban ghetto. When home life is unstable, young men and women will seek family outside of the home, creating extended families among their gang community (Towns 2007, Vigil 1988). The idea of “street family” is also advanced in Mayeda and Pasko’s research on Pacific Islander and Asian American youth (Mayeda and Pasko 2011). Older siblings and other extended family members “provided a space where violence was utilized to develop both

hierarchical relationships and a sense of coalesced masculinity where potential physical harm to one's own body was prioritized behind violent bonding activities" (Mayeda and Pasko 2011:127). They maintain that violent masculinity is often transmitted through the family and extended family.

Early gang literature, like Joan Moore's 1978 study on Chicano gangs in Los Angeles, gives us insight into how "machismo" culture influences gang membership. She describes the Chicano gangs as a social control system for the barrio. Moore claims:

Gang boys show what Anglo adolescents would consider extraordinary deference to adults. They can be observed apologizing for the use of bad language, or even slang. They may ask permission to smoke. They do not interrupt or contradict an elder or a more prestigious person... The barrio system is strongly male-focused, with deep segregation and complementarity between the male and the female activities and between the activities of older and younger people... What we have been describing has become the hackneyed idea of "machismo," "the code," "the culture," and the like. It is also a description of a fairly intense, if not always effective, system of controls. One of the core values that has been less talked about other than machismo is the belongingness that goes with a system based on familism... The success that Chicanos are oriented to is an idealized version of male strength and male responsibility that people around them can rarely approach. This success requires belonging to the group. Thus the gang represents a means to what is an expressive, rather than an instrumental, goal: the acting out of a male role of competence and of "being in command" of things. (Moore 1978:52-53)

Moore's analysis shows that Chicano gangs demonstrate a deep reverence for older male gang members and condition younger boys into strict adherence to their culture. Moore describes the Chicano household as extremely patriarchal. Boys learn to always be in control. She also points to a deep sense of familialism. Barrio gangs are an extension of the family, which is why they refer to each other as "homeboys" (Moore 1978:53).

In Chicano or Latino populations, "machismo," or manliness, infers pride, aggressive and often violent behavior. Like Moore, Howard Erlanger complicates the subculture of violence theory that suggests that violence is a value of certain groups. He explains, "failure to respond

violently to physical or verbal challenges may well lead to negative sanctions, while a violent response to such challenges is said to be supported, encouraged and at times directly required” (Erlanger 1979:235). Erlanger suggests that machismo is an indirect outcome of structural conditions within the community. In his study, the Chicano gang members claim that machismo means having courage because Cesar Chavez had a machismo even though he was non-violent and he fought for the people (Erlanger 1979:238). When one “fights” or sticks up for themselves, like Chavez, it doesn’t have to be physical. He argues that the “core values of the subculture are not directly concerned with violence, but rather with a sense of self in a much more abstract sense” (Erlanger 1979:238). Similar to Rios, Erlanger writes that violence is not rooted in or valued by the Chicano gang subculture; it is a secondary outcome of being blocked from healthy avenues to the “maintenance of dignity” (Erlanger 1979:238). The mere act of maintaining and defending one’s dignity, even if it means resorting to physical violence.

## **2.7 Girls and Gangs**

Although there has been a considerable amount of research on gangs and gang membership (Anderson 2000, Durán 2013, Goffman 2014, Goldman, Giles and Hogg 2014, Moore 1978, Moore 1991, Rios 2011, Venkatesh 2008, Vigil 1988, Vigil 2002), few studies account for important intersections of race, class, and gender. Women and girls who grow up in concentrated poverty are enmeshed in gang violence, and their identities are shaped by gang culture. In addition, most gang research is from the criminology perspective. This work is problematic because it pathologizes gang membership. First and foremost, criminologists perceive gang members as criminals who are violent and need saving. Secondly, they perceive gang members as men, not women. This inability to see them as secondary and unremarkable.



Many young girls have fathers, brothers, uncles, and boyfriends who are active gang members. Sometimes, these girls are protected from gang violence and activities, and other times, girls are participating, active gang members. Gang literature portray women and girls playing supporting roles (Durán 2013, Goffman 2014, Thrasher 1927), being discussed in passing (Moore 1978, Rios 2011), or being used as gatekeepers (Venkatesh 2008).

In 1977, Waln Brown argued that Philadelphia was a “hotbed of gang violence.” However, he was concerned that there was a lack of attention to girls and women's role within the gang subculture (Brown 1977b):

The females live in the same high concentration, low-income ghetto neighborhoods as do the males. They are exposed to same ghetto-specific lifestyle as the males. They encounter the same unstable, unclear nuclear family unit as do their Black male counterparts... They realize their limited access to the opportunity structure of the larger society at much the same rate as the males... In short, females encounter the same problems and function in the same milieu that leads males to delinquent acts and gang participation. (Brown 1977b:222)

By this logic, girls would form gangs at the same rate as the boys. However, Brown offers a gendered explanation as to why girls remained out of the streets. Brown argues that: (1) girls in working-class Black families are often left in charge of taking care of their younger siblings, and other household duties, especially if both parents are out of the house working or headed by single-parent households, limiting their exposure to gang culture; (2) Working-class Black women have more exposure to mainstream ideals than their male counterparts and are, on average better educated, thus mothers discourage girls from becoming involved with gang life; (3) girls and women are not pressured into joining gangs and are given a choice to participate, while young men in the neighborhoods are “drafted” by gangs or forced to join out of fear or for protection (Brown 1977b:222-23).

Brown argues that a sense of belonging and popularity draws girls and young women into gang membership (Brown 1977b:223). “As a gang member, the female has established her identity as one of the group, thus providing her with a high potential for popularity, while allowing her access to an atmosphere of excitement” (Brown 1977b:223). Brown highlights duties that some girl gang members perform, such as holding weapons, spying on gang rivals, or protecting the territory from outsiders. While some girl gang members can be sexual opportunities for the male members, it is not always their role within the gang (Brown 1977b).

Hunt and Joe-Laidler describe how girl gang members are subject to a substantial amount of violence in their everyday lives on the streets, in their families, or their relationships with boyfriends and lovers (Hunt and Joe-Laidler 2001). They show how girls are on the receiving end of violence mainly due to romantic relationships or hostility with rival gangs. They find that girl gang members rejected “aggressive attempts to make them conform to more traditional notions of femininity including sexual chastity, staying at home, cooking, and looking after children” (Hunt and Joe-Laidler 2001:381). While informative, the study lacked an in-depth analysis of how girls exhibit traditionally masculine traits such as fighting and participating in criminal behavior.

Adrien Wing and Christine Willis urge scholars to utilize critical race feminism to demarginalize the experiences of Black women in gangs and put women at the center of analysis (Wing and Willis 1999:4). They write:

The Black female gang member is triply burdened by her class, race, and gender. The Black female gang member lives primarily in the poor inner-city regions of large cities. She comes from a poor family, usually headed by a single female. She feels her choices are limited and she strives to overcome economic and gender repression...She turns to the gang to protect her from violence and to provide her with family-like relationships. Her father is often absent, and she is deprived of the kind of stable family environment every child needs. Due to all of these and other contributing factors, the needs of females

within these communities are not being met. The African American female must turn elsewhere to fulfill them. In the gang she hopes to find love, protection, acceptance, belonging, guidance, and support. (Wing and Willis 1999:12)

These narratives highlight why a Black girl or woman might join a gang to gain protection and familial-like relationships. Wing and Willis identify eight different roles for women in gangs from two distinct categories: (1) women as gang members and (2) women who affect gang members. Wing and Willis juxtapose these two groups of women — one group that condones and promotes gang culture and the other group that discourages gang membership and encourages men to leave the gang life. Using critical race feminism, Wing and Willis argue that youth prevention programs centered on uplifting Black women will reduce gang membership by empowering women and girls in the community (Wing and Willis 1999:14). The idea is that in turn, they will influence the gang members in their families and neighborhoods to lead a more productive and positive lifestyle.

Sociologist Nikki Jones (2010) provides an in-depth analysis of adolescent girls and women in inner-city Philadelphia. Jones observed several teenage inner-city girls who shared similar circumstances and codes with the boys in the neighborhood. In turn, many of the girls responded to violence with aggression and kept a “code of the streets.” “Those girls and women who defy normative conceptions of femininity and instead embrace perceived ‘masculine’ qualities like strength and independence are often disparagingly categorized as ‘unnaturally strong’ women” (Jones 2008:66). Girls growing up in unsafe communities have to exhibit a sense of strength, bravado, and courage to maintain an image that deters others from negatively engaging with them.

In addition, Jones's interviews reveal that both girls and boys reacted to losing a fight in similar manners. She shows that the girls who won fistfights against other girls engaged in fighting to earn respect in the neighborhood and illustrate that they were not easy targets. Exhibiting a willingness to fight discourages others from challenging them in the future (Jones 2008:72). Another recurrent theme among her interviews was the idea of "survival." Girls and boys need to exhibit violent behavior as a means for survival in a rough neighborhood.

However, participating in violent behavior conflicted with some girls' abilities to show a more feminine gendered performance. Many girls were concerned that they would not be seen in the community as "pretty" or "good" girls if they partook in gangs or fights. Girls "strategically chose from a variety of gender, race, and class displays depending on the situation, the public identity they are invested in crafting, and in service of a survival project that has historically defined the lives of poor, Black women and girls in the United States" (Jones 2009:92). While girls participate in the "code of the streets," there is often another set of gender normative expectations placed upon them (Anderson 2000). Families expect girls dress in conventionally feminist ways and to do gendered activities such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare. Often, a girl who operates outside conventional gender norms is not a potential romantic partner and is as "one of the guys."

Furthermore, Jones suggests that girls in the inner city strategically manage their reputations as "good/pretty girls" or "girl fighters" as a means of survival. Girls develop what Jones calls *situated survival strategies*, "patterned forms of interpersonal interaction, and routine or ritualized activities oriented around a concern for securing their personal well-being" (Jones 2010:52). For instance, "good girls" use tactics of staying inside and out of trouble by limiting contact with people in the neighborhood to family only, while "girl fighters" use their reputation

to gain notoriety and freedom. The “good girls” feel that staying out of trouble is the best strategy for survival. In contrast, the “girl fighters” believe that fighting offers them the freedom to walk about the neighborhood without fear (Jones 2010).

The dichotomy between these two types of gender performances is interesting because both roles have pros and cons. As such, Jones reasons that these two types of strategies are interrelated.

The pretty girl whose identity is invested primarily in her looks and the girl fighter whose identity is invested primarily in her actions are locked in a relationship that is based on a very old racialized and gendered hierarchy. Each girl may, in fact, want the same thing: an identity that brings with it a sense of personal power, self-esteem, and the respect of others. Because each one needs the other in order to maintain her reputation, however, the two seem to be always at odds. Their routine and ritualized physical and verbal battles reinforce the internalized racial hierarchy that is produced and reproduced through girls’ everyday evaluation of themselves and others. (Jones 2010:52)

This hierarchy divides young women into “good girls” and “ghetto girls ” (Jones 2010:52). The community treats good girls as special. On the other hand, ghetto girls who do not fit typical beauty standards use intimidation as a survival strategy. “Girl fighters” often receive negative treatment from the community, putting them at odds with “good girls.” The constant tension between these two groups view these quarrels superficial as jealousy and may result in physical altercations. Jones argues that these confrontations are a result of the racialized and gendered hierarchy of feminine beauty (Jones 2010).

Earlier in the *Gang Membership and Family* section, I discussed Valdez’s study on Mexican American girls. Although Valdez’s categorization of all street-orientated girls/women to be “beyond-risk” is off-putting, he does offer an interesting analysis of Mexican American familial structure and intimate partner violence, which is overlooked in much gang literature focused on male gang experiences. Valdez argues that in Mexican American, low-income communities

gender is associated with sexuality. Compounded with the *cholo/a* street culture, this association promotes male hypermasculinity, sexual conquest, and sexual objectification of women (Valdez 2007:111). Thus, gang-affiliated girls often become victims of sexual and intimate partner violence. Valdez argues that while girls often join gangs as a form of protection, they are also more susceptible to exposure to violence, especially sexual and domestic violence (Valdez 2007:132). He found that girls were often victimized for not adhering to gender-based norms such as being submissive, consenting to sex with their partners, and upholding conventional standards of femininity.

## 2.8 Gangs and Sex Work

Traditionally, sex work is analyzed from a deviance framework within sociology. Gang membership for young men and women is a lucrative alternative to minimum-wage jobs because it unlocks doors to the underground economy (Durán 2010; Venkatesh 2008). Often, gang membership also includes organized crime. Many of the gangs in San Diego are involved in low-level street crimes such as robbery and selling drugs, higher-level crimes such as pimping, pandering, drug trafficking, and white-collar crimes such as bank fraud.

Although many scholars have noted that girl gang members are viewed as sexual objects by boy gang members, many have not made the connection between the underground economy, gangs, and pimping. There is very little literature on the relationship between pimping, gangs, and sex work. In 2016, Aaron Pittman, also known as “Q-Tip,” was sentenced to 11 years in prison under racketeering charges for sex trafficking, as well as assault and robbery (Serano and Orabona 2016). Pittman was part of the “Black Mob” gang in North Park, a neighborhood of San Diego, and was a well-known pimp in the area. He was one of twenty-four gang members and associates who were charged under the RICO law for sex trafficking, murder, kidnapping,

robbery, and drug-related crimes (FBI 2014). “The federal racketeering statute known as “RICO” historically has been used to prosecute mobsters and organized crime, but federal prosecutors have been using the statute on street gangs in recent years because the gangs are increasingly acting as organized criminal enterprises especially sex trafficking and prostitution” (Serano and Orabona 2016:2). Pittman was an acquaintance of mine; he grew up with people I was friends with, and I would see him around socially. We all knew that he was a pimp, but to girls that he was not involved with, he was a “nice guy” and was seen as “cool” by other male gang members because he had a lot of money. Pimping became an attractive endeavor to male gang members because it was “easy” money. Although some women and girls are manipulated into the arrangement, other girls and women participated willingly.

Pimping became a lucrative enterprise for gangs in San Diego starting in the late 1990s (Carpenter and Gates 2016). Both men and women gang members were involved in the business aspect of pimping. Some women gang members might not have been participating in sex work but were still contributing by driving other women to meet “johns,” booking hotel/motel rooms, collecting money, or keeping the girls and women from fighting. Growing up, I knew many young women and men involved in what we called “pimpin’ and hoein’.” In fact, many of my friends became high-end “call girls.” Instead of walking the street, young women would post advertisements on Craigslist, Backpage, or use escort services.

In a study on adolescent pimping relationships, Anderson et al. argue that those who have been exploited are less likely to self-identify as victims (Anderson et al. 2014). They find that respondents believe younger pimps are more likely to use violence to coerce girls into sex work, whereas older pimps are more likely to use emotional manipulation and might be someone the girls care about or are involved with romantically. Pimps targeted young women who were

estranged from their families or were in vulnerable positions such as being homeless or having low self-esteem (Anderson et al. 2014). “Our respondents suggested that exploited youth do not identify as victims; instead, they agree to sell or exchange sex as a favor for a romantic partner (e.g., to help a boyfriend pay bills), for financial reasons (e.g. a girl working for her own benefit without a pimp), or for survival purposes (e.g., food, shelter, or clothing)” (Anderson et al. 2014:116). Anderson et al. claim that adolescent girls often enter into pimping relationships unaware that they are being coerced and threatened with violence if they tried to leave the relationship (Anderson et al. 2014:115-16).

If scholars frame this as *sex work*, it implies agency and choice. If we use the term *prostitution*, there is a negative stigma attached; and with the term *sex trafficking*, coercion is implied. The FBI press release describing Aaron Pittman’s case used the term *sex trafficking* because it wanted to depict him as a person who forced women into prostitution; the women, in this case, had no agency, no choice. I am not arguing that Pittman is not guilty of these crimes. However, I want to use his story to provide nuance to how sex work can be framed as sex trafficking, and I will discuss this more in Chapter 5.

Wendy Chapkis delves into the nuances of sex work (Chapkis 1997). She complicates the moral argument behind sex trafficking arguing that it historically was to save “beautiful white girls sold into ruin,” while Black women were stereotyped as sexually aggressive which justified sexual assaults by white men (Chapkis 1997:44). The sexual abuse of enslaved African women was commonplace and these stereotypes justified racial violence. “The idea that Black women were congenitally inclined to whorish behavior was matched by a comparable belief that Black men were highly sexed and dangerously out of control” (Chapkis 1997:44). Modern framing of sex work surrounds the idea of consent, where prostitution is consensual or forced (Chapkis



1997:51). Among gangs, there are examples of both, workers who are choosing to be prostitutes and pimps who coerce women and girls into prostitution. Chapkis argues that to decriminalize sex work that the laws must normalize sex work as a legitimate business so that workers will have the same protections under the standard employment laws (Chapkis 1997:155). The supporters of decriminalizing sex work maintains that it would ensure safer and less exploitive conditions for workers.

Ronald Weitzer argues that there are three sex work paradigms: oppression, empowerment, and polymorphous. According to Weitzer, the oppression paradigm maintains that sex work is essentially patriarchal in nature and that “exploitation, subjugation, and violence against women are intrinsic to and ineradicable from sex work, transcending historical time period, national context, and type of sexual commerce” (Weitzer 2009:214). In contrast, the empowerment paradigm emphasizes that sex work is an occupation and that the women or men involved have agency and the potential to be empowered (Weitzer 2009:215). Scholars who promote the empowerment paradigm stress the financial security and autonomy that some sex workers benefit from and liken it to other service work such as massage or physical therapy (Weitzer 2009:215). Weitzer argues that the oppression and empowerment paradigms are both one-dimensional arguments, claiming that sex work is more multifaceted. Finally, the polymorphous paradigm accepts the complexities of sex work, noting the uneven power relations, agency, and worker experiences (Weitzer 2009:215). This paradigm is more nuanced and allows for experiences of both exploitation and empowerment as well as a micro and macro level of analysis.

Scholars argue that the current literature lacks theoretical explanations of sex work from the societal level (Gerassi 2015). Lara Gerassi writes:

Marxist feminists have argued that sexuality is to feminism what work is to Marxism[...] Marxist feminism posits women's oppression on the economic dependence on men in a male-centric society and argues that capitalism continues to be the overarching oppressor of women. As long as capitalism exists, women will live in a patriarchal state and economically depend on men in a society structured around social class. (Gerassi 2015:81)

While I agree with this analysis, sex-positive theorists would argue that this reasoning diminishes human agency. In my view, sex work among gang members and their associates must be analyzed using an intersectional feminist framework. Some women gang members who participate in sex work argue that sex work is consensual and allows some women to gain economic stability. However, scholars must consider the intersectional analysis of sex work that identifies the social class component affecting sex workers who are more likely to be working-class. It is very rare for a woman or girl who comes from wealth to participate in sex work. In Chapter 5, I discuss the gendered nuances of "pimp and hoe" relationships among gang members and how they relate to the underground economy.

### 3 METHODS

Employing a multi-method approach to address these questions, I utilized the “docent method,” a qualitative place-based approach, to allow participants to walk me through their experiences of everyday life (Chang 2017). This unique methodology enables a participant-led, place-based, ethnographical analysis. Participants chose sites of interest to bring me to, as we talked. Centering the methodological process on the participants led to rich narratives of their experiences. This allows me to outline the layout of the city to illustrate how residential segregation facilitates the formation of gangs

Because I grew up in this area and I have friends from this community, I used my close contacts to reach out to gang members to ask for volunteers for this study. I interviewed 30 men and women gang members/associates in Southeast San Diego and Mid-City, which comprises several neighborhood gangs. I am particularly interested in what factors contribute to gang affiliation and what role gender plays in their formation and continuation over time. These questions guide my research:

1. How do racial, gendered, and classist factors contribute to gang membership?
2. How do Black men and women use their gang-affiliated identities to navigate and challenge social inequality within their communities?

Participants for this study were required to identify as current or former gang members or to have close ties to the gang community. This included ties to gang members -- such as family members, romantic relationships past or present, or having grown up in a gang neighborhood. My goal was to achieve diversity in positionality within the gangs and among people on the periphery who may not be in the gangs themselves but are affected the gang activities.

Before the interview began, the participant mapped out either a walking path or a destination that I drove to in a rented car. During the interview, I took pictures of the surrounding area to

map the neighborhood. Ultimately, the participant would lead me on a journey to illustrate their past experiences. Participants were briefed about confidentiality, eligibility, and safety measures.

Due to the sensitive nature of this study, participants' contact information was not recorded or saved on my phone, and identity markers were changed to ensure complete anonymity.

Before the start of the interview, participants were given an informed consent form to sign. The informed consent included a waiver of liability for insurance purposes since a portion of the interview involved driving. I allowed participants to ask me questions about the study, decline to answer any of the questions I asked, or opt out of the study altogether at any time.

I utilized a three-stage interview process for the "docent method" outlined by Jamie Chang (2017) with slight modification. The first stage involved a warm-up interview focusing on background information, positionality, and planning the path. I met with participants at a location of their choosing. They were asked to map out the route and "sites of interest" (SOI's) within their community. The second stage involved a participant-led walking or driving interview to SOI's. Since San Diego is a high-density city that is un-walkable, depending on the SOI's, I either drove to the site and we got out and walked around or stayed in the car to conduct the study. All interview stages were recorded; but for safety, the main interview questions were conducted while we were either pulled over in front of the SOI's or walking around the area. The third stage was a wind-down interview conducted at the end of the path chosen by the participant. Immediately after the interview, I mapped out the route, documented significant moments, and noted my interpretations and experiences (Chang 2017:611).

I chose to use the docent method because I want to minimize power imbalances and allow the participant to be the expert and serve as an educator and guide. Jamie Chang argues that the

docent method is community-based participatory research (CBPR) that allows academics to bridge the gap between researchers and the communities we work with (Chang 2017:609).

Chang writes that the docent method was designed to facilitate grounded theorizing: “The docent method was formulated based on several principals of grounded theory: symbolic interactionist foundations; focus on actions and situations; concurrent, iterative data collection and analysis; constant comparison of different styles of data; and theoretical sampling” (Chang 2017:611).

This method borrows from the ethnographic tradition of the go-along method to get “real-world” examples of someone’s experiences. It allows the participant to control the narrative and show the relationship between the neighborhood and the gang from their point of view. It also provides a unique way to show how places affect people.

The interview guide (Appendix A) consists of the statement of my research question, theoretical framework, and several open-ended questions with follow-up prompts. I collected basic demographic information and asked several overview questions about background information, culture, ethnicity, childhood community, and experiences with race and ethnicity in school. My questions were broken into the following categories: relationships with family and friends; education from elementary up to secondary school; and questions about self-identification, gender, and ascribed status.

The initial questions were simple, such as “Can you tell me about your background?” I then moved into deeper and more personal questions as the interview progressed, such as, “In what ways does your ethnicity plays a role in how you are treated by people in your community or outside your community, if at all?” I did not ask for any incriminating information or ask any questions about their gang affiliations that could hinder or harm them in their community. However, I did ask participants about the involvement they may have in the underground

economy. To protect the participants, I do not reveal gang locations or significant location markers. The participants were aware that the interviews were recorded and only listened to by me for transcribing purposes. Any incriminating information about someone or a group of people was redacted from the transcripts. I recorded all the interviews using a handheld recorder and transferred interviews to a password-protected laptop for transcribing. I used an online transcription service provided by Transcribe by Wreally. In addition, I made sure to follow Irving Seidman's code of qualitative research ethics by ensuring that I followed the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Seidman 2013).

I coded the interviews methodically, using the inductive technique to reduce the text into data. Using Seidman's coding techniques, I first developed profiles of individual participants and grouped them into categories that share similarities (Seidman 2013:121). Second, I marked individual passages and grouped them together to draw out the thematic connections (121). Once I developed themes and profiles, I analyzed the data to find connections to the theories discussed in the literature review and generate new theories using the grounded theory method. I utilized the grounded theory method to facilitate community participation in constructing theories that are based on participants' experiences. Chang describes grounded theory as "a set of approaches for collecting and analyzing qualitative data in a systematic, data-driven way to construct theory, or theories, from the ground up" (Chang 2016). I used NVivo qualitative coding software to manage and organize my data.

Because I am a member of this community who moved away, I am both an insider and an outsider. Robert Durán, a sociologist and former gang member, reflects on his insider and outsider status. He writes that standpoint theory gives authority to the perspective of people from colonized communities (Durán 2013:27). Rios, Durán, Collins, and many others have advocated

the need for people of color to write their own stories with a sociological analysis. Growing up, I had many friends involved in gangs and benefitted from the protection of gangs; however, I was not a gang member. I was an outsider because I did not fully participate in gang activities. I was busy furthering my education. In addition, I am currently living out of state. Apart from social media, I have kept in close contact with only a few people I grew up with since I moved away in 2014. One of the purposes of this study is to add to the current literature using a feminist standpoint perspective from a woman who has lived in this community.

Since I am from Southeast San Diego, the community ties I have fostered over the years allow me to have access to gang members. These interpersonal relationships afford me a level of trust outsiders would not usually receive. If I were a researcher who people did not trust, I do not think I would have gotten such rich and candid narratives. However, because I know some of the participants personally, my positionality was also a hindrance. Some of the men and women I grew up with did not want to talk about their previous history with sex work; and I believe it was because of our close relationship. In addition, I also think that because I am from this community, I was able to collect deep and meaningful interviews. At the same time, outside researchers may not have gotten the same level of intimacy. After many of the interviews, participants said they felt like the discussions were therapeutic; they felt good about telling their stories. One of the participants, Keith said, "It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. I actually enjoyed talking to you! I thought it was going to be different and really uncomfortable." Often people do not have time to reflect on their life. My questions are about their gang membership status and their family life and goals for the future. The conversations become very personal and deep in such a short amount of time. Because I am an outsider, some of the interviews felt

censored, while other interviews felt very revealing and genuine. When I was able to gain their trust, they used more colloquial language and their narratives were richer and more detailed.

I interviewed 15 men and 15 women from Southeast San Diego. I conducted the interviews in two phases, Summer 2018 and Summer 2019. During the second phase of data collection, several shootings occurred in the area, and my contacts advised me to cease the interviews. A limitation I encountered during this study was gaining access to the 18-24 age group. Most of my community liaisons were people I had grown up with who were within five years of my age (25-35). Those who were familiar with me knew that I was researching the community for my dissertation. Younger gang members were more skeptical of my presence in their community and did not want to be interviewed. I spoke to some off the record, but the conversations revolved around the current gang climate, and their advice that I be careful.

*Table 3.1 Participants racial breakdown.*

<b>15 Men ages 18-35</b>	<b>15 Women ages 18-35</b>
9 Black	8 Black
2 Latinx	1 Latinx
1 Asian (Filipinx)	2 Asian (Cambodian and Filipinx)
3 Interracial/Black Identifying	4 Interracial/Black Identifying

Some of the participants, chose more than one site to visit because the location was essential to the story they were telling. Participants I met for the first time always decided to stay at the meeting point to conduct the interview. During the interviews with unfamiliar people, I ensured that we were parked in a well-lit area during daytime hours. Often the meeting point was at a



grocery store, park, or community center. For my safety, before each interview, I shared my location with two contacts: the community liaison or person who referred me to the participant and a family member. At no point during any of the interviews did I feel unsafe or in danger. All the participants were respectful, and most were eager to share their stories with me.

Additional limitations revolved around my lack of access to the Latinx and Asian gangs. The neighborhood I grew up in was primarily Black, specifically from Blood gangs. The lack of access to other areas limited my contacts with other, often rival gangs, which I also avoided for my safety. Aside from these limitations, I believe these young men and women's narratives depict true survival, community, and resilience stories.

#### 4 GANGS AND IDENTITY FORMATION

Identity literature contains three overarching theoretical frameworks: individual internalization, contextual performance, and collective mobilization (Davis 2019, Owens, Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2010). The first framework, individual internalization, stems from the theories of symbolic interactionists, George Herbert Mead and Charles Cooley. They analyze how one internalizes the outside world, such as absorbing what one learns from society and applying these concepts to how one perceives oneself (Cooley 1902; Mead 1934). “Once identity has been successfully socialized and internalized it becomes a set of relatively stable self-structures, self-concepts, and cognitive schemas” (Davis 2019:358). The second framework delves into the notion that our identity is a performance. Erving Goffman highlights how the performance of the self centers on external factors such as neighborhood, workplace, and cultural elements that exist outside the individual (Goffman 1959). For instance, situational identity theory focuses on aspects of oneself that change depending on social settings (Alexander and Knight 1971). Finally, the collective mobilization framework derives from Marx’s class analysis and Durkheim’s collective conscience theory. This framework explores how people define themselves by utilizing their social location and commonality with others (Davis 2019). The collective identity framework explores identity formation surrounding social movements and how groups define themselves juxtaposed to other groups (Davis 2019).

Applying identity concepts to gang membership provides a way to examine how disenfranchised groups create their collective identity and how they perform or internalize roles and individual identities. Throughout my data collection, notions of identity formation, stigma, self-determination, dualism, and place-identity emerged. Through a CRT lens, I center gang members’ narratives. This chapter examines identity formation’s nuances among gang members

utilizing the three identity theory traditions: individual internalization, contextual performance, and collective mobilization.

#### **4.1 Internalization of Gang Identity**

One's self-concept is the "totality of a specific person's thoughts and feelings toward him- or herself as an object of reflection" (Owens, Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2010:479). Our physical attributes, self-referring dispositions (abstract categories and attitudes), and how we order ourselves within society contribute to our self-concept (Owens, Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2010). Our identity is the founding basis that our other identities build upon. Role-identity is how people identify their social position within the larger social structure based on interaction with others, while category-based identity is an abstraction of our demographic details put into categories such as "liberal Californian from the working-class" (Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010:479). People internalize and resist the scripts of structured role relationships. "In the micro-sociology tradition, identity is understood as at least somewhat dynamic, though largely crystallized during primary socialization, or childhood" (Davis 2019:358). Participants shared many childhood memories revolving around gang culture. Because core identity forms during childhood, gang membership is often internalized at a young age, becoming part of identity.

Julio is a high-ranking member of the Mexican Mafia, a large prison gang in California. Our interview took place in a rental car. We met in the Burger King parking lot near his son's soccer practice. He had broad shoulders and face tattoos. His son sat in the backseat with his headphones on, quietly playing games on his tablet. Julio was forthcoming with me from the very beginning of the interview. He recalls his childhood and what drove him into gang membership:

I don't really have good memories of me growing up, just me being incarcerated. That's pretty much it -- you know what I'm saying? My dad died of [an] OD when I was 15, so it's like once he passed away, I didn't really care about nothing. So that just drove me into more gang banging. A lot of people didn't want to hang out with me because they know if they hang out with me they gonna go to jail cause I was the type of person to be on the corner with no shirt on me, strapped up, not really caring about nothing, you know.

Now an adult with a son of his own, Julio reflects on his childhood with sadness. He says that his anger at his father dying was what drove him towards gangs. He spent most of his childhood in and out of juvenile hall and grew up in the cycle of incarceration. Julio's identity is dominated by his gang member status, neighborhood, and experiences being incarcerated.

As a recovering addict, Julio explains how he is trying to shed the stigma of being in prison, being an addict, and being a gang member:

I've done a lot of time, a grip of time, you know. So it was just like man, I gotta change this shit. You know what I'm saying? 'Cause I'm a two striker, so any little thing and they'll give me life. So I decided to go into a rehab.... I went to this program, and it was nothing but gang members, and the counselors were [former] gang members. And so I tried to do that, but then I was still going to the neighborhood. Like, "Oh, see, look at me -- I'm doing good." Next thing you know, I have a needle in my arm again. I told them, if I don't get from them, I'm gonna get it regardless from somewhere else. So either you make your money, or I'm gonna get it somewhere else...So next thing you know, I'm back in the game and I got busted again...So I got out and I said "you know what, I'm done." I went back to that same program, and they accepted me back. And I was like, I wouldn't go to the neighborhood. I told my grandma "you know what? I can't come see you." She was like, "why not?" And I told her why. Like man, I just don't want to bump into nobody. Or me having a bad day, next thing you know I'll be drinking or smoking or just shooting up or whatever.

Being a part of the gang introduced Julio to the drug world, both selling and using. Julio reflects on the moment in his life when he decided to stay sober. He admits that he still struggles with addiction and connects his gang membership with his addiction. Because many of his fellow gang members sell drugs, going to the park or being in his old neighborhood puts him at risk of a relapse. For Julio, avoiding his grandmother's house in his old neighborhood is critical to staying

sober and staying out of the gang. This puts a strain on his family and social ties. Julio is now four years sober and attributes his success to going to a church for ex-gang members and a desire to be active in his son's life. He still carries his gang membership identity with him. He finds a sense of community with folks of similar backgrounds helps him to manage his new identity as a former gang member while fostering his role as a father.

For Julio, being a gang member is affixed to his individual identity or self-concept. "The self-concept (or the "me") consists of three broad classes of individual attributes: self-referring dispositions, physical characteristics, and identities" (Owens, Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2010:479). Not only does Julio physically look like a gang member, with tattoos on his face and the clothing he wears, but he also calls himself a "two-striker," which indicates that he has a criminal record. Under California's infamous three strikes law, if he is convicted a third time, he will receive a life sentence in prison. His gang member identity centers on the neighborhood where he grew up and where his grandmother still resides. His *core identity*, family, and community are emmeshed with his gang identity and are compounded with the label of a "two-striker" or criminal. He can no longer go to his neighborhood without being seen by others as a gang member or being tempted by gang activities and drugs. These different labels of Julio's identity are nested within his *self-concept*: gang member, a recovering addict, two-striker, and Latino.

During formative ages, adolescents are searching for ways to fit in and to be "cool." Gang membership appeals to impressionable children because is glamorized. In low-income neighborhoods, children are less likely to be supervised outside due to instability at home, single-parent households, or parents working multiple jobs. Julio's grandmother raised him; both his mother and father were addicts. Working long hours, she often sent him outside to play:

I remember when I was a little kid, you know what I mean, there was no technology or what not, like today. So my grandma would just be like, cause my grandma raised 11 kids plus me and my brother, you know what I mean, so she really didn't have time, she was never really home. So she would be like, "oh go outside and play." She thinks that was the right thing to do. We'll go to the park and at the park, you know what I mean seeing the gang members, with cars and tattoos and I was like 'man these guys are cool' you know? So little by little, those were the people I would idolize, the dope dealers, the gang members; that's who I wanted to be when I grew up.

For Julio, the park in his neighborhood is his gateway into gang life. Many other participants express the same sentiment: the neighborhood park or hanging outside is the first step to being gang-affiliated. Julio's grandmother left her grandchildren unattended for long periods, resulting in them being lured by gang membership. However, the absence of adult supervision is a structural problem. His grandmother is not to blame. This is a structural problem caused by stagnant wages, poverty, and segregation.

Because many participants enter gang membership at a young age, it shapes how they view themselves and how community members perceive them. A 22-year-old Black man named Travis grew up in a gang family. His brother and his father are part of the Blood gang. I met Travis in a store parking lot close to an exit off the 805 freeway. It is the same exit where two of my childhood friends crashed their car into a store after being gunned down on the freeway by rival gang members. Both were shot, only one survived. Travis walked to the store which is close to his mother's home. This area is considered North Park, part of the area has been gentrified but there are still remnants of gang activity in the area. This neighborhood is unique because it is mixed-income area that it very diverse. It is close to San Diego State University and has somewhat affordable housing, so it attracts college students. North Park borders Mission Valley so there are some high-income neighborhoods near low-income neighborhoods. This also means that it is heavily policed.

I interviewed both Travis and his brother Trae. Travis and I drove around the area, he showed me the street where his mother lives, where he got arrested, and the park he would hang out at as a kid. Travis speaks about his gang membership and his early trouble within the education system:

I started banging at an early age, like at 11 years old. I was terrible at school. I've been expelled from the San Diego Unified School District twice... All the way from kindergarten up, I remember I was just always suspended, always in trouble. I bit my kindergarten teacher for waking me up from naptime. So I was a handful, I was definitely considered a bad kid.

During the interview, Travis details his criminalization from kindergarten until he graduated with his GED while still in juvenile hall. While he admits to having been a bad kid, Travis's childhood behavioral issues could have been addressed by therapy or medical interventions instead of expulsions. Travis internalized the gang membership identity as a young child, and that identity stayed with him throughout his entire educational career.

Travis is the father of one child, with a baby on the way. He plays football at a two-year college. He talks about his rigorous conditioning schedule with prospects of a scholarship at a university:

Travis: It's something that I gotta do, like time is ticking. I'm 22 and you know 'bout to be two kids and it's really finna be crunch time for me. I'm not going to be able to do this for much longer. I gotta do it now while I still have the opportunity...I got to be able to dedicate myself to it with all the time I got now 'cause I got a child that's not even here yet.

So sports-wise, conditioning, and being healthy... do you want to go pro?

Travis: Not pro, I really just want free education. And one of my friends just came back, he graduated in 3 years actually... came up through the neighborhood just like me we played on the same pop-warner (elementary football) team, hung out on the same block all that.

Like Julio, Travis takes his role as a father very seriously. New roles form, and identities evolve.

Under the Identity Accumulation Theory, as people add new role-identities they gain additional

resources, status, and social connections (Owens, Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2010). Different roles such as a parent, spouse, church member, or college student can help reduce stress and foster healthy self-esteem (Owens, Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2010). Travis gets a second chance. His football-player role combined with his college-student role affords him an opportunity at an education and an overall better life prospect. Travis is strategic and utilizes his football talent to pay for his education.

Because identities are dynamic, the gang membership identity for Julio and Travis is in transition. Both Julio and Travis add the role of fatherhood to their self-concept, which comes with immense responsibilities. A study on a sample of 466 men and 163 women gang members find that parenthood reduces crime among gang members (Pyrooz, McGloin and Decker 2017). Parenthood is a significant life event that creates strong social bonds for gang members, forces men and women to conform to society, minimizes unstructured time spent with the gang, and promotes changes in identity (Pyrooz, McGloin and Decker 2017:871-72). Julio talks about improving his life so he can be there for his son: “I know he’s watching, so I try not to do anything that’s going to jeopardize like I’m very on the straight and narrow... He plays soccer Monday, Wednesday, Friday. He is really active. You know I try to keep him active. I take him to church. All the people hanging around him, they’re doing good. I want him to grow up with a lot of positive people.” Julio is a very active parent and describes how he wants his son to grow up with positive people in his life. For Julio, becoming a father has been a catalyst for change that has had a positive impact on Julio and his son.

I met Johnny, now a 37-year-old Black man, when I was in high school. He is part of a neighborhood Blood gang. Johnny met me in a mall parking lot south of Southeast San Diego in the city of Chula Vista. He and his wife live nearby. He moved out of the neighborhood because



he is a nonactive gang member and is focused on his family. Johnny spent time in federal prison, so he actively avoids Southeast San Diego. Chula Vista has its own gang problems, but it is primarily Latino/a gangs. Most gang members who have aged out of gangs no longer reside in Southeast San Diego. He recalls when he first joined the gang:

Just growing up as a kid, that was kind of the culture. Just a young kid playing sports, you just throw up gang signs. I started throwing up gang signs just trying to be cool and hang out with the cool kids.... when you get older it gets more serious, you know what I mean? And you know, now you wearing colors and you hanging out at parties.... you start getting associated with some of your older friends, or their older cousins, or their older brothers are in the gang. So now they're in a gang.... You go out to the mall, or whatever, and some other dudes from a (another) gang think you from the gang... So they attacking you, so now you pretty much like damned if I do damned if I don't.... I wasn't really jumped into a gang or nothing, just hanging out with the certain group of people.

For Johnny, being with his friends meant being part of the gang. He also argues that gang membership is part of the culture of Southeast San Diego, and it made him feel cool. Because he grew up in the area and associated with the gang, other rival gang members assumed his membership. Being from a particular neighborhood gives you status and signals to others that you are under the gang's protection. Associating with a well-known gang can provide you with power over others. It boosts the confidence of boys looking to fit in or to belong.

People define themselves based on interactions with one another and their material environment. Place-identity is the notion that our identity centers on our physical environment. "At the core of such physical environment-related cognitions is the 'environmental past' of the person; a past consisting of places, spaces, and their properties which have served instrumentally in the satisfaction of the person's biological, psychological, social, and cultural needs" (Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff 1983:59). Central to our identities is the place we call "home," and it is thought to be the place of greatest personal significance (Proshansky, Fabian

and Kaminoff 1983:60). For most people, home is the place where they grew up. Home is a place where one feels a sense of belonging.

Gang members create a strong emotional attachment to their neighborhoods, a place where they feel at home. As such, the participants expressed a strong sense of place-identity to Southeast San Diego, known for being gang territory (Kyle, Graefe and Manning 2005). Every one of my participants described where they grew up by naming the street they lived on and describing their neighborhood in detail, from the parks to the stores and the schools they attended. You can sense the pride in their voices and the sentimental attachment they have while representing “where they are from.” Roger, a 32-year-old Black man and former gang member, describes his neighborhood as “some of the best memories I had. It’s like being around family and friends -- people from the neighborhood come over. That really was the best moments.” Earlier I spoke of Mike and his goal of being the first gang member to graduate from law school. He proudly describes his family roots: “I was born in Southeast San Diego. I believe my grandparents moved into the community like the mid-50’s. I’ve been here ever since, and both my parents born and raised there... So growing up in this community are like some of my best memories as a child and I just remember everybody knowing everybody.” This sentiment demonstrates that gang members develop a strong place-identity with their neighborhood. Their self-identity is the reflection of internalized bonds, memories, family, friends, and community.

The internalization of identity develops in stages. During childhood, the first stage of identity manifests through family upbringing and where we are raised. Many of the children growing up in Southeast San Diego are exposed to gangs at a young age. Their *gang identity* becomes intermingled with their *personal identity* in addition to their roles of son/daughter or sibling. As such, a nested layer of *place-identity* reflects the meaning they attach and the experiences they

have created in their neighborhood. They develop an emotional connection with their community because it feels like home and what home represents. For children growing up during the 1980-90s, it was customary for kids to spend a lot of time playing outside, going to the park, and hanging out with friends in the community. The gang member identity is their primary source of dignity, pride, and sense of self. This early socialization is the core identity that gang members draw from until they develop new roles, such as a parent.

#### **4.2 Internalized Identity: Self-Determination**

Richard Ryan and Edward Deci introduce self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan 1985, Ryan and Deci 2000). Deci and Ryan argue that self-determination theory is an “approach to human motivation and personality that uses traditional empirical methods while employing an organismic metatheory that highlights the importance of humans’ evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation” (Ryan and Deci 2000:68). They identify intrinsic motivations and extrinsic motivations, claiming that individuals are more motivated when they are more self-determined or feel a sense of control (Ryan and Deci 2000, Wu, Hu and Orrick 2021).

For gang members, the drive for self-determination is rooted in a desire to take control of their life trajectories while navigating limited opportunities. Mike, a 32-year-old Black man, defines himself as a gang member. I met him at a local community center where he volunteers. He met me at my car, and he walked me around the community center. It was two small store front buildings that had been renovated to create one large building. Inside there was a colorful cross mural on one of the walls. In the back of the center it had a large open lot with large murals on the walls. The murals along both the left and the right side walls, were colorful and uplifting.

There was a colorful map of Southeast San Diego and large murals of Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez, Larry Itiong, and Mother Theresa. I visited the center on two occasions. The first was to meet Mike for the interview and the second was for a community meeting on record expungement. At the community meeting, three attorneys from the public defender's office were there looking up records and offering legal advice. They also barbequed and served food in the back lot.

Mike argues that he identifies as a gang member because he defines gang membership as being proud of where you grow up. He goes on to say:

So we have like what the penal code says what a gang member is and what the policies say, or CalGang, how to document people as gang members. But the nuance of like gang membership is so complex that you can't just be like, that's a gang member, right? So I believe like you have to define within yourself what a gang member is... how are you choosing to represent, uplift, or tear down, your community? So I'm just choosing the uplifting side of it, and saying that I'm going to be a gang member from this community that is going to be an attorney and an advocate... So I think it's just like a self-definition because like the little homey that's out here running around with pistols and shooting... We just are choosing to represent it differently right, he's doing it in a way that's going to get him and everybody else in jail and I'm doing it in a way that is going to add value and pride to the to the neighborhood.

Gang members are documented by the CalGang database through police sweeps. This documentation labels these young men and women as criminals, stigmatizing them within the community. Mike challenges the stereotype that all gang members are dangerous and cause destruction to their neighborhood. Instead, he is working to unite his community and change the narrative. He does not allow this label to stifle his growth and his passion for uplifting his community. Now a current college graduate, he is successful despite structural racism. I met many gang members like Mike, who work to improve their communities and define gang membership more positively. He became a representative for the community and felt a lot of

pressure to do well. While he acknowledges that some gang members in his community commit acts of violence, he believes that gang members have a choice to act positively or negatively. The act of self-definition is a form of resistance. By centering the narrative on gang members like Mike, it forces the community to look deeper into the structural mechanisms that close off positive life course trajectories that limit prospects for young men and women.

In addition, Mike confronts the gang membership label from a policy standpoint. As I mentioned before, CalGang, the California Gang Documentation program, is under scrutiny for unfairly documenting Black and Brown men. The act of labeling these young men limits their ability to be functioning members of society. Having a criminal record controls and restricts gang members from improving their lives, often over minor infractions. I will discuss the policy implications of this in more detail in Chapter 6.

Another respondent, a young Black woman named Amanda, shares her experiences with being labeled a gang member at a young age and how she deals with her gang membership status as an adult. Amanda is in her early 30's and is a tall woman and the youngest of the family, with three older brothers. I met Amanda in the parking lot of her apartment complex where she lives with her mother, father, and young son. We conducted majority of the interview in the parking lot and walked to the liquor store down the street next to a local Mexican food restaurant. Amanda lives in an ethnicity mixed neighborhood of preliminary Mexican and Black residents. It was around 5pm and we watched the neighborhood come to life as people were coming home from work and stopping at the liquor store or picking up food from the Mexican restaurant. I also met up with Amanda later that week at the community center meeting on expungement. She walked with me around the community center looking at the murals and explaining the current

gang climate. She took on the label of a “girl fighter” and learned to fight at an early age. At the store Amanda recalls:

I feel like the only reason I had to fight was really to prove myself, but my fighting started at home because my brothers weren't going to let me be no punk. So I just used to fight for no reason and then I used to fight because I knew I could beat you up. I'm bigger than you. I can intimidate you and I'm going to use that. Like I'll be honest, it's sad but I was a bully... I'm not trying to brag but I never taken a loss, but if you asked me to today do I fight? Hell no. I don't want to fight. I'd rather sit down and talk to you and see if we can figure something out. Like, I'm real peaceful now and like growing up, it was always just hectic and drama. And it was stressful, but you can't live that way but now. Like I believe my son changed me because now I have something to live for... If it's not something important, I don't give it no energy.

Amanda admits that at her gang member status compelled her to create a “bully” identity as a tough front. At a young age, her brothers taught her how to fight because they recognized that being a “punk” in her neighborhood made her vulnerable to violence and disrespect. As a teen, Amanda felt like fighting was the only way to gain respect and being a bully made her feel powerful in a world of uncertainty. Being able to fight gave Amanda status among her peers especially the men gang members and proved to be a valuable tool against rivals. This gave her the ability to feel comfortable around the men gang members, to cross gender lines, and became a source of pride. She claims that she did not mean to brag about having street credibility. However, this street credibility gives her freedoms that some girls growing up in her area did not have, the ability to protection herself from predators.

Nikki Jones writes, “Ultimately, teaching adolescent girls how to physically defend their personal boundaries provides them with a resource that they need to navigate their neighborhood streets” (Jones 2010:35). Jones explains that Black women in inner-city neighborhoods socialize their children with survival practices in opposition to traditional ideals of femininity. These gendered practices of survival fuel stereotypical tropes such as the “angry Black woman” (Jones

2010). Like Julio and Travis, Amanda's catalyst to outgrow her gang member role comes in the form of a new role as a mother. Her motivation is extrinsic as she explains that having a son gives her something to live for beyond herself. Now, she chooses to change how she deals with drama by resolving conflicts through communication rather than fighting. She actively chooses to disengage with people who do not serve her best interests as an adult. Adolescents lack autonomy in deciding what neighborhood to reside in or which school to attend. Because specific areas are considered gang territory, it is hard to avoid gang membership unless parents actively keep their children in the home or in what Nikki Jones calls "controlled settings" like school, church, home, or family (Jones 2010:49).

As gang members reflect on what they gain from gang membership, they also confront their personal identity and how to navigate the stigma of gang membership. Identity researcher Steven Hitlin argues that our personal identity is a "sense of self — built up over time as the person embarks on and pursues projects or goals that are not thought of as those of community, but as the property of the person ... It is experienced by individuals as 'core' or 'unique' to themselves in ways that group-or role-identities are not" (Hitlin 2003:118). While gang members share a common *gang identity*, the way participants talk about their gang membership status signifies how the interview prompts them to reevaluate their core values.

Earlier I mentioned how Travis is in the process of self-improvement. His journey from a "bad kid" to a "gang member" and now to a "college student" changed his core values and therefore changed his personal identity. He expresses what he gains from being a gang member:

A lot of times, I was just looked at like I was some badass kid that was just you know, throwing up gang signs... I felt like if I didn't do the things that I did and I wasn't the person that I am, I wouldn't have made it *through*, you know what I mean. It was 'cause of the environment. But just because I had to do the *things* that I did to make it *through* doesn't mean that's who I am. It doesn't define me.

And now I'm in a different place and in a different position in life where I'm able to really focus on other things. I know that that, those trials, and tribulations helped me. And I just want people to know that if it don't break you, it make you. I wouldn't advise it for everyone, though, cause you definitely gotta be built Ford tough.

As Travis adopts additional identities, he considers and justifies his actions in situations where he benefits from his gang membership status. He argues that he “had to do things to make it *through*,” yet, these things he did does not define *who* he is, or his values.

Travis uses coded language to insinuate that he might be proud of some of the *things* he had to do. This notion of situational identity illustrates that gang members perform activities they feel they *must* do to survive in their environment. Once they make it through or evolve, they can reassess and focus on their personal values.

While not all gang members are going through personal transformations, many distinguish between their gang member identity and their core identity. They contend that their environment, or neighborhood, is the main contributing factor for their gang membership. In addition, Travis alludes to concepts of masculinity, such as men within gangs maintaining a tough front. He says you “gotta be built Ford tough” to be in a gang. In the next chapter, I will delve into the nuances of gender performance among gang members.

### **4.3 Contextual: Dualism**

The dualism of “gang members” vs. “gang bangers” is the idea that there are two types of gang roles for men and women. For instance, the sociological concept of “cultural straddlers” can be applied to gang members because they partake in other roles and identities such as father, husband, employee, or student (Carter 2006). When at school or work, they may code-switch while speaking to someone with authority (Carter 2006). I observed several instances of



codeswitching while conducting interviews. Some gang members used proper English and carefully chose the words they used to describe situations. For example, during an interview with 23-year-old Ty, an active gang member. I met Ty in the parking lot of Wal-mart. We stayed there the entire time of the interview. For gang members, large stores are considered neutral space. Typically, you do not see active gangs fighting in large stores because it draws unwanted police attention. At the beginning of the interview, Ty used very formal English and called me ma'am several times. He explains that he moved to Texas when he was 16 and just moved back. I asked what made him move to Texas, he replied, "I went to visit my brother." When he said this, I thought to myself, "Who visits their brother for five years?" Later in the interview, he tells a story of getting stopped by police in Arizona. He was on a road trip with his girlfriend, and he admits that he had marijuana in the car. He stated that the police booked and released him days later, and then he had to find a way back to San Diego so he could eventually find the means to get to Texas. In this part of the interview, Ty was more relaxed and started to use slang language. He stated, "The police in Arizona were dumb because they were never supposed to release me. I had a warrant out for my arrest." Instinctively I called him out, "So when you were in Texas with your brother, you were on the run?" Looking surprised, he shook his head while looking down and said, "Yeah." At this moment, Ty did not activate his "gang member" identity. Some "gang bangers" might have taken my "calling him out" as disrespectful. Although I am discussing his gang membership, I am not a threat to him, so there is no *need* to switch to that role.

The person I met at the beginning of the interview was a completely different person than the one I was speaking to towards the end of the interview. The first Ty used proper English and replied with "yes ma'am" and "no ma'am" several times. He sat straight up, enunciated all his

words, and his hands were folded in his lap. Towards the end of the interview, Ty was visibly more relaxed. He used cuss words and used more slang language. I argue that the “gang banger” identity is only activated when a person is threatened by other gang members. Like DuBois’s concept of double consciousness, “gang members” can feel like their identity splits into two parts, depending on the situation (DuBois 1903). In this context, code-switching is the action of using your double consciousness by switching your language, demeanor, tone, and sometimes your appearance. When interacting with outsiders, “gang members” are aware of how they might be perceived and try to minimize their gang membership status to other non-gang members, or “squares.” On the other hand, “gang bangers” do not typically code-switch, nor do they frequent situations where they might have to engage with many outsiders. On average, “gang bangers” have less contact with non-gang members. Most of them have dropped out of school and are not formally employed. Many are also very active in their duties and responsibilities to promote and protect the gang.

Jessica, a former gang member, is Black and Puerto Rican but identifies as Black. I met Jessica at her apartment complex, and we walked around her neighborhood. Jessica talked about when she was about 14-year-old, she and her cousins would walk from her mother’s house to her uncle’s house, which was about a 45-minute walk. During these walks, Jessica and her cousins encountered many dangerous situations and she joked that now as a mother, she would never let her daughter walk that far. The area was congested and there were several apartment complexes in a row. Cars lined the street and there was no parking and I had to park one street over and walk down to her house. Due to the rising cost of living in San Diego, several families are living in tight quarters with one single-family home or apartment. Jessica’s mother-in-law lives with her along with her husband and daughter, in a tiny two-bedroom apartment.

Jessica expresses similar ways that she adopts a double consciousness, especially during college, when she replaced her “gang member” identity for a “college-educated” identity. She recalls instances where she actively monitored her language during class and how she spoke to her professors. Jessica recalls when one of her professors challenged the way she thought about her gang membership identity:

I had this Professor that taught Black Studies that asked me questions about it [gang membership]. Like “What does it represent?” Like, “What does it like do for you?” I just think he wanted to know what it did for me, and like it got me thinking...I think he was just planting seeds in my head, but I started to think like that year and years later like ‘what, what is it?’ and I feel like it was really like nothing. Like just a group of people who they want to like stand for something but because they lack a lot, they’re standing for the wrong things... I didn’t really understand, “Why did my family do that?” Like, “Why did my mom want to say that she’s from a gang?” And I felt like this throughout those years.

Jessica was resilient; she attended a 2-year college and then transferred to a university, where she earned her bachelor’s degree and broke the generational cycle of gang membership in her family. Upon reflection, Jessica pinpoints a turning point in her life where her gang membership identity no longer serves her. In the college space, she no longer needs to be tough, and she adopts characteristics that she learns from her peers and her professor. She questions the validity of gang membership, causing her to challenge her belief system. She expresses wanting to stay in San Diego to be there for her younger family members and show them a different lifestyle. Without resources like bussing, Jessica might not have had access to quality education. These types of programs help low-income students of color. Like Wing and Willis (1999), I believe access to education and programs geared towards Black girls and women are the key to breaking the cycle of generational poverty and, by extension, gang membership.

Like Jessica, Johnny was afforded the opportunity of a better education. He recalls attending a prestigious Catholic high school and opting out of navigating a white space:

I went to a Catholic High School. I had a scholarship there. I didn't like it because I don't wear uniforms and it just wasn't *my people*, so I wasn't really feeling like comfortable. I kind of wanted to hang out with people that had the same position as me or grew up how I did. A lot of these people are higher class. So yeah, I starting to try to fit in with them and ended up transferring... And then that's when I started kind of like dipping and dabbing with the gangs.

Johnny's Catholic high school is primarily white, and in 1998, it was \$4000 a year for tuition. Most students who attend this school are from well-off families. The kids drive brand new cars and live in large homes by the beach with manicured lawns, a stark contrast to the houses and neighborhoods in Southeast San Diego. Navigating this white space was difficult for Johnny so he opted out, instead attending school in his local district. Although he didn't stay, he explains that upon reflection, it was a "good experience," in the sense that it helped him gain middle-class cultural capital. Johnny graduated high school in his neighborhood and went on to attend a four-year university.

There is another notion of dualism found among gang members when they change their identity using different names. For instance, gang members differentiate between their *gang names* and their *government names*, or birth names. Brandon, a 30-year-old "gang member," still somewhat participates with the gang culture but holds a full-time job and has a family. He talks about his dual life and reports that at work, he is strictly "Brandon," and his co-workers have no knowledge of his other life. He and his wife have two daughters. He describes his wife as a "square." Among his friends, he uses his gang name but rarely lets the two different worlds cross.

Someone's gang name is only used within specific settings, not in schools or places of business. Mike, our future lawyer, talks in-depth about the persona of the gang names:

That's why we have street names and shit, right? Like, who the fuck is that? Ok, but who is this person? Who is your government? Who is that?...That's that mask that you gave yourself or was given to you to be somebody that you're not. You

know, people don't respect that government name people respect that street name because that street name did some things right. You have a reputation, that's all it is. It's a bunch of people living a bunch of lies. But you live a lie for so long, you start believing, and you forget what the truth even is... But a lot of times, things we might see as kids start acting up in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, grade, but all that stuff was put into them at 3, 4, 5, 6-years-old. What you are seeing is the symptoms of it when they start acting out... They've been hiding stuff for a very long time, and this is the only way they know how to express themselves is through violence.

Mike argues that the gang names are a mask to hide earlier trauma. Trauma sometimes manifests through lashing out as adults. Facing hardships or witnessing violence as small children can be traumatizing. Mike points to children in his community that grow to be adolescents with behavioral problems. The idea of having a separate identity that you can use as a mask is a defense mechanism. In a sense, gang members use this mask to justify the violence they commit. It allows them to put distance between their actions when they are in stressful or situations where they must activate their gang identity. In the next section, I will talk extensively about what I call "black extraordinary adolescent trauma."

Code-switching and the use of different names allow gang members to navigate between gang culture and non-gang culture somewhat seamlessly. "Identities serve as anchors for behavior and understanding in the ongoing flow of interaction. These identities do not develop at random but are a behavioral outgrowth of one's personal identity. The values at the core of the self that produce our sense of personal identity are distal influences on action, shaping and channeling the choice in situations in which we interact" (Hitlin 2003:125). Typically, gang identity for "gang members" is situational and only "activated" when in contact with other gang members. For "gang bangers," their gang identity is their primary status. They are "active" in gang culture and continually perform gang duties and expectations based on what the group values.

Finally, the young men in gangs exhibit traits of hypermasculinity or toxic masculinity such as reacting with violence when “activated” or provoked. I argue that when members feel safe and unthreatened, they exhibit healthy traits. Gang membership offers protection, a sense of belonging and family, access to the underground economy, and loyalty (Hunt and Joe-Laidler 2001, Orozco Flores and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013, Vigil 1988). Nonetheless, this is also coupled with hypermasculinity, violence, and deviance (Erlanger 1979, Orozco Flores and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013, Rios 2011).

#### **4.4 Collective: Black Extraordinary Adolescent Trauma**

Utilizing the theory of the “routinization of extraordinary death” (Charmaz 1980), Charmaz argues that death becomes “extraordinary” in circumstances such as combat or state executions. I take this theory a step further to argue that death in the hyper-segregated ghetto is distinct and routinized by capitalism to “maintain conditions where personalized violence is institutionalized in lower class members’ interpersonal relationships” (Charmaz 1980:210). In other words, death is pressed upon the psyche of Black men and women in the ghetto at young ages, making these scenes of “extraordinary deaths” routine and part of the normalized experience. An early form of extraordinary death is the historical lynching of Black people in America, while a current example of *extraordinary* Black death is death by police brutality (Grant and Thomas 2018).

Trauma and victimization in gang communities are frequent occurrences (Hunt and Joe-Laidler 2001, Valdez 2007). All the participants revealed a childhood/adolescent memory that involve traumatic violence including death. I interviewed Shanice, a 35-year-old black woman, near her mother’s house. She was in town visiting her mother and currently resides in Los Angeles. We walked around her mother’s neighborhood which is considered Lemon Grove. Lemon Grove is a buffer city between Southeast San Diego and San Diego State University.

After walking for about ten minutes, we decided to finish the interview in the car because it was getting later in the day, and we did not feel safe walking around. Shanice's father is part of a neighborhood Blood gang. She explains why her father is incarcerated for murder:

I was about 11. I heard a loud crashing, and I see my dad coming into my window, and he just looked like a crazed maniac. He was dripping sweat. He had an ax in his hand, and my first thought was like, "he's gonna kill me." But he came, and he went right past.... I was like, just kind of shocked there for a minute, and then I heard my mom screaming, and I heard her boyfriend and my dad's like tussling and stuff... And my mom tried to stop him too, and then I guess she got in the way, and he chopped her arm. She still has a scar right there [points to arm]. And then all of a sudden, her boyfriend stopped and then he just like was trying to get away and my dad was still like swinging the ax, and he [the boyfriend] was like struggling down the hall, and he went out the front door and my dad kind of pushed him out as he opened the door and closed it.... I was begging him to let us go, and my Mom's arm was like open, like veins and stuff coming out, and I told him like "mom is cut, and we have to get her help," and then that's when I guess it clicked in his head because I was like screaming at him and he finally let us out. And I just remember like when we opened the door, he [the boyfriend] was like right there like he didn't even make it like a step out the door. He was just there on the ground, dead.

Although Shanice did not consider herself a gang member, she grew up in a "gang" family. Her father, uncles, aunts, and cousins all participate in the gang culture. Shanice is triply burdened by being low-income, a racial minority, and a woman. Shanice lived through a very traumatic experience. She witnesses her father break into her home, attack her mother, and murder a man. Hearing this story is difficult. Yet, it is not just a story of trauma but a story of resilience and courage. She explains how as a child, she helps her mother by reasoning with her father to let them seek help. She remembers this moment in detail and could recall it exactly as it happens.

Later in the interview, I asked Shanice if she has ever spoken to anyone about this experience, and she said that she does not talk about it at all. Our interview allowed Shanice to unburden herself of this traumatic experience. The act of listening to these types of narratives is what Camangian calls "critical caring pedagogy," which is listening to people's stories, showing

that you care, and giving space for the healing process. In addition, she is marred by this traumatic event that she carries with her into adulthood. Shanice does not receive therapy or counseling after the incident, and she said that it affects her life as an adult, and she plans to seek treatment. When I asked why she did not receive therapy after the incident, she retorts, “My mom couldn’t afford therapy. We had to worry about paying the bills.” Experiencing this type of extraordinary trauma as a child has life-altering effects and shapes how a person operates within society. The stigma surrounding seeking mental health support in the Black community results in an undiagnosed and untreated population, many of whom have post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. Research conducted on gang member victimization reports that gang members who are “exposed to a combination of direct violence (as a victim) and indirect violence (as a witness) suffer higher incidences of current and lifetime PTSD” (Beresford and Wood 2016). Additional research on gang members’ victimization “shows that 16 percent of incarcerated adolescents have been sexually assaulted, molested, or raped, 57 percent have witnessed someone being killed, and 72 percent reported being shot and/or shot at” (Beresford and Wood 2016:149). What makes Shanice’s experiences “extraordinary” is that her community experiences traumas routinely. Community members learn to repress the trauma and move on with their lives. Unable to grieve and heal with a lack of access to quality healthcare, they are in a constant struggle for survival.

Amanda laments that she was just eight years old when she first experienced gang violence. Now 28, she no longer considers herself a gang member but recalls that she used to be a girl “fighter” and that her two older brothers introduced her to the gang culture. During her interview, she explains that her first encounter with gang violence was a drive-by:

I think I was like eight years old, and we were all outside playing, and it was broad daylight, and we seen the cars coming, but we didn’t know what was going



on. So, my brothers and they friend, they was just like “RUN!” But you know when you hear run, you’re not going to run your eight! And they snatched me and my other brother up, and they like dragged us, and they just start shooting and then when they started shooting like, they just laid on top of us, and it was really tragic, and they told us “Don’t tell Mommy or Daddy!” So, I finally told like a few years ago that it actually happened. I never said a word until like a few years ago.

Although Amanda is never traditionally initiated into gang membership, she gained membership through her brothers’ high status. Because she is their sister, she was automatically seen as a gang member and was guilty by association. After this incident, Amanda later joins the gang during her freshman year of high school. Her introduction is through in-house influencers. Although Amanda no longer considers herself an active gang member, she is still provoked by rivals and is treated as a gang member in the streets.

Both Amanda and Shanice experienced extreme violence at such a young age and now rarely talk about their experiences. Silence among gang members extends beyond the idea of snitching. There is a “code of silence” within the gang community (Anderson 2000). The avoidance of speaking about traumatic events within this community speaks volumes about the lack of awareness about mental health services. Talking about past traumatic events can evoke painful feelings, and this community has a long history of suffering in silence. The structural multiple marginalities experienced by Black women in our society are compounded for women gang members and affiliates. In addition to their triple burden, they are criminalized and further stigmatized in our society and lack the resources to help them cope with the extraordinary trauma they have endured.

Like Shanice and Amanda, many of the men participants recalled traumatic experiences in adolescence. For example, Randy, a 25-year-old active Black gang member, joined a gang in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I interviewed Randy at the park near his house. It was a small park located in Encanto.

It had a small baseball field, a playground, and a field of grass. There was a baseball team practicing while we sat on the bleachers and watched. This is the park that he spent most of his childhood, it is also the same park that he was introduced to gangs. His parents are drug addicts, and he grew up in and out of foster care. He explains that he was born with heroin in his system and feels discouraged because his life has been so difficult. After his home got shot up, he dropped out of high school. Randy recalls when he was 16 that he witnessed one of his friends getting shot:

I remember one day a friend from my neighborhood, he didn't gang bang or anything, we were going downtown, and I ended up getting into it with some Crips. And I'm telling him like he need to go. And he didn't want to go. He started trying to fight one of them, and they pulled out a gun and shot him. That's probably the worst memory I remember. I felt bad 'cuz it was my fault. He didn't even die but he ended up moving to Arizona after that and getting murdered in Arizona.

Randy's story is one of victimization and violence (Anderson 2000:111). Early on, he experiences a rough upbringing. Because his friend is not a gang member, Randy feels responsible for his safety. He blames himself for what happened to his friend and takes on this burden. This traumatic event compounds the other difficulties he experienced growing up in an unstable environment. His troubled youth led to a life of gang membership, delinquency, and many stays at juvenile detention centers. Due to his constant instability, Randy claims that he found a sense of family within gang membership.

Like Amanda and Shanice, Randy experiences "extraordinary" violence in witnessing the death of friend, but like many in this community, this is the norm. For gang members, "black extraordinary adolescent trauma" becomes a part of a shared collective identity. Researchers argue that individual trauma can become collective trauma by connecting shared histories. "Although trauma is primarily understood as an individual human experience, it often

generalizes to symptoms in collective social settings” (Rinker and Lawler 2018:151). Gang members and their affiliates not only witness violence, but they also share the violent incidents perpetrated by rival gangs with others in the community -- not just by word of mouth, but virtually, through videos and social media posts (Patton, Eschmann and Butler 2013, Patton et al. 2014). As members learn of a tragedy, it circulates among the community, primarily through social media. As such, the event becomes a heavily documented and shared collective trauma.

In addition, gang members bond over shared trauma. This shared trauma sometimes manifests by acting out through violence. “Learned helplessness and fatalism renders the victim or group vulnerable to hypervigilance of threat and intrusive thoughts. Similar to an individual with PTSD, collectives’ cycle through depression and anger, often acting *in* before acting *out*. Eventually, impotent fantasies of revenge and need for justice trigger acts of violence against the oppressor” (Rinker and Lawler 2018:152). Thus, “black extraordinary adolescent trauma” becomes a part of their individual and group identity. To cope, some gang members respond to social injustices by rationalizing their anger and using it to justify their use of violence. Overall, I argue that “black extraordinary adolescent trauma” is a neighborhood effect condition that should be included in the urban sociology neighborhood effect canon, and that warrants further research.

#### **4.5 Collective: Black Girl Gang Membership as Familial**

Researchers found that gang membership for girls and women is familial (Archer and Grascia 2006, Esbensen et al. 2010, Sutton 2017), with young women reporting that 71% had family members involved in gangs (Miller 2002). All the women gang members or affiliates I interviewed accessed their gang ties through male family members. Women gang members who engage in acts of deviance also experience victimization, which becomes routine and normalized.

As mentioned earlier, Jessica reports that her entire family is from gangs and that her mother and older relatives are still actively participating within the gang community. She reflects:

Growing up, I felt like it was like a norm, right? You're supposed to have like gang members in your family. It's sort of like a protection for your family. It's a way to identify where our family is from. I always thought that it was it was a good thing. Like if your family didn't have gangbangers, and it's kind of like your family was weak. Like right, why is there no tough people in your family? And I felt that way for a really long time. Like I feel like when I was in high school was the first time where I thought like, it actually wasn't like a "cool" thing...I got bussed out, and I seen stuff that I didn't know existed. Like I seen people like my age with really nice cars and like really nice houses and like their families like went on vacations.

Jessica, who is now a college graduate with her teaching credential, benefits from bussing. She attends a school with more resources and has access to a "college-going culture" (Mehan 2012). She reflects that at one point, she felt like the gang culture was normal and looked down on other families who were not involved. She adds that she viewed gang membership as positive. For her it was a form of protection from victimization. Once she left Southeast San Diego, she saw how other families live and realized that she does not think it is "cool" anymore.

While growing up in a gang-oriented family, Jessica's identity reflected the street culture. During college this identity was challenged once she immersed herself in other cultures. During the interview, Jessica reflects on her gang membership and how she felt like she was a gang member because it was a part of her family life:

I did it because my family did it, right [...] Even like Michelle [her cousin], because I see her just how I was like at her age. Every other word is "blood," this and, "bracken," (what's up) that. And I'm just like, "oh my gosh like you sound so tacky!" And I just say it to her because I wish someone would have told me that when I was her age. But now I feel like I said before, it's a way to *identify yourself* and these people they don't know any other way. We have like these roles, right [...] Disadvantaged communities where they don't really have access to a whole lot of knowledge, not even material, just knowledge. They don't really have options of other roles to conform to, so what they do have is the *gang role*, and it gives you everything that you're looking for. Like it gives you money, it gives you

the sense of like *belonging*, it gives you family if you don't have none, or if you do have some it's expanding your family, and it gives you like, *you feel like more superior in your community* when you're from a gang [...] I feel like because they just lack so much knowledge, that's like the role that they *want* to do.

Jessica reflects on her family's lack of opportunity and knowledge of different lifestyles. Jessica echoes what other scholars claim: gang members growing up in disadvantaged areas search for belonging and security. Gang membership provides an identity for underprivileged youth who do not have the means to make money or the sense of belonging to a family, and it gives them a sense of pride and status. As an adult who no longer identifies as a gang member, Jessica now challenges the idea that gang membership is "normal." She is currently using her former gang membership identity as a catalyst to break the gang culture tradition in her family. She acts as a mentor to her younger family members. She arranged for her younger cousin to utilize the bussing system to attend a better school. In addition, she spends her weekends taking the kids to the museum, their sporting events, and other extracurricular activities.

Like Shanice and Amanda, girls and women are exposed to violence through situations involving family members. Amanda used this violence as a reason to join the gang and become a "girl fighter," so she would no longer be vulnerable to attacks by others in her school and community. She employs her gang member identity for protection. She boasts, "Like I don't want you to have that impression, but I want you to know that I'm with the shits and don't try me because if you tell somebody like you're a 'gang banger,' they're not gonna fuck with you because they automatically gonna think like, 'oh she crazy. She knows this person. She can get this done to you.' It's like a shield." For Amanda, gang membership is a security mechanism, protecting her from threats within her community.

Shanice, who is now a college graduate and seeking a career in the film industry, takes on the “good girl” persona (Jones 2010). Although Shanice did not identify as a gang member, her gang-affiliated identity taught her to challenge gang membership:

Being a part of a gang to be ‘cool’ or to be affiliated with other people seemed cool when I was younger. But it was just stupid, and a lot of people suppress their true selves and their potential trying to fit into this gang [...] there's a whole world outside of your neighborhood than what you see, not that you have to leave your neighborhood, but you can pursue dreams and passions.... I'm first generation in my family going to college and graduating, and I had to learn a lot on my own. So, I feel like there should be more support there and teaching them about school and getting their education.

Shanice is now a mother. She spent a lot of time talking about helping her daughters make good decisions and obtain a college education. Shanice argues that being in a gang stifles people from seeking their full potential. As an adult, she wants to challenge the gang culture in her community by showing girls and young women that they can pursue their goals. She points to a lack of educational support in her community and wants to give back by helping people find pathways to college.

While some girls and women use their gang member identity to navigate the violence in their neighborhoods, others use it as a means to empower their community. Wing and Willis argue that when Black women are uplifted, they will encourage their communities (Wing and Willis 1999). Girls who are forced into gang membership through familial ties are now women with children who see gang membership through a different lens. These women challenge the gang culture and want to empower their communities. The vast difference between Shanice and Jessica's experiences -- as opposed to Amanda's experiences -- is education. After going to college, Shanice and Jessica were able to exchange their gang member identity and adopt a new one as college-educated Black women.

#### 4.6 Discussion

What is unique about the docent interview process is that it prompts gang members to do some reflection. They are asked to think about what lessons they learn or what they gain from gang membership. In a one-hour conversation, these participants walked me through their personal journeys, the good and the bad. Gang members internalize a *gang identity* because their personal or core identity is influenced by their exposure to gangs at an early age and by the feelings of attachment placed on their neighborhoods (place-identity). Along with other researchers, I argue that parenthood is a turning point for gang members (Pyrooz, McGloin and Decker 2017). Becoming a parent positively impacts the trajectory of women and men gang members who live with their children (Pyrooz, McGloin and Decker 2017:869). Throughout one's life course, gang participation decreases as they age and as significant life events such as parenthood or attending college occur. The key component is that gang members adopt additional identity roles as they get older.

As gang members unpack different layers of their personality, they differentiate between their gang identities and their core identities. Utilizing self-determination, gang members develop a duality: a gang identity and a personal identity. These two identities are distinguished by their "gang names" and their "government names." Their gang names are situational and used as a mask to protect themselves from traumatic experiences living in hyper-segregated neighborhoods. Within these hyper-segregated neighborhoods, children are at risk of being victimized by violence and subsequently traumatized. Joining the gang provides protection and is a survival mechanism for many young men and women. For girls, the push factor for gang membership is familial, as girls tend to join gangs or be affiliated with gangs through family members. Finally, I argue that living in a hyper-segregated neighborhood produces collective

trauma that I coin as “Black extraordinary adolescent trauma” and, as such, is a neighborhood effect that should be included in the urban sociology neighborhood effects canon.

## 5 GANGS AND GENDER

When I was 18 years old, I would frequent Tijuana, Mexico, with my homegirls. Sometimes my boyfriend at the time would meet us down there with his friends. Tijuana, also known to locals as TJ, is a rite of passage for teens growing up in San Diego. TJ is the main border town with Mexico, about 20 miles south of downtown San Diego. During the early 2000s, kids as young as 16 years old drove to the border town of San Ysidro on the U.S. side, parked their cars, and walked across to Mexico through a large metal turnstile gate. It was that easy. A passport was not necessary. The clubs in TJ hardly checked ID; the drinking age was 18; and the clubs stayed open until 4 a.m. It was a hotbed of teen angst and bad decisions. Now you must have a passport to cross the border, and you must go through a security checkpoint that scans your bags.

On one occasion, we went to TJ to celebrate the birthday my boyfriend’s cousin Martin. Martin was in the Navy, and TJ was a popular destination for young newcomers under 21 and not yet able to party in downtown San Diego’s Gaslamp District. The group was a mix of Southeast San Diego (SES) gang members, swabbies (a slightly derogatory term for a sailor that my group used), and squares (girls/boys who were not in gangs). We ranged in age from 18 to 23, and there were nine young women and eight young men in our group. The majority were Black, except for me and another young woman who was white. My boyfriend was gang-affiliated, and so were a few of his friends. After a night of dancing and drinking, the women took a cab from the club to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection checkpoint. There was usually a long line to cross back into the U.S., so the wait could be anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour, depending on the night. While waiting in line, a few of my friends from the North Park



area saw a few guys they knew from their neighborhood. Some of the guys and girls were chit-chatting and flirting. I did not know the guys that well, but I knew that they were gang-affiliated, so I stayed to myself. My boyfriend and his friends left before us, and we planned to meet them in the parking lot on the U.S. side.

As we walked over the bridge to the car, the guys from North Park (NP) walked with us. However, halfway to the car, the NP guys started to berate and curse at women in the group who did not return their advances. When we reached the car and met up with my boyfriend and his friends, words were exchanged. Unbeknownst to the women, the NP guys were rivals with a few of the other SES guys in our group. Some of the “squares” got in my car, while some stayed outside in the middle of the fight. A young Black woman named Cindy started yelling and provoking a guy from North Park, and he slapped her in the face. I watched helplessly from the car as a fight broke out. The SES gang-affiliated guys were banging [claiming their gang and provoking a fight] on the North Park guys, defending the honor of Cindy. It was chaos. Someone threw a brick into the rear window of one of the cars, and soon a police cruiser pulled up. All the guys from North Park ran while the rest of us stayed. No one was arrested because we convinced the police that we were the victims and the men who ran were the perpetrators.

As I reflect on this moment now as a sociologist, I see a few dynamics at play that I did not recognize then. The SES men in our group did not like that the women in our group were talking to the NP men. It was viewed as disrespectful. They felt like we *belonged* to them. We were not to talk to other men, especially rivals from the wrong side of town. Defending the honor of Cindy meant engaging in a show of hypermasculinity. This masculinity can be seen by outsiders as toxic because of the harm done to the other group but can also be seen as good by the women receiving protection. The NP man who slapped Cindy in the face reacted with violence when he

was challenged by a woman. Both men's groups objectified the young women. Researchers argue that men who embrace sexist opinions are more likely to engage in sexual harassment (Walton and Pederson 2021 :3). Sexual harassment increases when groups of men share these norms, and it bonds them with other men (Walton and Pederson 2021 :3). The SES group used chivalry to center themselves and provoke a fight with the NP group. The NP men engaged in street harassment to assert their dominance over the women. When their advances were ignored, they resorted to violence.

Furthermore, Cindy and the other young women fighters in this group engage in aggressive behavior. To fight alongside the men/boys gang counterparts is a norm for women/girl gang members, especially in response to an attack on public reputation or men instigating a violent confrontation (Fishman 1999:75). Nikki Jones argues that when violence is an everyday backdrop, girls who grow up in the inner city — even girls she terms as “good girls” — must know how to fight (Jones 2010): “Girls with public reputations as fighters will court conflict and are often ready to ‘throw down’ [fight] at the slightest of violations, a bump or a stare, but girls who wish to be seen as good, as many girls do, fight only when they have to -- when they have reached the protective limits offered by situational avoidance and relational isolation” (Jones 2010:73). In this instance, the “good girls” who avoided the fight sat in the car and the “girl fighters” fought along the SES group of men (Jones 2010). During the interviews, many women participants recall engaging in situational violence because they were being threatened.

Traditional gender roles are essential to understanding why some boys/men and girls/women join gangs while others avoid gangs. This chapter focuses on the nuances of gang membership and gender utilizing an intersectional framework. This meso-level analysis focuses on gendered nuances among members of the same gang and between gangs. In addition, I unpack gendered

expectations within families, schools, and their community. While I include men in my data and discussion, this chapter centers on girls and women in gangs.

### **5.1 Familial: Girls/women Gang Membership**

Young women who grow up in gang families often take measures to either avoid or embrace gang membership. In Anne Campbell's *The Girls in the Gang* (1984), she describes Connie, the leader of a Puerto Rican women's gang called the Sandman Ladies NYC (Campbell 1984b). Connie's husband Gino is the leader of the men's group called the Sandman. Campbell illustrates how Connie treats the gang like her family and that her children are brought up in the gang. "Every member of the family has their own set of club colors. By birth they are in the Sandman. So far, this has proven to be a source of pride, and the children feel it gives them a particular status among their friends" (Campbell 1984b:84). Connie expects her oldest daughter, Suzie, to fight other girls her age and to represent the gang in the neighborhood. Campbell's account of Connie and Suzie's relationship is more sister-like than mother-daughter. Campbell claims that even though Connie gives Suzie a lot of freedom, she will discipline Suzie very harshly whenever she feels Suzie is disrespectful (Campbell 1984b:82).

In James Diego Vigil's book, *The Projects: Gang and Non-Gang Families in East Los Angeles*, he writes: "Seventy-nine percent of all female gang members were found to have a family member involved in a gang, whereas only 54 percent of non-gang families had a family member previously or currently involved in a gang. The involvement of other family members in the gang perhaps further normalizes the gang in the eyes of the family, thus making a girls involvement see less deviant to her family and herself" (Vigil 2007:113-14). Vigil states that many girls who join gangs also deal with drug and alcohol abuse within their homes, as well as verbal, sexual, and/or physical abuse by a family member or parent (Vigil 2007:114).

### *5.1.1 Jessica's story: Mother/Daughter Relationships*

In the last chapter, Jessica described living in a gang family, similar to Campbell's depictions about Connie and Gino's family. Jessica questions her mother's motives for joining a gang and why her family encouraged her siblings and cousins to be gang members. She asks, "Why did my mom want to say that she's from a gang?" During the interview, Jessica speaks about her mother with some resentment. She reflects on her upbringing and how her mother supported gang membership and allowed her to smoke and drink at an early age. She recalls how her mother reacted when she first claimed the gang that her mother is from:

So, for my mom it was like a cool thing. It was like "Oh you're from the gang now!" It was part of our culture. It wasn't like a bad thing. And then I started adopting a lot of the behaviors like smoking and drinking. I remember when I was in the seventh grade all my cousins were smoking weed already and I was like, "I'm gonna smoke some weed and we were getting high and my mom told us, I would never forget this, she said "if you're going to smoke weed do it at my house because if you smoke it out there, they might try to lace your weed."

When Jessica tells this story, her eyes are wide. Her facial expressions indicate that she feels that her mother is outlandish for allowing her to drink and smoke at such a young age. Like Campbell's participants, Connie and Suzie, Jessica and her mother share a sister-like relationship. A study on girls' substance use indicates that mother-daughter relationships are the main predictor of whether girls are more or less likely to use drugs and alcohol (Valdez 2007:74). Mothers-daughter relationships deemed positive directly influenced their daughters, successfully averted illicit drug use, and fostered healthier coping strategies for stress and conflicts (Valdez 2007:76). Jessica expected her mother to reprimand her. Instead, her mother celebrated her gang membership and allowed her to smoke weed. Jessica's reflection on her mother comes on the heels of becoming a mother herself. She has a seven-year-old daughter and

takes on the role as a mother figure for her nieces and nephews. As a mother, Jessica cannot imagine allowing her daughter to make the same decisions her mother condoned.

Jessica speaks at length about her relationship with her mother and their differences in child-rearing practices, and how she interacts with her family. Her mother, 48, is still an active OG (original gangster) and is a source of conflict and shame. She describes how she feels like the “black sheep” of the family along with her Aunt Rita, who is also a former gang member. Aunt Rita is now sober, while her family is heavy smokers and drinkers. She expresses, “My mom still goes to her gang day and gets her T-shirt... We went out for Tia’s birthday and my mom was like saying like ‘oh Auntie Rita is so boring she never wants to go to the set [gang territory] anymore,’ and it’s kind of like sad because she’s doing it to better her life and I feel like we should like accept it because she’s trying to be a better person.” In more than one instance, Jessica conveys disappointment in her mother. She challenges the way her family glamorizes gang membership and substance abuse, wishing that her family would support her Aunt Rita for trying to improve her life.

Jessica reflects on how much she loved school and reading as a child. After high school she attended a two-year college and worked as a student ambassador, doing school tours and visiting local high schools to help other students like herself find pathways to college. Another source of disappointment for Jessica is when she drops out community college to become a stripper. In retrospect, she says she wishes her mother would have encouraged her to stay in school:

I decided I was going to be a dancer [stripper] and I did that with my cousin, and it was just like it’s something that I don’t regret but I can’t believe my family was like okay with that. We were helping my mom with her bills, but it just didn’t feel like me.... And then I was like “this is what I’m doing.” And like everyone was like happy! Like all my cousins you know like Tia, my cousin Keisha, even my mom, like everyone has like tricks [men who paid for sex], they had paying for stuff and here I am like on the bus

going to college like trying to stretch out, you know my ambassador check and financial aid check and I just chose dancing, I chose that over school.

Jessica feels conflicted over her love for her family and the resentment she feels towards them for allowing her to drop out of school and to start stripping. Although she says that she does not regret it, she tries to lessen the stigma by referring to it as dancing instead of stripping. This change in term reveals that Jessica feels some shame. In addition, she feels upset that her family, specifically her mother, is happy that she started stripping. Stripping allows her to contribute financially to her family, fit in with her family's lifestyle, and is lucrative. She explains that at one point, she feels like she is better than the other girls at work, so she decides to stop stripping and goes back to school full-time and is "super focused." Her mother and other family members place less value on her education and more value on making money, even if that means resorting to prostitution or stripping. Her mother and cousins all participate in some form of sex work and it is normalized in her family.

Nevertheless, Jessica is determined to get an education and pursue her career goals. She recalls being so proud of herself for all the sacrifices she made to graduate from college but feels let down by her family. "I just feel like nobody really cared. I don't want to make people feel bad but like no one did anything for me like I remember like after my graduation like we just went to my mom's house and we just like smoked and drank like there wasn't even like a balloon or card, like nothing." This momentous occasion for Jessica turned into another excuse for her family to party. She feels like her mother did not support her while she was in college. Time and time again, she is looking for validation from her mother that she makes the right decisions and makes her proud, but she is left feeling like her family does not understand her achievement.

Another component found in this study that is well documented within gang literature is that gang families face economic instability and poverty (Campbell 1984b, Moore 1991, Venkatesh

2008). Moore finds that Mexican girl gang members live in homes where one parent is absent or with no one in the home working (Moore 1991:89). Jessica reports that her mother received -- and currently continues to receive -- Section 8 housing, “My dad was a gang banger; he was out of my life since I was born. I was raised by a single mom... when I was four, she applied for Section 8, then we were able to have stable housing because a lot of people in my family were addicts and a lot of my cousins stayed with me... I pretty much grew up poor on government assistance.” In this study, 93% of the women respondents report economic instability during their childhood. This poverty component becomes a significant factor in why many girls/women gang members and affiliates participate in the underground economy including, selling drugs and sex work. For Jessica’s family, government assistance was beneficial. She was able to go to a good school, attend college, and now has well-paying job. This is evidence that social service programs like Section 8 housing and bussing can be great tools to help lift folks out of poverty. Yet, these programs are constantly at risk of budget cuts.

Many studies focus on ways that positive parent/child relationships can prevent gang membership, such as having healthy communication (Snethen 2010), supportive families (Shute 2013), or parenting classes embedded within school-based prevention programs (Koffman et al. 2009). However, there are not many studies or programs on gang families that encourage gang membership. In Joan Moore’s *Going Down to the Barrio* (1991), she discusses girls and women in Chicano gang families, but there is not much research on girls and women from Black gang families. Moore writes that, in Mexican American gang families, girls were generally more restricted than boys and were expected to follow traditional Mexican American norms such as not being allowed to go out, not being allowed to have a boyfriend, and being expected to take on domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, and looking after younger siblings (Moore 1991).

For women like Jessica, breaking from the gang membership tradition in her family is unlike what we have seen in the current literature. One major takeaway from my research on gangs is how family socialization is an underutilized approach to studying gangs and gang life. There has been too much emphasis on criminalization and not enough on gangs as a family unit, socialization, and the bonds they create. Traditional notions of how girls should behave challenge how gang families socialize children to participate in gangs, riskier lifestyles, or the underground economy.

## **5.2 Maria's Story: Gang Kinship Networks**

Girls and women like Jessica and are resilient. They use their hardships as a catalyst to fuel their drive to pursue a better life for themselves and their children. Jessica finishes college and is doing well in her career. Nevertheless, not all girls/women from the gangs in Southeast San Diego have the same opportunities as Jessica, who benefitted from bussing. Another participant named Maria, a Black woman in her late 20s, comes from a gang family like Jessica, but embraces gang membership instead of replacing it with educational pursuits. Her grandmother raised Maria; both of her parents were drug users and dealers and were not in her life. She does not elaborate about having a relationship with them after being adopted by her grandmother. Maria states that she was born with drugs in her system, so her grandmother applied for an emergency adoption seven days after her birth. Her grandmother adopted all four of her siblings, too. Her oldest brother introduced her to gang membership, and they are members of a well-known Blood gang in SE San Diego.

I interviewed Maria in the parking lot of her apartment complex. She lives off the main road that travels from downtown all the way through Southeast San Diego. This area is notoriously known for gang activity. While we talk in the car, several children are outside playing in the



parking lot and the playground which is behind us on the right side. In front of us to the left, are several young men smoking and hanging out on the steps leading up to an apartment. Maria has a daughter in middle school who comes up to the car several times to check on her mom and then goes back to playing with her friends.

Growing up, Maria entered gang life from a young age because it is normalized. Her grandmother became bedridden during her middle school years, so her older siblings raised her. There were the five siblings, several cousins, and friends from the neighborhood staying or hanging out at her grandmother's house on any given day. When her older siblings, who were also gang-affiliated, try to intervene, it is too late. Upon reflection, she recalls:

At some point my brother and sister tried to do some intervention, like "no you're not doing this, you're not gangbanging," but then again, I was like "Fuck you. Who are you to tell me what to do? I'm grown, I know everything." But yeah, I think my grandma was oblivious to us actually being gang related 'til the house started to get shot up... The house was shot up at least 4-5 times... There was multiple people there from different places [gangs]... So, it was really just a hang out spot. But then it started getting dangerous. But didn't stop them from hanging out, like oblivious to actual danger or something cuz everybody had guns and thinking they was gonna save us, then my cousin got shot.

Living at the place where everyone hung out gave Maria notoriety and social status. She became more invested in and popular among her fellow gang members. Because many gang members frequently hang out at Maria's house, it becomes a target for rival gang members. In San Diego, drive-by shootings have been the primary form of what Sanders calls "gang warfare" since the 1980s (Sanders 1994). He argues that drive-bys that target rival gangs who are "hanging out," are strategic gang tactics that are victim precipitated (Sanders 1994:80-81). In this case, Maria's family is the target, and the intention is to kill or harm them. Maria experiences so many drive-by shootings that she talks of them in passing as though they were not traumatic events. I had to

ask her to clarify about her cousin getting shot, and she talks about it briefly and dismisses it as him being “okay.” Her casualness during this conversation suggests that she is taught to deal with trauma by minimizing and moving forward with life. Maria puts up a tough front. By trivializing traumatic events, Maria suppresses the pain and social suffering she has experienced.

In addition, Maria describes being at her grandmother’s house without adult supervision. A common theme among participants is a lack of parental supervision. Often parents and guardians are gone a lot due to over-employment or are absent altogether. Ranita Ray argues that sibling ties provide a vital kinship network among the inner-city poor: “My findings show that because of the obligatory nature of exchange, actors often struggled to find the distinction between exchange and the sacred filial bond” (Ray 2016:347). When her older siblings try to take control, it is already too late. Maria challenges her older siblings, and they struggle with her for respect. She describes how this dynamic starts many conflicts between them over the years despite her siblings being steadfast during tumultuous times.

Utilizing the idea of kinship sibling networks, I take Ray’s idea a step further and argue that gang members form such close kinship ties that it mirrors families, thus creating gang kinship networks. Black gang kinship networks are bonded by place, shared identity, and extraordinary adolescent trauma. Members of these gang kinship networks value loyalty, expect reciprocal exchanges, and utilize the networks in different ways. For example, women use the network for resources of survival such as temporary housing and protection, while men use their kinship networks for emotional support.

Maria’s grandmother died while she was in her early 20s. The house went to her aunt, and all the young adults living there had to find a place to stay. Without help from their parents or a stable environment, many relied on gang brothers/sisters to provide temporary housing. For

Maria, her younger siblings, and her cousins, the gang serves as an alternative family (Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995). Youth living in instability are attracted to gangs because it provides them a kinship network and fills the void of familial love and support. For instance, Maria describes what she finds positive about gang membership:

I would say that it was more of a unified thing. It was always somebody -- like still to this day I have my brothers' friends or like my big brothers [gang brothers] and sisters' friends or my big sisters [gang sisters] unifying the family. I don't have a big family. So, I would say that being able to have this extended family and be able to encounter any kind of trouble or anything and there is multiple people you can call.

Because of her absent parents and her disabled grandmother, her older brother and sister take on many household responsibilities. Maria relies heavily on her both her gang and her siblings. Sibling ties become a significant source of survival and are a necessary family arrangement for poor youth coming of age in the inner city (Ray 2016). Maria's extensive gang family remedies her lack of family. This type of kinship network is crucial for folks living in low-income areas because traditional means to resources are not always available. Maria's home life is unstable, and she finds comfort knowing that she can reach out to her gang family for financial or emotional support. This kinship network becomes a tool for gang members like Maria to help navigate social and economic barriers.

Residents living in Southeast San Diego rely on each other for community support, such as babysitting in exchange for rides to work or someone helping to fix a car to trade for mowing the lawn every month. This bartering is typical for close-knit communities, especially for single mothers who lack the money to pay for outside help. Sudhir Venkatesh talks about how JT, a gang leader in Chicago's Robert Taylor projects, provides services and helps tenants in exchange for them turning a blind eye to gang dealings: "He gave money to some local youth centers for sports equipment and computers. He willingly loaned out his gang members to Robert Taylor

tenant leaders, who deployed them on such tasks as escorting the elderly on errands or beating up a domestic abuser... A drug economy, he told me, was 'useful for the community,' since it redistributed the drug addicts' money back into the community via the gang's philanthropy" (Venkatesh 2008:115). This dynamic makes the community complicit in the gang's criminal activities and earns their loyalty and silence when questioned by the police. Like Anderson's code of the street, residents are aware of the criminality of the gang members but are scared to snitch or, in some cases, receive support from the gang in other capacities (Anderson 2000).

Ray argues that the poor rely on intimate ties for a variety of necessary resources (Ray 2016). I take this a step further and apply Ray's theoretical framework of kinship ties to what I refer to as "gang kinship networks." Gangs serve as a brotherhood/sisterhood that can be necessary for youth living in low-income areas looking for support and protection. However, like kinship sibling ties, gangs can be a source of contention when relationships are not reciprocal. Ray argues, "Lack of reciprocity in exchanges often lead to a power imbalance where (mostly) older siblings, overwhelmed by responsibilities, demanded loyalty and obedience in return for providing resources. Those who were dependent resented such power plays, leading to further conflict and hostility between siblings" (Ray 2016:350). Maria is dependent on her older siblings. She often clashes with her older brother, which fuels her rebellious nature. At 16, Maria gets pregnant by a young man from a Crip gang, which is a rival of her family's gang. This becomes the main source of controversy between her and her older brother JJ. Maria retorts, "I was a disrespectful ass little girl. So, I just didn't listen to people. So of course, everyone on my side [gang] was like, you can't talk to a Crip, and I'm like I can do whatever the fuck I want." JJ feels Maria is disrespecting him and the family by being in a relationship with a Crip. Maria's response is not one of obedience, causing years of conflict between the two siblings. JJ assumes

the patriarchal role in the household and is a high-ranking member of the gang. When Maria disobeys him, she challenges his position and authority as the man of the house and leader of the gang, which makes JJ harsher in his treatment of her. Not only does Maria defy his authority in the household, but she also challenges her loyalty towards the gang by fraternizing with a rival gang member. When JJ exerts his power, Maria rebels more. As the years pass, tensions ease and everyone starts to get along, but there is some controversy surrounding their relationship.

Amanda expresses that in times of trouble, she calls on her “gang kinship network” for protection. She recollects when she is jumped on the bus, and her brothers and their homies come to her rescue:

It’s been times where my brothers did have to come up to the school because I got into it with some guys on the bus. They tried to push my head through the window, and I threw my backpack because I had my social studies book and our books used to be thick and I smacked the guy in the head with it and my homegirl called and by the time we got from the bus and made it to the liquor store it was like eight cars full of dudes like waiting. My brothers and all their friends got down with a bunch of high school kids. I went back to school the next day and nobody had nothing to say. Everything was just cool; everybody knew like it was serious, like, “she ain’t gonna take no shit.”

Being attacked on the bus is a traumatizing experience. Girls that have a reputation for fighting on behalf of their gang are constantly in fear of not just other girls but boys as well. In addition, age does not matter when it comes to disrespecting a family member. Although all the young men that attacked Amanda were in high school, the men that came to fight them on her behalf were older. Because Amanda knows that her gang kinship network is tougher than the high school bullies, she does not put up with disrespect. She retorts, “They’ll talk shit and I used to talk shit right back.” The girl fighters I interview place great importance on having a strong gang behind them to call on in times of need. Having a solid gang kinship network benefits young women, especially girl fighters who are often provoked by rival gang members. The gang kinship network becomes a support system for women and girls to help them navigate dangerous

situations. If Amanda did not have the backing of her brothers and their friends, Amanda could have been seriously hurt when she got off the bus.

Many of the men participants speak positively about their kinship gang networks. Travis explains how he views girls in his gang: “I guess it is just being a friend but like, even the regular friends I’ve had, they don’t compare to my homegirls like, they really there for you.... I mean they got your back through thick and thin. I know I’ve got a few homegirls who if I needed something you know, they would be right there, regardless of what it is. They got kids now and whatever you know, but I just think those bonds will never be broken.” Travis speaks highly and protectively of his sister-like “homegirls.” He tells me that his current girlfriend gets jealous of his relationship with his homegirls even though he views them as sisters. Girls in gang life tend to be entirely devoted to their gang brothers, often going above and beyond to support them emotionally and financially. Travis mentions that his homegirls now have kids, and some are in committed relationships. This sisterhood/brotherhood bond goes beyond spousal or romantic relationships. Sometimes these relationships can cause conflict. Men with strong kinship bonds with their women gang siblings are deeper than typical childhood friendships which made lead to feelings of jealousy from romantic partners.

Additionally, most men gang members share the same positive sentiment about gang kinship networks. In Chapter 4, I mentioned that Brandon’s identity as a “gang member” is situational. During his interview, when I ask about what he learned from being in a gang, he explains, “There are certain rules to the gang: Never leave one hungry and never leave one lonely. If your homie is hungry, feed them. If your homie needs a place to stay, help them. Never leave a homie stranded. If they need clothes, you give them yours.” This notion of loyalty, ethics, and family goes far beyond the portrayal of gang members as just “thugs” and “criminals.” Like the men in

Rios's study, Brandon argues that these young men are searching for dignity and respect (Rios 2011). These men also show each other love, compassion, and empathy. They are there for each other when the world beats them down. They create a community that can be a place of solace.

As such, brotherly bonds go beyond traditional sibling ties; they extend into "gang kinship networks." Travis has an older birth brother named Trae. I interview Trae in a Walmart parking lot while his girlfriend and his homie wait in the car next to us. He is a 24-year-old Black man. Travis and Trae are from the younger generation of gang members. Trae also has two young children, claims the same gang as Travis, and is working on opening his own moving company. Trae speaks at length about his pride in his younger brother for changing his life around and going to college. He is very close to and protective of Travis and expresses how he is upset when his brother goes to jail for robbing some football players from another school at a party. When I ask how he feels that being in a gang contributes to his life, he explains:

I just felt powerful. I felt like one of those bad times in my life when I needed somebody to go to, one of my boys, my brothers, I called my homies. They were always there for me... It has brung me good energy in my body, you know what I'm saying. When I'll be down, and you think about so much bullshit going down I would go be around the homies cause they was always down for whatever... So, I don't know, being in a gang really brung out the man in me, to know about street life, to know about all this extra shit... It helped create me being the man I am today.

For Trae, the brotherly love he shares with Travis extends to his gang brothers. Not only does he have close kinship ties with his homies, but he attributes his manhood as being shaped by the experiences with gang membership. Like the kinship networks that Moore identifies in Chicano prison gangs, there is an obligatory familial element to gang membership where members feel responsible for each other's wellbeing (Moore 1978:99). Trae conveys how he turns to his gang brothers for emotional support when he is down or dealing with obstacles in life. He turns to his gang brothers to lift him up, give him good energy, and be his support system. When Trae says

that he felt “powerful,” this implies that he feels he can handle the obstacles life throws at him because he has a gang kinship network that supports him and gives him the confidence to move forward.

Roger is a 33-year-old Black man who spent most of his adolescent and young adult years in and out of juvie and prison. I meet Roger at the local Jack N’ the Box, a popular fast food chain in California. He takes me to the local skate park that he goes to every day to work out. The skate park has a small skating area, a small playground, and a dirt track for running. Roger’s priorities are his music, his children, and giving back to his community. He participates in youth summits, or conferences, for kids aged 12-17 to introduce them to music and guide them to avoid gangs, drugs, and street life. Roger’s reflection on how he becomes a gang member gives credence to the gang kinship network theory. He recalls what brings about his gang membership. He reveals, “I was young, so I wanted to be a part of it, I thought that’s what was up, you know the homies from the neighborhood... it was more like a family...it’s not like it was forced on me, like they all you got, to be from here. You know, I made that choice.” Roger explains that he chose to be in the gang because he wanted to belong not just to a gang, but to a family. For young men and women living in poor communities, gangs create a sense of belonging and family (Goldman, Giles and Hogg 2014, Moore 1991, Wing and Willis 1999). When Roger says, “they all you got, to be from here,” he is alluding to his environment. Living in poor neighborhoods, often all you have is the gang for family and support.

However, the gang is not always a place of comfort and loyalty. As Ray suggests, there can be conflict when loyalty is not reciprocal among kinship networks, which is the case with Roger as he gets older and gets into trouble with the law (Ray 2016). Roger explains that one of his close gang brothers betrayed him by snitching:



Friends I was rolling with every day. Somebody that I considered one of my family members from my neighborhood, you know told on me.... You know, it got handled you know but I was mess up about it. I was messed up about it because I'm like, dang, how could somebody tell, like how could you tell on me? Like, you know what I mean? You supposed to be my brother, we supposed to be in this together like so it kind of messed me up, but it was another life lesson for me.... You know, everybody ain't riders, everybody ain't your homie like that.

For Roger, this lesson becomes embedded with many other lessons. His life course drastically changes when he takes a plea deal and receives six years for first-degree burglary. Most gang members follow the “code of the street” and do not tell on others for fear of retribution by the gang (Anderson 2000:133). However, in some cases, fellow gang members will snitch on their friends when facing criminal charges to get their charges dropped. The problem with snitching is that law enforcement will use statements from informants providing false information. It breeds distrust in the police for letting other criminals walk in exchange for snitching, and reinforces racial profiling (Natapoff 2009:128). Natapoff writes, “False accusations, mistaken warrants, erroneous raids, and wrongful convictions associated with snitches will be more frequent in communities in which the practice is prevalent [...] it is the natural consequence of the deployment of criminal informants in poor black neighborhoods and against Black defendants” (Natapoff 2009:13). The practice of law enforcement’s use of snitching is harmful to low-income communities because it furthers the cycle of distrust between law enforcement and communities of color.

### **5.3 Girl Fighters**

Society frames girls who are feminine and docile as valuable, while tomboys and rule-breakers are immoral. However, being tough is expected of girls growing up in gang families or gang kinship networks, just like the boys. This notion challenges the traditional norms of patriarchal families treating girls as soft, delicate, and weak. Because Jessica grew up in a gang

family and culture, she normalized gang membership as a young child and recalls feeling like non-gang families were unusual. The family celebrated gang culture and engrained toughness in their children. This expectation manifests as knowing how to fight, understanding the “code of the street,” and being prepared for dangerous situations (Anderson 2000).

Like Amanda and Cindy, Maria is a girl fighter. As we sat in the car and talked, I noticed many scars on her face and hands. As a teen, she did a week in juvenile hall for fighting a girl at school and was constantly involved in fights. In San Diego, the girls involved in gangs view themselves as fully integrated with the boys -- as mixed-gender gangs instead of auxiliary gangs (Vigil 2007:108). For instance, when asked if boys and girls are separate in the gang, Maria reveals, “There was no difference. We were together when we hung out with my homeboys and homegirls, it was all together.... But when we’d go fight and things like that usually started with just me and my homegirls like when we’re bored.” Vigil argues that girls who fight for the gang help gain prestige and respect (Vigil 2007:121). Maria saw herself as equal to the men gang members, and she often challenged their claims for dominance. As we saw from her earlier discussion of her brother JJ, Maria did not fear the men in her life.

Fishman argues that most women gang members participate in “norm-violation activities,” such as underage drinking, smoking marijuana, and petty misdemeanors such as driving without a license, skipping school, and fighting (Fishman 1999:73-75). For example, Maria claimed gang membership as a young girl. However, she did not fully join until she was in the sixth grade. When most middle-class girls aged 11 and 12 are worried about science projects or soccer games, Maria was kicked out of middle school for truancy and was in and out of alternative schools for kids with behavioral problems. Eventually, she dropped out of school when she

became pregnant at 16 and earned her GED as an adult. These norm-violating activities characterize many young women growing up in gang families where delinquency is normative.

Similar to the women I spoke with, the men also share the impression of equality. A gang member by the name of Ty reflects on women within the gang, “I don’t knock them at all. I got a few homegirls that are real cool, you know they been through it and that’s why they ganging too, you know. And I’ve been there for them or whatever... I mean shit, girls shooting up motherfuckers too, like houses and stuff. They’re still putting in hard work too, it’s not easy for them. They could be more mean on females.” For 22-year-old Ty, women and girls in the gang were just as tough as the men. Although he views them as equals, he adds that the young women in the gangs are treated more harshly by some men in the gang. While there is the impression of equality, women in practice are subjected to unequal treatment. Vigil writes, “Sadly, many young women who turn to the gang for protection from domestic abuse continue to be abused by homeboys in the gang. These types of verbal and sexual abuse may not be considered as such by those involved in it, but many girls accept rude and sometimes dehumanizing treatment from the guys” (Vigil 2007:116). Even though girls and young women with high status within the gang receive equal treatment, some men subjugate women within the gang. We see this in the earlier example of Cindy. Because Cindy was a girl fighter, the men in the rival gang treated her as such and did not think twice about hitting her.

In addition, current literature challenges earlier notions that girls and young women gang members are not as violent as men gang members. As violence increases in hyper-segregated communities, guns have been more accessible for both men and women, and more women perpetrate violence. Researchers suggest that violence by women in gangs is due to the changing gender roles (Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999, Fishman 1999, Hagedorn and Devitt 1999).

Women are gaining more power and being less restricted in society (Hagedorn and Devitt 1999:256). Because of growing gender equality, women and girls participate more in gang membership, become more violent, and partake in more men-centered crimes (Hagedorn and Devitt 1999:256). “Early ethnographies... indicate that girls have long been involved in violent behavior as a part of gang life, but this violence tended to be ignored or trivialized. Girls’ gang experience has always been looked at as less important than boys’, somehow not genuine and defined by the male experience” (Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999:245). For criminologists, the increasing involvement of girls and women in violent crimes challenges the long-established theories that masculinity is at the core of delinquency and deviance (Hagedorn and Devitt 1999:259).

As Ty reveals, girls and young women in the younger generation are participating in drive-bys and “putting in work,” or committing criminal acts on behalf of the gang. When girls gain notoriety for being violent, they become targets of rival gangs. High-ranking gang member Joe explains how one of his homegirls gets shot: “I gotta homegirl that was shot and became paralyzed because she is one of the leaders of our gang and really out here putting in work.” While I agree with researchers who argue that women and girls are committing more crime, some reason it is to gain status among gang members (Campbell 1984b, Hagedorn and Devitt 1999). Alternatively, I argue that women engage in violence to feel powerful and that their actions are rooted in pride and self-esteem.

People from all backgrounds underestimate girls and young women. The girl fighters I interviewed respond to disrespect with violence and anger. They are trying to prove others wrong, feel they are in control, and respond to acts of disrespect. Black girls and women living in the hyper-segregated ghetto are disenchanted with society and deprived of the stability that

comes easily for white middle and upper-class women. They are not acting to be aggressive or to be performative for the men gang members. Girls and women gang members have a sophisticated understanding of the world that rejects them, so they do not pretend to play by the same rules as other women.

For example, Amanda learned how to fight not because she wanted to but because she *had* to. If she did not learn, she would be left vulnerable to attacks from other gangs. She carried this tough exterior into the classroom and experienced contempt from teachers at school. For example, she recalls:

I feel like growing up like you had to be like hardcore and like I'm the only girl so all I knew was to be tough or try to act tough. So, when I went to middle school it was in the wrong side of town, but it wasn't like gang banging back then it was just being badass kids. So, we had homeroom and it was at the time of the Columbine shooting and the teacher gave us our report cards. I don't understand how you could give somebody an F in homeroom and you're sitting here quietly reading right and she gave me an F. And I said, "I'm gonna fight her." So, the bell rings and she tried to say I said I was going to shoot her but it was like a week after that Columbine thing happened so instantly the security snatched me out of class and I had to go into the office. That was like my first time in handcuffs. I cried like a baby. My mama had to come get me.

In this very instance, the adults at school no longer treated Amanda like a child despite "crying like a baby." She no longer trusted her school or authority. Was she in the wrong for telling a teacher she was going to fight her? Yes. Did she deserve to get kicked out of school for it? No. And why did she get an "F" in homeroom? Perhaps Amanda was a troublemaker in the classroom, and the teacher was looking for a way to get her removed. What is clear is that Amanda and her teacher did not like each other. Whatever the reason, this incident sets the trajectory for Amanda's life. Teachers viewed her as a troublemaker, so she adopted these labels and joined her brothers' gang.

Monique Morris argues: “Schools that approach learning as an exercise in classroom management are often preoccupied with discipline -- exclusionary discipline, to be exact. Black girls are more likely to be punished for talking back to a teacher, cursing, or being ‘loud’ in ways that authority view as disruptive to the classroom” (Morris 2016:84). In addition, the presence of security “resource” officers in low-income schools reinforces the idea that students of color need to be under constant surveillance. Studies show that an increase of SRO’s in schools has increased student citation rates (Morris 2016:76). As in Morris’s analysis, the Black girls and women I spoke with act out in response to constantly being disrespected, underestimated, and ridiculed. Morris writes, “Black girls interpreted their attitude, not as a stagnant expression of anger and dissatisfaction. Rather it lived along a continuum of responses to disrespectful or degrading triggers in their lives – many of which were present in their learning environment” (Morris 2016:86). Amanda views receiving an “F” as an affront when she feels like she is a decent student most of the time.

Everyday affronts and disrespect build up over time. Girls who routinely deal with these triggers at school, at home, and in their community feel hopeless. Like Rios’s theory of boys using resistance instead of socially acceptable norms as a means for striving for dignity, girls resist by fighting (Rios 2011). Fighting against patriarchal norms, fighting against disrespect, and fighting authority are last resorts for girls who do not have other avenues or ways to resist. Girls and women who grow up in communities where fighting is a requirement of self-defense adopt tough fronts as a form of self-protection.

#### **5.4 Gender: “Pimps and Hoes”**

When I was 18 years old, I became distinctly aware that several of the young women I grew up were engaging in sex work. At the time, I attended San Diego State University and worked

full time, so I did not have much time for friends. However, when I did hang out with my friends, it seemed like escorting and pimping appeared out of nowhere, and everyone was doing it. It caught me by surprise, and I can remember describing it as an “epidemic.” These young women engaged in sex work, often with a man controlling the financial transactions and acting as a pimp. Growing up Catholic, I was conflicted. I was taught that sex before marriage was a sin. Even though I did not believe it, some engrained sense of “morality” I learned from Catholicism nagged at me so much that I tried to talk many of my friends out of sex work. These girls and young women are preyed upon and are often forced into sex work. I witnessed this happening, even to my best friend at the time. We eventually had a falling out because of her lifestyle. I recall her driving in fancy cars and living in a nice two-bedroom apartment ten minutes away from the Las Vegas strip. For a 19-year-old, the sex industry is attractive because it can be very lucrative, especially in a big city like San Diego or Las Vegas.

In 2014, the FBI charged 24 North Park gang members for sex-trafficking under the RICO law, or Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (FBI 2014):

The gang members allegedly forced many of the trafficking victims into prostitution through threats or actual violence. According to the indictment, they branded their prostitutes as if they were property -- with tattoos of gang monikers, bar codes, or a pimp’s name. Members of BMS [Black Mob and Skanlass gang] sold, traded, and gifted these girls and women among each other. All 60 female sex trafficking victims, including 11 minors, were offered resources to help them start a new life. (FBI 2014:3)

Of the 24 people indicted, three were women. They call these women “bottoms” -- women who help groom the younger women. Bottoms assists the men gang members turned pimps. The FBI made the indictment under the RICO charge because they were able to establish that the 24 people were associated and connected either under the gang or in financial transactions, and to prove the involvement of underage girls. The charges included murder, kidnapping, robbery, and drug-related crimes (FBI 2014). The press release states that several gangs were involved

and associated with the North Park gangs, which sex trafficked in 46 cities across 23 states (FBI 2014).

The FBI frames the men as sex traffickers. I distinguish between the scope and nature of gang-involved sex work and sex-trafficking conditions because Southeast San Diego gang members are involved with both. For this study, I define sex work as voluntary work and distinguish it from sex trafficking or forced prostitution. Feminists constantly debate these two terms and grapple with frameworks relating to agency and power because of the dichotomous nature of the definitions (Miriam 2005). Wendy Chapkis writes: “On the one side, there were feminists who saw commodified sex as a form of – and incitement to -- sexual violence. On the other, there were those who embraced recreational (including commercial) sex as a potentially liberatory terrain for women. The one side viewed prostitutes as victims of sexual slavery, while the other side understood them to be sexual renegades and exploited workers” (Chapkis 1997:1-2). As mentioned previously, Ronald Weitzer conceptualizes sex work into three overarching paradigms: oppression paradigm, empowerment paradigm, and polymorphous paradigm (Weitzer 2009). The polymorphous paradigm “holds that there is a constellation of occupational arrangements, power relations, and worker experiences .... [T]his paradigm is sensitive to complexities and to the structural conditions shaping the uneven distribution of agency, subordination, and job satisfaction (Weitzer 2009:215). For this study, I utilize the polymorphous paradigm, which allows for a more nuanced, multifaceted understanding of sex work.

For gang members, sex work can be both liberating and oppressive. For women gang members who engage in sex work like Jessica’s mom and cousins, sex work is a choice and a step towards financial stability. Men gang members do not usually prey on women gang members as prostitutes because they are protected kin. The men gang members engaging in



“pimp and hoe” relationships manipulate young women into prostitution, acting first as their boyfriends and then becoming their pimps (Weitzer 2009:228). These women are often associated with gang members and are not actually in the gang, nor did they grow up in gang families. Men gang members who become pimps frame their position as someone who protects the women from other pimps or “Johns” or “tricks” who might hurt them or fail to pay. The women are then expected to “pay their pimps.” Pimps often coerce women through threats of violence, but some young women willingly participate. In my view, men gang members who act as pimps do so purely for financial gain. They buy into the notion that women are objects. They do not view these women as equals, but as products. For low-income women of color, making money and turning around to give it to a man for fear of violence is not liberating; it is servitude. However, women gang members involved in sex work without a pimp are seen as independent. They have a choice between a low-income job and sex work, and they chose the more lucrative one.

Unfortunately, data on intersecting roles of gang members and pimping relationships are limited. While some participants were willing to talk about what they knew about sex work, others refused. My positionality as a researcher in my community could have hindered receiving data that is sensitive. Because I know some of the participants, many may have refrained from sharing information that they may feel shame about for fear of judgment. For example, I know that several women I interviewed participated in sex work in their past, yet they chose not to disclose it during our interview. I also asked some of the men gang members I knew growing up about their previous participation as pimps and they also did not disclose it or talked about it vaguely.

During the interviews, I asked the women how they felt about men gang members acting as pimps. Shanice says: “Gang members being pimps and using that as a means to get money versus -- just gang members did more robbing and other hustles to make money, and they felt this was a less risky way of doing things like you know robbing people or robbing establishments. It was less risky because the female was doing all the work, and they’re just collecting all the money, so they can keep themselves out of it a lot of times.” Shanice, a girl who grew up in a gang family, knew that the men gang members were sex trafficking women and using them for financial gain. Although Weitzer regards pimps as managers of street-level prostitutes, many pimps managed women who were escorts and call girls (Weitzer 2009:228). Duties mainly involved transportation to and from appointments and protection if things went awry. Yet, in these pimping relationships, men benefit the most and are often exploitative and abusive. “The most classic case of such third-party control is pimp-run prostitution. Here a combination of psychological dependence, drug use, and violence may be used to exercise control over a worker” (Chapkis 1997:98). Pimps control every aspect of the women’s lives, from what they wear to what they eat; the women who find themselves in these men-controlled situations are under constant surveillance.

Shanice did not see the upside of women having pimps because the women take all the risk, and the pimps take their money. When I asked about how she felt about the women who participated in prostitution and sex work, she said:

I feel like girls like to associate themselves with the gang members because it was like trendy. They thought it was cool. You know the way they like start going into this whole way of life, like it was competitive amongst the guys, whose girls making more money and then the girl’s kind of took on that competitive persona of making money, it was weird.

Like Shanice, I, too, felt like the pimp and hoe relationships were “trendy.” In 2004, many Southeast San Diego men gang members were suddenly pimping, and their girlfriends became sex workers. Typically, most women in relationships where their boyfriend and their pimp are one and the same do not see their relationships as unhealthy or exploitative. They enter the relationships consensually, not realizing they are being deceived (Anderson et al. 2014).

Sometimes the men gang member/pimp would have a girlfriend who did not participate in sex work and would lie to their sex workers about being in a relationship. Subsequently, they would then turn around and lie to the girlfriend about being involved with their “hoes.” Meanwhile, the sex worker thinks that they are in a romantic relationship.

Most of the men in Black gangs who become involved in sex work and sex trafficking are from low-income communities and prey on vulnerable young women who are often dealing with socioeconomic instability or abusive family members. The power dynamics in these instances remain patriarchal, abusive, and toxic. Johnny shared his views on men gang members turning to pimping for money:

I think it was a trend. It was a group of dudes, clique of dudes that was pimping at a young age that made it big and had nice cars and you know rolling around the city, dripping. People see that and they want to know what’s going on, how they get that money. So now they want to be associated with that. You know, everybody wants to be associated with money and power. So that’s what pimpin’ brings, money and power. I think it’s more of a trend and egotistical type of thing more than anything, having control of somebody and you being able to say that they giving you all their money.

Johnny is referring to the North Park gangs that were indicted in 2014. This group of young men started pimping, and it became a trend (FBI 2014). The men were “dripping” or flamboyant.

They went around town showing off their expensive cars, bragging about how they got the money, until other gangs wanted some of the action. According to the FBI, they threw “Players’ Balls and posed with gold jeweled pimp cups and pimp canes and posted the pictures on

Facebook” (FBI 2014:2). The FBI report states that the men involved forced the women to be “branded” with tattoos of their pimps’ names or the names of the gangs with which they were involved (FBI 2014). Pimps recruited girls and women from “El Cajon Boulevard,” which is known to locals as the “hoe stroll,” as well as from social media. As Johnny said, it was an “egotistical” thing, and they did it for money and power. Prior to pimping, other street gangs did not respect the gangs in North Park. When they started pimping, these men became very popular among the other gangs because they saw how lucrative pimping could be, and for low-income men, the fast money was attractive.

Johnny said that the men preyed on vulnerable women: “I think you got some victims; you know they probably been through some shit in their life.... They want to have a father figure or male figure in their life, and the pimp is pretty much a predator, so they take advantage of the weak.” Johnny confirms what other data reveal: such men target women with low self-esteem or unstable living situations and psychologically manipulate and coerce them into sex work (Carpenter and Gates 2016, Marcus et al. 2016). He states it is an economic move that the gangs made to find other ways to profit from the underground economy. He says, “Pimping been here, and I think it became big in the 2000s, real big, and it’s easy money, and we’re in a city where it’s a lot of tourists, and you can pimp here without having to go on the streets... The gangs, they had to find a way to make money because crack was gone, not like it was back in the ’80s and ’90s, that’s how guys were getting their money off crack and shit.” Johnny argues that Black men’s gangs are looking to make money via underground economic networks. During the ’80s, the crack epidemic took over the cities, and gangs could profit from drugs. Since law enforcement started to prosecute drug dealers with hefty sentences, men gang members moved on to other ways of making money.

In 2016, the University of San Diego and Point Loma Nazarene University conducted a study titled, “The Nature and Extent of Gang Involved Sex Trafficking in San Diego County.” The study, headed by Ami Carpenter and Jamie Gates, analyzes qualitative and quantitative data from (1) surveys conducted over ten years with 702 participants in a “prostitution first offender diversion program,” (2) intake forms from 140 sex trafficking survivors, (3) combined police arrest records and sheriff booking datasets, (4) focus groups with staff at 20 local high schools, and (5) in-depth interviews with gang affiliates involved in or knowledgeable about sex trafficking (Carpenter and Gates 2016:7). Carpenter and Gates find that the sex economy in San Diego County is much larger than previously estimated. In 2013, the sex economy reached \$810 million (Carpenter and Gates 2016:8). Carpenter and Gates do not distinguish between sex work and sex trafficking. They frame this report using the oppression paradigm and submit their findings to the U.S. Department of Justice which in turn, makes this document a part of the official use for policies. Most notably, Carpenter and Gates argue, “The stereotype that sex trafficking is principally a practice of Black gangs is inaccurate for San Diego County and may channel apprehension efforts by law enforcement in too narrow a direction. This disproportionate attention is in part driven by the highly visible social media presence of African American gangs on social media, making them ‘low hanging fruit’ for law enforcement” (Carpenter and Gates 2016:17). They claim that 110 gangs in San Diego County from different neighborhoods and racial/ethnic backgrounds have profited from sex trafficking, that the average age of entry for victims is 16 years old, and that victimization is concentrated to ten zip codes that correlate with underserved populations (Carpenter and Gates 2016:9). These zip codes coincide with areas within North Park and Southeast San Diego. Many participants in this study report similar experiences with law enforcement.

A North Park resident named Rhonda, a Black participant in my study, recalls being attracted to gang members when she was younger because they were “cool.” Rhonda was not a gang member herself, but she was romantically involved with a few boy gang members when she was in high school. When I asked her about the pimp and gang situation in San Diego, she recalled many times in high school when underage girls -- including her -- were preyed upon by pimps: “When I was living in North Park, there was a guy, he just got out of prison for pimping... He was my neighbor and he always wanted to hang out and stuff... he was pimping and he asked me if I was interested in prostituting. Girl, I was like 16 years old.” Rhonda never participated in prostitution. She saw it as a big problem in San Diego: “I was working at the high school and I was employed by UCSD as an advisor. They [students] were telling me that they were getting pregnant by pimps and stuff and they were prostituting while they were pregnant... I know for sure that girls are still doing stuff like that under the age of 18.” Under the law, girls under 18 cannot consent. Gang member pimps manipulate, groom, and coerce young girls into prostitution. Shanice also distinguishes between adult women who perform sex work and the sex trafficking of underage minors, stating: “I feel like if they are of age and legal and that they fully understand what they’re doing, that’s their business. I have no judgment. I do take issue with the ones that were minors.” Many of the women gang members in Southeast San Diego know that men gang members engage in underage sex trafficking and do not challenge or question their fellow gang members. The men gang members wield their power over both the women gang members and vulnerable girls and young women in their community.

Historically, patriarchal society has been insistent on controlling women and the female body, from reproductive rights to policing what girls wear in the classroom. In smaller subcultures, the age-old inclination for men to oppress and control women still manifests. Even

men who value kinship ties with some women they view as equals treat other women and girls as commodities. The polymorphous framework on sex work and sex trafficking allows for such flexibility. While some women gang members willingly participate in sex work without a man involved or benefitting financially, other women and girls are groomed, coerced, and trafficked. Like other scholars, I call for more research on the dynamics of pimping relationships between men and women. The purpose of this section is to explain the intertwined networks of gang members in San Diego participating in sex work and sex trafficking. I want to be careful not to reinforce stereotypes of Black men as violent deviants. In the next section, I will explore manhood and masculinity among Black gang members and suggest why some Black men gang members participate in violence against women.

### **5.5 Manhood and Masculinity among Black Gang Members**

The literature on manhood and masculinity among low-income men of color is vast. Angela Harris argues that low-income men of color in inner cities use hypermasculinity to show physical strength and aggression (Harris 2000:789). Men of color might express this with physical and sexual domination of others (Harris 2000:789). Victor Rios claims that hypermasculinity serves as both resistance and a resource for self-affirmation against the competing meanings of manhood from institutions of control that work to dehumanize (Rios 2011:141). bell hooks contends:

If black males are socialized from birth to embrace the notion that their manhood will be determined by whether or not they can dominate and control others and yet the political system they live within (imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy) prevents most of them from having access to socially acceptable positions of power and dominance, then they will claim their patriarchal manhood, through socially unacceptable channels. (hooks 2004a:53)

These theoretical frameworks provide some reasoning as to why some Black men gang members use violence to express their manhood. However, my goal for this section is not to reinvent the wheel or add to the robust literature that already exists (Coston and Kimmel 2012, Froyum 2013, hooks 2004a, hooks 2004b, Hunter and Davis 1992, Shabazz 2015). In this section, I will highlight findings that provide a counternarrative of how Black gang members view their manhood and masculinity that offers nuance and strikes down the one-dimensional narrative of the violent Black man.

Black men gang members are multidimensional. On the one hand some believe in equality and act on it by valuing women among their kinship networks, and on the other hand some engage in subjugation and violence toward women. Yet, both the media and the academy choose to focus on the age-old stereotype of the violent or deviant Black man (Anderson 2000, Goffman 2014, Goodwill et al. 2019, Gravel et al. 2018, Jackson 2015, Sanders 1994). “Black males today live in a world that pays them the most attention when they are violently acting out [...] black males are assigned the position of hypermasculine, out-of-control male body, and white males (whether enforcers of law or educators) are perceived to be acting within reason” (hooks 2004a:53). To provide more depth and nuance, I refuse to write about marginalized groups in a way that only reinforces negative stereotypes. To that end, I will use this section to highlight positive narratives of manhood and masculinity expressed by gang members in this study.

When I asked Roger what he thought “being a man” meant, he replied: “Just being a stand-up person, being honest, you know looking out for people, you know caring and loving...being a man is you have to have a heart. I don’t think you can call yourself a man and not have a heart. You know what I’m saying? You got to. You got to have a heart even to be a gangster.” For Roger, being loving and caring is a part of manhood, “even” for gangsters. This opinion directly



counters the narrative that gang members are heartless and violent. He adds that structural and environmental obstacles cause some men to react with violence. Roger says, “See, a lot of times we get our hearts hardened too because of, like I said our environments... people are rough, you know, and they make you feel like you can’t be a punk... you come out here you gotta fight, you gotta be tough.” As Rios explains, men and boys are searching for dignity and respect; knowing how to fight out of self-defense protects one from being vulnerable to disrespect and victimization (Rios 2011). Rios and Sarabia write about what they call “synthesized masculinities,” masculinities that are fluid, situated, and shifting (Rios and Sarabia 2018:166). “Masculinity is a central vehicle by which marginalized young men attempt to compensate for race and class subordination [...] Synthesized masculinities address marginalized men’s adoption of various forms of masculinities to access resources they perceive themselves to be lacking and to compensate for other forms of domination” (Rios and Sarabia 2018). Black men gang members can value love and equality but, in practice, act in ways that contradict their values due to peer or societal pressures and notions that achieving patriarchal manhood requires the domination and control of others (hooks 2004a:53). In this case, they can adopt aggressive masculinity in situations that call for violence to survive, but display caring and loving masculinity in interactions with their family or “gang kinship networks.”

Another common theme is that Black men gang members value traditional ideals of fatherhood, providing for their family, and conventional gender division. All but three out of the 15 men I interviewed were fathers. Trae explains, “In my eyes, to be a man you have to protect and feed your family first, you know what I’m saying. Be able to take care of your responsibilities.” The majority of men gang members I interviewed conceptualized their masculinity and manhood as tied to their roles as parents. A Black participant named Jamal said:

“I ended up having my first daughter when I was 19 and from there just like I felt like I had to provide. It was like immediately I was just forced to be a man. I was still hanging out, but I still found time to make sure I had a job or I was hustling. I wasn’t just sitting on my ass so really it was like a survival thing.” Jamal expresses that once he had his daughter, it forces him to be a man. To him, being a father and being a man are synonymous. He goes on to say, “Being a man means a person who is going to guide their family into just being happy... kind of protect the family condition and find resources to provide for the family... you know uplift your family emotionally.” Like conventional patriarchal ideals, many gang members view manhood as being connected to providing for one’s family. However, unlike traditional notions of manhood, Jamal explains that being a man also means uplifting his family emotionally and making sure they are happy. This notion speaks to a desire to have strong emotional connections and mental health within the family unit.

Aasha Abdill explores Black fatherhood in the low-income neighborhood of Brooklyn’s Bedford Stuyvesant (Abdill 2018:50). She argues that seeing fathers with their children in public is a reflection of changing gender norms as well as the growth of female-dominated work sectors (Abdill 2018:51). In addition, she criticizes Elijah Anderson’s portrayal of “decent” daddies versus “street” fathers as polarizing and too simplistic (Abdill 2018:9). “Behaviors among urban black men that are widely considered anti-social by the general public contribute to the widespread negative view of these men... In cases where the stereotypical public image of the ‘hard’ black man directly contradicts the positive parenting traits portrayed, many observers are unable to reconcile what they see with what they already know to be true” (Abdill 2018:53). These stereotypes are more pervasive for men gang members with children. However, evidence shows that the fathers in this study value fatherhood. Many of the fathers I’ve mentioned in this

study talk at length about trying to be good fathers either because their fathers were absent or because they have good fathers.

For example, Mike talks about his father being a positive influence in his life. His father is a minister and very involved in his upbringing. He spoke with pride about his mother and father still being together and living in the same neighborhood that his grandparents lived. He explains:

I believe like our generation is kind of split. Right? Like a lot of us who have fathers in the home or a strong family foundation, kind of like stayed straight but a lot of the other ones who maybe didn't have the same support system started getting involved with gang banging, drugs, jacking, and things like that. Me personally, I like straddled that fence since I had a father. He was a tough father.... I never really got a chance to go all the way left but then I also had to like fly straight because you know Pops wasn't playing no games, right?

He did not go down the wrong path because his father was always there to support him and nudge him back when he strayed too far. Other boys and young men who get involved with gang banging and criminal behavior may not have a father figure to guide them. Mike says that he hopes he can be a good father to his children, like his father. For Mike and other gang members, fatherhood is an essential aspect of one's life course and, as I mentioned in Chapter 4, fatherhood often replaces the gang member identity and forces them to take on new roles.

Mike is very thoughtful and intuitive about how boys' socialization promotes being "tough." He differentiates between how parents teach girls and boys ways to deal with pain:

When a daughter falls, scrapes her knee, and the mom or the dad consoles, like "it's okay, it's okay to cry, it's okay, baby." But the boy falls, scrapes his knee, and the mom or dad is like, "Get up, rub it off, that didn't hurt, you know rub some dirt on it. Boys don't cry." Or "Aww, you soft." You know all this is pumped into your head as a toddler. "Don't cry!" The only emotion that is acceptable is anger. So, like, if somebody said something to me that hurts my feelings or that challenges me, I can't say, "Hey man, that hurt my feelings." Or I can't cry. Because now I'm a punk, I'm a sissy. I'm a wimp. So, I'm gonna sock you in your face because now how else do I know how to express that?

Mike is distinctly aware of the gendered norms of child-rearing in his community and broader society. Parents teach boys to “suck it up” and deal with pain without showing emotion, while allowing girls to cry and express their emotions. Academic literature on gendered child-rearing practices is robust (Hill and Sprague 1999a, Hill and Sprague 1999b, Mesman and Groeneveld 2018, Morawska 2020, Sharp and Ispa 2009, Thomassin, Seddon and Vaugh-Coaxum 2020). Gendered expectations are communicated from parents to children, organizing their socialization of work, roles, and identities along gender lines (Hill and Sprague 1999b).

## **5.6 Discussion**

Overall, I argue that girls’ and women’s gang membership tend to be familial. Researchers must consider girls’ relationships with their mothers within gang families and how these families socialize girls in non-traditional ways. Place, shared identity, and “black extraordinary adolescent trauma” bonds young men and women into “gang kinship networks.” These “gang kinship networks” are instrumental for survival in inner cities and provide resources for youth who find themselves in unstable housing or economic situations or in need of protection from violence in their community.

Family socialization is an underutilized approach to studying gangs and gang life. Researchers place too much emphasis on criminalizing gangs or marginalized men and not enough on gangs as family units, socialization, and bonds. I provide nuances that other scholars fail to provide regarding women who participate in sex work for gangs. Furthermore, I offer explanations for why Black men gang members engage in violence and domination against women they deem as weak, but not against women they value or see as kin. In addition, instead of reinforcing negative stereotypes, I use this study to provide a counternarrative to that of Black men gang members as deviants and seek to highlight their capacity to value kinship ties. While

some men gang members still express conventional patriarchal views and act in sexist and violent ways, others describe the importance of equality with some women within their network. This study provides a more nuanced approach to traditional notions of gang men as being violent and sexist.

## 6 CRIMINALIZATION OF GANG MEMBERSHIP

The neighborhood I currently live in is a middle to upper-middle-class, racially mixed suburb of Sugar Hill. Sugar Hill is a small city in Gwinnett County, Georgia, about 30 miles north of Atlanta. Although we often visit my childhood home in Southeast San Diego because my mother still lives there, my daughter will never know what it is like to grow up in a primarily Black neighborhood with gangs or poverty. She does not quite grasp the privileges she is afforded. She has access to a free neighborhood pool, a free state-of-the-art gym, quality education, and the freedom to walk around the neighborhood without fear. As I reflect upon the stark differences between where I grew up and where I live now, I feel some guilt. While I have access to two full-sized grocery stores less than a mile from my home, it takes my mother 10 minutes to drive to the nearest grocery store. I have no idea where the police station is in my area while the police station is half a mile from my childhood home. Come to think of it, I have never heard a police siren while living in Sugar Hill. The aesthetic standards of my current neighborhood are rigid. I was recently fined \$35 for leaving my trashcans in front of my garage, and there is not one piece of graffiti in sight. Unlike my childhood neighborhood, the social order requires well-manicured lawns and waves to your neighbors as you walk the dog. Mama, I made it!

While there are some gangs in Gwinnett, the amount is minimal. My daughter knows about gangs since I study them, and she lived in San Diego until she was eight, but she will never join a gang. Her current neighborhood would not approve. Growing up in a community with gangs is

*the* formula for joining a gang. So why are there no gangs in my neighborhood? Simply because gang membership is a result of other neighborhood factors: hyper-segregation and poverty.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2019, the city of Sugar Hill's median household income is \$87,090, and the residents are of 68.7% white, 12.3% Black, 9.2% Asian, 19.6% Hispanic, or Latino. While Sugar Hill is also segregated (primarily white), poverty is not an issue.

This chapter focuses on answering the question: "How do racial, gendered, and classist factors contribute to gang membership?" It is essential to analyze gang membership from an intersectional perspective because men and women of color in low-income neighborhoods typically make up street gangs. However, there is an interesting class element that is under-theorized. Some argue that fraternities and sororities are a type of elite gang (Kendi 2018). There are also biker clubs, country clubs, brother and sisterhoods, exclusive women's groups, and many different "members-only" groups that practice initiation rituals and have violent and criminal elements. So, what makes street gangs different? The intersection of race and class deems low-income minority gangs as criminals while white fraternities, for instance, are socially acceptable because they are not poor. Even though white fraternities may participate in minor crimes such as property damage, hazing, or drug use, they do not have to participate in the underground economy for survival and rely heavily on social institutions to regulate their behavior.

Young men and young women in low-income neighborhoods are susceptible to crime, extraordinary adolescent trauma, and neighborhood effects. Stemming from William Julius Wilson's, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, the neighborhood effects literature is broad (Massey and Denton 1993, Sampson, Morenoff and Gannon-Rowley 2002, Wilson 1987). It encompasses the socialization process of people, especially adolescents, living in concentrated poverty, which

produces many neighborhood-level factors such as delinquency, violence, disadvantage, adverse health outcomes, and high-risk behavior (Sampson, Morenoff and Gannon-Rowley 2002).

However, few sociologists include gang membership as a neighborhood effect. Criminologists answering this call theorize that residents who live near gang set spaces report more perceived problems with unsupervised teens (Blasko, Gouvis Roman and Taylor 2015 ). Thrasher writes, “Ganging is merely one symptom of more deep-lying community disorganization, which frees the boy from ordinary controls and thus makes possible the development of the gang” (Thrasher 1926:3). Blasko et al. argue that this perception of disorder reflects social incivility which supports Thrasher’s view of gangs as consequences of neighborhood social disorder or effects (Blasko, Gouvis Roman, and Taylor 2015).

While the criminology argument builds upon the idea of weak social institutions and “perceived incivilities,” I take this a step further and ground this argument focusing on neighborhood-level structural constraints. Therefore, in this chapter, I argue that gang membership is a neighborhood effect. Using a critical race lens, I am making two arguments. The first is that hypersegregated neighborhoods (poor, underdeveloped, and oppressed) with high crime and victimization force youth to seek gang protection. The second argument is that low-income Black and Latinx youth endure *legal violence* perpetrated by local law enforcement and probation officers that routinely harass youth to document gang membership (Menjívar and Abrego 2012). This legal documentation of gang membership by the state marks gang members as criminals, keeping them in a constant cycle of surveillance. This legal violence prevents documented gang members from finding gainful employment and safe housing and weakens their family social ties. I utilize Cecilia Menjívar and Leisy Abrego’s term *legal violence* to describe how laws and their implementation create harmful outcomes for gang members’ lives,

families, and communities (Menjívar and Abrego 2012:1384). While many studies have come to similar conclusions, I utilize critical race theory to inform my findings while centering gang members' narratives about striving for racial justice.

### **6.1 High Crime and Victimization**

Gang members are unique because they are often both criminals and victims (Lane and Fox 2012). Lane and Fox's study on Florida inmates indicates that gang members and former gang members report committing more property and personal crimes than non-gang members (Lane and Fox 2012:512). Current gang members report experiencing more personal victimization than ex-gang and non-gang members (Lane and Fox 2012:512). Lane and Fox argue, "One important possibility is that fear of crime may lead to more criminal behavior (e.g., weapon carrying or use) as offenders try to protect themselves from victimization or retaliate for perceived wrongs or become more emboldened if they believe their criminal knowledge, experience, peer associations, and weapons make them relatively invincible" (Lane and Fox 2012:49). From this standpoint, gang members and associates are in what Katz et al. call the "victim-offender overlap," often getting trapped in a never-ending cycle of perpetrating crime due to the fear of becoming a victim (Katz et al. 2011:48).

As noted previously, most people join gangs for protection (Decker 1996, Melde, Taylor and Esbensen 2009, Padilla 1992, Rios 2011). For gang members in Southeast San Diego, protection from victimization is one of the main reasons for joining a gang. Brandon, a Black gang member (discussed in Chapter 4), grew up in a single-mother household. His mother worked a lot and, he and his sister were often left at home alone or went to the neighbor's house after school. He recalls how he joined a gang: "I used to walk home from middle school by myself, and grown-ass men would bang on me. Then, I started hanging out with the gang members and joined my



older cousins' gang, and all of us from the middle school would walk home together for protection." Brandon went to school in an area where the Sureños, Crips, and the Blood gangs' set spaces meet, so he had to walk through a rival gang area to get home.

A quantitative study conducted in 1995 of eighth-grade youth attending 11 public schools in different cities surveyed students about the association of gang membership and violent victimization. Researchers found that gang membership suppresses and protects gang members against general violent victimization (simple assault) yet increases the risk of serious violence victimization (aggravated assault or robbery) (Taylor et al. 2007:372). This argument is consistent with the gang member narratives in this study and shows a positive correlation between self-reported reasons for gang members to join gangs for protection. Young girls and boys who initially join gangs in middle school for protection are under pressure to perform more serious crimes as they get older or more involved with the gang. Once young girls and boys join gangs, they must continually increase risky behavior to prove loyalty to the gang or to create a reputation for themselves to gain status. Young boys and girls, especially those without constant adult supervision, are also more susceptible to increased victimization risk factors (Taylor et al. 2007). Youth, especially in low-income hypersegregated areas, find themselves vulnerable in their neighborhoods and turn to a gang's protective circle to learn how to fight and gain knowledge about street survival.

In addition to joining gangs for protection, active gang members are much more likely to engage in violence and experience gang retaliation. Gang members face retaliation and victimization due to their gang-related status and frequently associate with other offenders (Lane and Fox 2012). In Chapter 5, I spoke at length about Maria. I also interviewed her cousin Jamal, who was shot by a rival gang in Maria's garage. I met Jamal at the trolley station parking lot near

Market Street. I was surprised to see that this area is going through gentrification. We walked by his old middle school and he led me to his grandmother's previous home. Jamal's family is mostly Bloods, and he explains how he grew up in a neighborhood with ongoing racial tensions at school as well as gang violence:

It's near two gang territories, a Blood gang and then it's like borderline close to the Crips... You know that my school being a Crip dominant school, you would hear stories about the middle school, and you know the riots they had and you know the Mexicans were racists and all this other stuff that just brought the school down. So, I just had that feeling like okay once I graduated sixth grade and I have to go here now I have to brace myself for this. So, it was just like a group of us who like at my elementary school, we had a pact like once we go here, we're going to stick together. We're going to walk home together regardless. This is even before I decided to start gang banging.

For Jamal, going to elementary school and hearing stories about the dangers he might encounter once he entered middle school causes him to fear his neighborhood. Not only does he have to worry about being on the receiving end of stereotyping and disrespect from Mexican students, but he must also deal with possible threats from the rival Crip gangs that knew of his gang-affiliated family. As Lane and Fox argue, Jamal's fear is so great that he turns to gang membership for protection from possible neighborhood threats (Lane and Fox 2012). In Jamal's case, he fears the people in his neighborhood, and he chooses to join a gang to no longer be afraid.

As an active gang member, Jamal explains that he must "put in footwork" or engage in criminal activity on behalf of the gang so that fellow gang members from his set will not question his loyalty. In addition to keeping up with his reputation or "making a name for himself," Jamal also worries about retaliation from other gangs. He describes, "I can't change my past. So, like I can't change whatever somebody feels... and my friends and family members that passed before me I want like whoever was responsible to you know feel that same pain and hurt...It's the same with us, if we take somebody like from over there...they want us to feel the

same hurt and pain... it's always been like that like revenge is the best thing going." Jamal explains that retaliation is common even for a retired gang member because you "cannot change your past." Thus, the "victim-offender overlap" becomes a never-ending cycle of gangs acting in retaliation to conflicts that arose from the previous generations (Katz et al. 2011). Jamal adds that the younger generation is responsible for retaliating against offenses that happened to their older family members. "A little brother or a little cousin that's eventually going to grow up and going to want to retaliate, it's just all in retaliation. It's just generations and years and years of things happening, and then maybe it'll go unanswered but then maybe it won't so you're always looking over your shoulder." Jamal describes this as a constant fear that gang members must endure, upholding their reputation and always being ready for a fight.

Racial dynamics are complex in Southeast San Diego because it is the area in San Diego where majority of minoritized people live (Guevarra 2012). While there might not be many white people, people of color live, work, and interact daily. The same idea goes for rival gang members. On the one hand, there is gang violence among different gangs from the same area. When one of the central high schools is closed, many of the teens are bussed to primarily white schools north of the city. Mike recalls how this caused the different gang factions to unite at school. He recalls,

It was a struggle in high school because a lot of our schools were getting shut down. Like gentrification, people getting pushed out to different communities...so it was a lot of different gangs at the white high school as well. For the most part we all got along because we all understood that we are all in a school that one, don't want us. And two, we are around people who don't like us. So that almost kind of brought everybody together because we couldn't go eat with the Mexicans or the whites, you know to me I think honestly the only people who really kind of rocked with us is like the Filipinos from Southeast, you know what I mean?

While I was in high school, I remember hearing about the race riots at local middle and high schools. Often it started with a fight between two different ethnicities and became an all-out

brawl -- such as Black students against Mexican students or Cambodians against the Samoans. These riots would continue until I graduated from high school in 2003. When many Black students were bussed to other parts of the city, they often put aside their differences despite being from rival gangs. They came together because of the othering status they experienced from their white and Mexican peers. Not only was it a culture shock for them, but they were othered not just by race but by class. This discrimination caused them to seek solace in each other, uniting rivals against a common threat.

Moreover, Mike also mentions that there is a camaraderie between the Black community and the Filipino community. He explains, "I've always kind of looked at Filipinos as like light-skinned Black people... There's some of them that are from like upper-middle-class like the ones who maybe got the military parents or sometimes like they would kind of act funny towards us, but like they was poor just like us and they were cool with us. They rocked with our cultures like with the arts and the music and all that was so similar." Like much of the U.S., what bell hooks calls the imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy creates the socio-historic conditions that pit minoritized communities against each other. When the students from Southeast San Diego made it to the new school, they no longer were divided by gangs, and they united by race and class. Mike explains that the Filipino students from Southeast San Diego that go to school with them in the northern suburbs found comfort with the other Black students because they are also poor. Once the students left their neighborhoods, the gang factions no longer existed and an unspoken alliance formed.

Neighborhood factors create gang membership as a necessity for survival among young girls and boys who lack adult supervision due to their parents' over-employment. Youth growing up in high-crime areas can become victims of criminal elements in their neighborhoods. One of the

critical situations where children feel most vulnerable is walking home from school. Most of the gang members in this study express “walking home from school” as the reason for seeking protection by joining a gang. This is another reason urban sociologists should consider gang membership among the neighborhood effects literature.

## 6.2 Legal Violence and Gang Documentation

In 2012, Cecilia Menjivar and Leisy Abrego use structural and symbolic violence to theorize the term “legal violence” to describe the “complex manner in which the law exerts its influence and control” (Menjívar and Abrego 2012:1383). Their study argues that structural violence is rooted in the uncertainty of everyday life by blocking pathways to a living wage and other material resources such as health care, housing, and food. This precarity causes undue stress on the poor and obstructs mobility to a stable quality of life (Menjívar and Abrego 2012:1385). The symbolic violence is the invisible manifestation of white supremacy upon subordinate groups that make social hierarchy seem natural (Menjívar and Abrego 2012:1386). Together, these concepts combined with legal violence amplify this precarity. Menjivar and Abrego argue that immigration laws converge with criminal law to create *social suffering*, or the collective suffering among a large group of individuals, and in their case, documented and undocumented Central American immigrants.

For this study, I expand on the concept of legal violence and apply it to gang membership. Lawmakers frame laws, such as the three-strikes law, as positive ways to curb violence and deter the youth from gang membership and crime. However, the outcome does quite the opposite. Instead, these punitive laws trap gang members in a cycle of re-offending and block Black and Latinx youth from upward mobility. The agents that carry out these practices are local police officers and probation or parole officers. They routinely harass, harm, and surveil gang members,

causing social suffering and undue stress. Like Rios's concept of the inverted panopticon, gang members are in the center of a hyper-surveillance system that keeps them trapped in the criminal justice system (Rios 2011). However, while Rios applies this concept to primary Black and Latino boys living in concentrated poverty, I establish that documenting men and women gang members intensifies the surveillance through legal gang enhancements.

In 1988, the Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act (STEP Act) was enacted (Yoshino 2008:118). This law creates the foundation of what we now know as gang enhancements, or greater imposed punishment for crimes benefiting a criminal street gang (Yoshino 2008:118). Sometimes these gang enhancements can increase sentencing by up to ten years and are used subjectively by judges depending on the offender's criminal history, gang affiliations, or nature of the crime (Muniz 2014:216). This creates a tenuous legal status that stalls upward mobility and causes social suffering. In addition, the STEP Act paved the way for CalGang, the database used to document gang members. According to Swan and Bates, since 1997, San Diego County has implemented 20 civil gang injunctions (CGI's) or court-ordered restraining orders (Swan and Bates 2017:135). They argue that CGI's and other gang suppression methods have hidden harms to the community, which include the "disruption of family relationships and friendships, and the creation of obstacles to re-establish public relationships; the blockage of opportunities for institutional integration in education, housing, and work; and an increase in feelings of futility and injustice" (Swan and Bates 2017:149). For documented gang members in San Diego, navigating the criminal justice system creates additional obstacles in their already challenging lives.

The San Diego Police Department has a special Gang Suppression Unit tasked with identifying and documenting gang members. Laila Aziz, a Southeast San Diego community

leader, calls for Black and Brown community-led programs and transformative justice to reduce violence in her recent commentary published in the San Diego Union Tribune (2020). She writes:

I spent most of my life in Southeast San Diego, where walking home from school was a traumatic experience. Tuesdays and Thursdays were known as the “gang unit days.” Police officers would stop us, handcuff us and line us up on the curb or a wall. Without probable cause, they would search us, take our pictures and ask us personal questions. We did not realize that they were collecting data to document and use against us as we grew up. These interactions with the gang suppression unit became a part of life. Having our constitutional rights violated became our norm. (Aziz 2020)

Unfortunately, for youth growing up in Southeast San Diego, this is a normal day-to-day occurrence. The CalGang documentation database is a strategic control mechanism used to target Black and Latinx youth to oppress, restrict, and stifle their full potential.

### **6.3 Gang Documentation**

Several gang members describe their criminalization, the never-ending cycle of legal violence, and the hardships that legal violence creates to prevent them from gaining positive upward mobility. Roger explains how he felt after being documented as a gang member before he even joined the gang: “You get stereotyped. I got pulled over with one of my buddies who was in a gang just because we were in that area...I got documented. I was a minor and they documented me. It made me feel furious. I was mad. I was like how you going to document me? I’m not dumb. I just live over here. At the time, I didn’t even really know what a gang member was.” As a young boy, Roger was documented before joining the gang -- which is allowable under the CalGang documentation guidelines. Roger’s life is significantly interrupted by his time spent in juvenile camps, diversion programs, and prison. While he is currently on probation, finding gainful employment has been challenging, and he explains that he currently lives with his mother and has been looking for a job. Lawmakers frame gang documentation as a race-neutral

law that identifies suspected gang members to prevent crime. However, in practice, it labels young Black and Latinx youth as criminals often before they even join gangs. As a result, Black and Latinx youth become targets while engaging in non-threatening activities such as driving, walking, and living in their neighborhood.

A study conducted by Ana Muniz portrays how gang documentation and injunction policies implemented in the 1980s were “meticulously designed to control the movement of Black youth by criminalizing activities and behavior that are unremarkable and legal in other jurisdictions” (Muniz 2014:216). Muniz claims that in 1987 the Cadillac-Corning neighborhood of Los Angeles County became the model for current gang injunctions. This area was targeted for lying adjacent to the white, middle, and upper-class neighborhoods and for threatening the geographic racial and class separation and control (Muniz 2014:216). Since then, gang injunctions have become a routine practice against gang members and have expanded to officially prohibit noncriminal acts, allowing “police and prosecutors legal discretion to carry out extralegal control and repression” (Muniz 2014:234). It is no coincidence that gang members are heavily policed in San Diego while at the beach, in neighborhoods going through gentrification, and in neighborhoods adjacent to large retail centers or San Diego State University. Recently large gang injunctions have been implemented, most notably in North Park. It is minutes away from San Diego State University and just over the 8 freeway. The community just over the freeway is Mission Valley, a primarily upper-middle-class community close to upscale shopping malls and tourist attractions. The documentation process is arbitrary and inhibits gang members’ mobility around the city.



Laws like the STEP Act, three-strikes law, and CalGang documentation criminalize Black and Latinx youth for everyday activities. Travis explains how his documentation status allows the police to stop and detain him without probable cause. He recalls:

They got me for being in my neighborhood, twice for being at my grandma's house. The first time I was walking to the store, and I wasn't with nobody or nothing. The other time I was just outside of my grandma's house...I've been documented since I was 12 years old ... I was in and out [juvenile detention centers], in and out for just violations.

Because Travis is a documented gang member and on probation he is not supposed to go to his neighborhood or set. Whenever he visits his grandmother, he is violating his probation. Being arrested for violating probation not only leads to a continuous cycle of re-offending, but puts a strain on family social ties. While Travis's mother works, she has no one to care for her children that live outside of the neighborhood, creating an impossible situation for Travis. Michelle Alexander argues that folks on probation and parole are more likely to get arrested for petty violations like failing to get a job or missing appointments with their probation officer, and are consequently locked out of mainstream society (Alexander 2012:95). The interweaving of structural, symbolic, and legal violence oppresses Black and Latinx youth, keeping them in a perpetual state of marginalization.

#### **6.4 Victimization by Police**

In the summer of 2005, I was at my gang-affiliated boyfriend's apartment. He lived with three roommates in a middle-class area of Chula Vista, about seven miles south of Southeast San Diego. While we watched a movie in his room with the volume up loud, we heard a loud bang on the bedroom door. Someone shouted, "CHULA VISTA POLICE, OPEN UP!" Confused and scared, we unlocked the door. Two police officers pointed long-barrel guns at our heads; this was

the first time a gun is pulled on me. I was 18 years old. We immediately put our hands up. They told us to come to the living room and to sit on the couch. The officer started to ask questions about if we had been fighting earlier that day. I told the officer that I worked earlier and that I just got to the apartment about an hour ago. They question us for about 10 minutes, and the roommate corroborated our story. The officers decided it is a case of mistaken identity. There was a domestic dispute between one of their friends that came over earlier in the day with his girlfriend. One of the neighbors called the police, and the police showed up four hours later with guns drawn. They asked us if we are documented gang members or on probation and luckily none of us had records.

As I reflect on this incident, I cannot help but feel lucky. One of the officers who questioned us was Black; I am Filipino and Native American; my ex-boyfriend and his roommate are Black. This incident could have turned out drastically different. With our current political climate, it does not end well for many people of color. Unfortunately, it did not end well for Breonna Taylor and Kenneth Walker. In March 2020, in Louisville, Kentucky, Breonna Taylor and her boyfriend Kenneth Walker woke up to what they thought were intruders and turned out to be the police. Tragically, Breonna dies during a shootout in what is now being called a botched raid (Oppel, Taylor and Bogel-Burroughs 2021). This case of mistaken identity caused national outrage. The story is just one of many instances where the police have killed Black people performing everyday activities. The Black Lives Matter movement highlights the disparities of the treatment of Black men and women during interactions with police that end in deadly force. According to a recent study conducted in New York City, the chances of Black people experiencing force during a police stop is 27 percent higher than their white counterparts, and the likelihood of a police officer drawing their gun is 28 percent higher (Kramer and Remster

2018:974). Stephon Clark's cell phone was mistaken for a firearm and he was killed in his grandmother's yard in Sacramento, California (Chughtai and Mugarura Mafigiri 2020). Botham James was killed by an off-duty officer while in his home eating ice cream in Dallas, Texas (Chughtai and Mugarura Mafigiri 2020). Tamir Rice, a 12-year old boy, was killed in the park while playing with a toy gun in Cleveland, Ohio (Chughtai and Mugarura Mafigiri 2020). Police brutality against Black and Latinx youth is not new. However, with the advent of camera phones, police violence is now documented more than ever.

One of the critical mechanisms for the continuous cycle of recidivism by documented gang members is police harassment. A report on the Texas prison system reveals that men gang members are at a greater risk of being arrested (at 68%) than their non-gang counterparts (at 45%) after three years of release from prison (Pyrooz et al. 2020:211). Researchers explain that once gang members leave prison, the stigma of gang membership stays with them and is on public record, causing unequal treatment from probation, parole, and police officers (Pyrooz et al. 2020). Several young men in this study report that the police continually harass them after being released from prison or jail. This constant harassment makes it harder for them: to maintain good relationships with their employers, to find housing, and to maintain their social ties.

A current gang member named, Joe, details the constant harassment he receives from the Gang Suppression Unit (GSU) in San Diego County. Joe is still pursued by the police in San Diego even though he is not currently on probation. I interviewed Joe in the parking of the corner store by his house. Due to his disability we chose not to walk around his neighborhood. His experiences are traumatizing, and he describes that the same police officers harass him for several years. Joe is a high-ranking gang member from a faction of the Bloods gang. He is shot

in his head during a gang shooting in 2006 and has hemiplegia, leaving him without full motor functions in his right arm and leg. The terms of Joe's probation are extensive. He has a curfew, is restricted from wearing his gang colors or any clothes that symbolize his gang and cannot associate anyone else that is a documented gang member, including family members. Joe recounts a traumatic police encounter while he is driving home.

The police got a car pulled over... They see my car coming... They drive from behind that car and automatically come get me. Boom. By the time they pull me over its six cop cars and a helicopter. Then they come up to the window and the guy says, 'Probation or parole?' Probation, I have to say that every time. That's what they brief you on you have to tell them you're on probation or you're going to jail. They pull us out the car and the guy says, "He has dope in his hands, he just put the dope in his ass!" But it's because my hand is like this. [paralyzed] I don't have any dope. They smashed on me, they got me all stretched out. I have hemiplegia. I'm paralyzed, they're trying to put me on the ground, it's not going to work. I can't do this... They put me on the curb finally and then they make me do a cavity search outside. My other homie is just sitting on the curb. He's on parole. Their conditions are not as steep as GSU (Gang suppression unit) probation. They took my car and I'm paralyzed. I had to walk all the way down to my cousin's house... I asked them, 'Why are you guys messing with me? And he's like, 'I'm part of a special gang task force... so were going to keep messing with you.'" So, like for years it just kept going. Just harassment... 'when are you guys gonna stop?' It's never-ending. It's embarrassing.

Not only is Joe physically violated, but this abuse is also legal under state law which claims that someone can receive a body cavity search if there is probable cause and a search warrant. Joe is triply burdened. The police discriminate against him for being a known gang member, being Black, and being disabled. In this instance, the police are blatantly targeting Joe and express that they will continue to harass him because he is a documented gang member. The state frames legal violence as justified acts for the sake of public safety. However, Joe is not committing any crimes and is performing an everyday activity that millions of other Americans perform. Joe is powerless in this situation. His liminal status as a criminal first and citizen second makes him vulnerable to unlawful searches, arrests and inhibits his movements around the city. He is criminalized and will carry this stigma with him for the rest of his life.

Joe's story is just one example of how many documented gang members are susceptible to police harassment. Stripped of his rights, he no longer has autonomy. He is limited in terms of where he can go, the times he can be out, and the people he can be with. He is at the mercy of the gang suppression unit. He is in violation for having marijuana on him, after receiving approval from the judge to allow up to eight ounces of medicinal marijuana in his possession during his probation. Nevertheless, this permission does not stop the police harassment or arrests. Joe's interaction with the gang suppression unit is extensive:

I lived in a bad neighborhood and like people saw this a lot it's embarrassing when they came to the house. So, the same cops that just took me to jail for a 365 for a doobie, [end of a marijuana blunt often the size of a penny] this guy's knocking at my door boom, boom, boom. Like wow, he's got his gun. Like he's like trying to kill me. He's the only one I see then I see all the rest of them. He's just like in my house and just like ridiculed me like, "oh, yeah. I know this guy and He's this and that and this is making the other officers just go harder and harder when it's like there's nothing here for you. There's nothing here for you."

Because Joe is a high-ranking gang member, getting him to re-offend will give the police status. The act of the police searching Joe's home serves two purposes. The first is to attempt to charge the gang member with a re-offense by finding drugs in his possession. When the police find nothing, the search serves its second purpose: to create fear and to demonstrate their authority. The pretense of searching for drugs in his home or his car is an intimidation tactic used by the police to harass gang members. Not only do they use extreme force, but they also use the guise of the law to justify unlawful searches. During the interview, Joe tells how he fears that the police are going to kill him. Because he is vulnerable, he becomes an easy target. His gang member status, disability status, and minoritized status marks him as a second-class citizen. If he files a complaint, the situation may worsen. He is seen as a criminal and fears that no one will believe his story.

A recent report on 253 gang members from San Francisco highlights their negative accounts of police interactions (Novich and Hunt 2019). Novich and Hunt argue, “The use of stop, question, and frisk practices often raises concerns about racism and abuse of force. While these practices are argued to be important and effective crime-fighting tactics, they disproportionately target African Americans and Latinos and have yielded disappointing crime reduction results ” (Novich and Hunt 2019:249). Studies overwhelmingly show that more Black teenagers experience force during a stop than whites (Kramer and Remster 2018:973), gang members regularly experience the use of excessive force and verbal abuse from the police (Novich and Hunt 2019), and living in a neighborhood with exposure to lethal policing is linked to greater risk of high blood pressure and obesity (Sewell et al. 2020).

Jamal describes his views on the police in his neighborhood: “The police just pull me over for no reason and I’ve been dealing with that for years and having that resentment of like ‘Why are you messing with us?’ It’s like okay, they’re here to protect me but at the same time who can protect us from them when they get out of line and start doing things that they’re not supposed to be doing like harassing people just because of our skin color.” Jamal expresses the same sentiment that many of the participants in the gang community feel: “Why are you messing with us?” Coupled with a nationwide breakdown of trust in the criminal justice system, low-income people of color see law enforcement as a corrupt institution. Gang members, in particular, are systematically targeted by the police to create a climate of fear.

Muniz argues that gang injunctions came about during a distinct moment in California’s history. She argues that the implementation of the STEP law utilizes gang injunctions to control Black youth in the Cadillac-Corning neighborhood (Muniz 2014). These laws became a precedent for future gang injunction used to control public space and keep communities

segregated. Muniz claims, “Categorization enables and justifies selective surveillance, force, and detainment. Since the first injunction, the powerful label of gang member has evolved to justify violent state action. It is a status that sparks fear in the general public. Police, policymakers, and media outlets constantly exploit the gang membership label in a way that legitimizes repression” (Muniz 2014:232). Therefore, the symbolic use of the stigmatized gang member label backed by laws like the STEP law and the CalGang database legally sanctions the use of force, harassment, and surveillance by the police on Black and Latinx youth.

Legal violence perpetrated by police and probation units prohibits gang members from finding positive pathways to improve their lives. These laws restrict them to certain areas, blocking them from family ties and social networks. The curfew and area restrictions prevent them from working certain jobs, and their criminal records prevent them from applying to a whole sector of often high-paying employment. The constant surveillance impedes them from securing safe housing, and home searches cause evictions that lead to being denied housing in the future. These hidden obstacles brought on by the criminalization of gang members cause social suffering and are unjust.

## **6.5 Probation and the Cycle of Reoffending**

Probation and parole officers exacerbate the cycle of recidivism. Several of the gang members I spoke with talked about how petty offenses led to violations. At the top of the list is testing positive for marijuana, missing their probation appointment, or getting arrested for being with another documented gang member. A study conducted on first-time juvenile offenders and the probation officers’ processing decisions reveals that probation officers use arbitrary extralegal factors such as demographics and home environment to determine if they will process them into the court system or to send them to a diversion program outside of the court (Fine et al.

2017:106). They find that juveniles who went through formal processing were more likely to re-offend within six months of the first offense (Fine et al. 2017:105). Current gang members have the most significant risk of recidivism due to the stigma of gang affiliation, overzealous arrests by police, and “public” gang member status in criminal justice databases (Pyrooz et al. 2020:217). Pyrooz et al. argue, “The state maintains policies outlining the enhanced monitoring of gang members on parole and interagency collaborations targeting gangs, which could result in elevated recidivism” (Pyrooz et al. 2020:218). This interagency collaboration is undoubtedly true for the gang members in this study. Officers wield an immense amount of power over those that are on probation and parole. One small mistake can earn someone on probation a new charge and additional time in prison or jail.

Minor violations keep gang members in a constant cycle of re-offending. Joe has violated numerous times for possession of marijuana, even though his judge authorized him to have up to eight ounces. Other documented gang members reveal similar accounts. For instance, Ty experiences violations for having a “dirty piss test.” Maria receives additional time on probation for missing her appointment due to work. Roger, who spends most of his childhood incarcerated for violations, shares his experience re-offending at a diversion camp program in San Diego County that is now closed: “I just kept getting in trouble losing days at camp. Like they have this thing where you could “lose a day or you could gain a day” ... If you mess up like, messing up means you could spit without asking, walking around sagging, just any type of trouble... So, it's some people that get 60 days and end up being their 90 days or a hundred days because they keep messing up. Roger explains that “messing up” could be for minor violations like saggy pants or having an attitude. Decisions are made arbitrarily by the camp officers. These mistakes are costly and extend their time spent incarcerated. By the time they are released, they have



missed out on valuable years of their lives. Gang members and other incarcerated men and women feel like the world has passed them by and spend their time trying to play catch-up.

When gang members have negative interactions with the police, it leads to disrespect between gang members and law enforcement (Novich and Hunt 2019). However, gang members value and expect positive interactions from law enforcement. When treated with respect, even when suspected of criminal misgivings, they hold favorable opinions about those particular police officers (Novich and Hunt 2019:253). For instance, Ty comments on how some of his probation officers helped him finish high school and he really felt like they had his best interests in mind even after violating him for having drugs in his system. On the other hand, Joe shares a negative experience with his probation officer, “My probation officer marked me as most likely to come back with a new case. He didn't mark me as like, “oh, he's good. He's doing better and he's gonna succeed.” In this instance Joe feels he is doing better, even though his probation officer’s view is negative. The probation officer’s lack of support and confidence in Joe is discouraging. Time and time again, these interagency collaborations work together to degrade, oppress, and stomp on his spirit. The beat patrol, gang suppression unit, courts, and probation are a collective unit created to control and mass incarcerate Black and Latinx youth (Alexander 2012).

## **6.6 Discussion**

I argue that gang membership is a neighborhood effect of living in poor, hyper-segregated neighborhoods. Using the critical race theory lens, I maintain that segregation, racism, and legal jurisdictions create and maintain poor and oppressed communities. Criminalized street gangs do not exist in high-income, primarily white neighborhoods because no interlinking neighborhood effects are causing social conditions where young men and women need to form groups for

survival. Therefore, I call for urban sociologists to add gang membership to the neighborhood effects literature. In addition, gang documentation is used as a control mechanism by local law enforcement to suppress and restrict gang members. The state uses legal means to keep documented gang members trapped in the cycle of re-offending, causing social suffering for the gang members and their families and communities. This legal violence is two-fold, both creating a climate of fear and oppressing Black and Latinx gang members and their associates.

## 7 CONCLUSION

I recently visited my mother and 97-year-old grandmother in Southeast San Diego. Unfortunately, my grandmother passed away shortly after I left, I am grateful to have been able to see her that one last time. The neighborhood has changed so much since I moved away. When I arrived at my grandmother's house, I noticed many cars parked in front of her home and down the block. When I asked who they belonged to, and mother said that they were the neighbors. She noted that several of the homes next to her have three to four families living in one house because they cannot afford to live independently. Like many low-income communities, gentrification is seeping into Southeast San Diego. During my visit, I noticed new urban development construction, even a Starbucks in the middle of the hood. Yet, there has also been an increase of homeless people, drug addicts, and deteriorating buildings in some areas of Southeast San Diego. The cost of living has skyrocketed in California, along with the unemployment rates caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like all studies with human subjects, researchers must distinguish between intentions and impacts. Before embarking on this study, I wanted to be a vehicle that gang members told their stories and to offer nuance to a stigmatized and criminalized group. During the interviews, I

made it clear that I was not there to exploit or cause harm. But more importantly, I am confident that the outcome of this study results in a better understanding of gang members. I call on future researchers to use the information I have gathered and apply it to public policy initiatives, reformed police practices, and holistic urban planning.

I grew up in Southeast San Diego, and this is my home. I hope that this study can shed light on both the good and the bad and remain faithful to the narratives of these participants. Highlighting the portrayal of Black women gang membership adds nuance to gang literature. More women voices are necessary from both sides of the research, the researcher and the participants. Collins coins the term "outsider-within" while referring to Black women doing domestic work within white families (Collins 2009:13). She argues, "being in outsider-within locations can foster new angles of vision on oppression" (Collins 2009:14). Privileged white scholars have done most of the scholarly research conducted on gang membership, and my truths and the truths of my participants could never be their truths. Being an outsider within the academy has afforded me a unique examination of researcher positionality. While reading other sociological and criminological studies on gang members, I could not help but think that the research felt elitist, as a scientist from above looking down on a petri dish containing violent gang members who are dangerous to society. Because I am from this community, I believe there is a meaningful understanding between myself and my participants because we come from the same place. Doing this research, I realized that there is something very profound about self-determination and how we uplift our communities (Collins 2009:107).

By utilizing a CRT framework, I analyze how gang membership results from the intersection of racist practices and U.S. laws. I demonstrate the complexities of how minoritized neighborhoods create a climate ripe for gang membership. By centering gang narratives, I

highlight the myriad ways that people living in Southeast San Diego navigate gang culture and identity, gender expectations, and criminalization. The data supports the structural explanations for gang membership, rather than the inherent criminality of individuals. This project aims to empower the community by depicting a more accurate representation of gangs and shifting the narrative of a one-dimensional story. Collins argues:

Investigating the subjugated knowledge of subordinate groups... requires more ingenuity than that needed to examine the standpoints and thought of dominant groups.... Alternative knowledge claims in and of themselves are rarely threatening to conventional knowledge. Such claims are routinely ignored, discredited, or simply absorbed and marginalized in existing paradigms. (Collins 2009:270-79)

We must value and apply the knowledge from stigmatized and discounted groups like gang members, especially if we want to understand how to combat violence that manifests from the oppressed. Using the CRT lens, I center the narrative on stigmatized Black men and women that have been discounted and pushed out of mainstream society.

I found that that there is a shared "black extraordinary adolescent trauma" within hyper-segregated gang communities, often resulting in a collective identity. Lack of access to viable jobs, education, and mental health are just some of the many obstacles gang members face. Therefore, a shared collective trauma bonds gang members. Gang members utilize their gang identities as tools to navigate their neighborhoods. Some use them to uplift their community, for safety, and to develop a sense of belonging. My research also highlights the complexity of gang identities. Men members, who people view as hypermasculine, often show a wide range of positive emotions and care for their communities, a critical duality seldom studied. I call for more trauma and mental health research for Black low-income communities to help heal them from violence and stop generational violence.

In addition, Black women gang members use their gang-affiliated identities as a tool to navigate violence within their neighborhoods. As adults, Black women gang members displayed resilience. Those who had access to education replaced their gang member identity with a college-educated identity and use this new identity to challenge gang culture in hopes of uplifting their communities through education. I contend that gang members can switch to a gang identity if they feel threatened. When they feel safe, they effectively find ways to navigate gang and nongang culture by code-switching their behaviors and use a different name depending on each situation. Although these young men do engage in violent behavior, I argue that when their gang member status or identity is not activated, these men exhibit healthier displays of masculinities and have the potential to be upstanding citizens.

Family socialization is an underutilized approach to understanding gang membership. I argue that researchers should shift their focus from criminalizing gangs to emphasizing gangs as family units and kinship networks. I maintain that for girls and women, gang membership is familial, often gaining gang membership through the men their families. I argue that place-identity, shared gang identity, and "black extraordinary adolescent trauma" bond young men and women into "gang kinship networks." These "gang kinship networks" provide resources and acts as a support system for youth in unstable home lives. The brotherhood/sisterhood bonds created among gang members and affiliates are dynamic. While on the one hand can be a great source of support, on the other hand, it can seem like a burden, especially for those others rely on most. Men gang members find kinship ties among other gang members as a source of comfort and solace and can be a positive way to share brotherly love.

Additionally, being tough and knowing how to fight is an essential skill for girls and women within gangs. I argue that girl fighters within gangs adopt tough fronts as self-protection from

everyday slights to their dignity. I apply a polymorphous framework to sex work and sex trafficking and contend that sex work for gang members and affiliates can be both liberating and oppressive. Girls and women gang members who engage in sex work without a male counterpart, or pimp, can be a liberating experience for those who choose sex work over low-wage jobs. However, women and girls manipulated into sex work by boyfriends turned pimps find themselves coerced into sex trafficking.

In addition, I illustrate that Black men gang members are multidimensional. I offer alternative narratives to the stereotype of violent Black gang members. While on the one hand, there are instances where men gang members adopt conventional patriarchal norms of masculinity and oppress women. On the other hand, they can exhibit caring attitudes towards people within their gang kinship network. Putting on a tough front, using a gang name, and joining a gang is just some of the survival tactics that help young Black men navigate their community. Men gang members practice situational aggressive and violent behavior and activate this behavior when they act in self-defense or feel victimized. Black men gang members hold traditional ideas about fatherhood and gender division. Yet, fatherhood is highly valued and looked at as aspirational.

Finally, I demonstrate that hyper-segregated neighborhoods with high crime rates force youth to seek protection from gangs. Gang members expressed first being afraid of "walking home from school" as the main reason for joining a gang. Once a gang member, young men and women are more likely to be victims and perpetrators of violent crimes which Katz et al. calls the "victim-offender overlap" (2011). Low-income minoritized youth are subject to *legal violence* routinely practiced by local law enforcement and probation officers (Menjívar and Abrego 2012). The legal jurisdictions of gang documentation, gang injunctions, and policing practices

interlink with social conditions to cause *social suffering* (Menjívar and Abrego 2012). These punitive laws create additional barriers and obstacles for documented gang members, trapping them in the cycle of re-offending blocking Black and Latinx youth from upward mobility. This causes harm on not only gang members but their families and communities as well. Therefore, I call for sociologists to include gang membership as a neighborhood effect and to fund more research utilizing a critical race theory lens.

Currently, Southeast San Diego is going through dynamic changes. Big developers have taken over much of the main throughfares to build apartment complexes. Alongside, physical changes, there has been sweeping social changes as gang members become actively involved with challenging racists policies and policing practices. Future policies should utilize holistic approaches to policing such as providing counseling for first offenders rather than punitive sentences. Cities like Bakersfield are moving toward community policing efforts such as training officers to deal with mental health crisis's (2021). I envision future research efforts aimed at pinpointing economic policies that can tackle California's growing cost of living crisis. Increasing wages will account for some relief for folks living in California however, rent control and tenant protection measures can make a big difference for low-income residents in Southeast San Diego.

My work challenges the one-sided, male-dominated research seen in gang literature. Providing gang members the opportunity to share their stories helps them to reclaim their identities. It is important to note that this study delivers a more rich and nuanced portrayal because it is written by someone from the community. I strive to deconstruct deviant stigmas that gang members face. There is much more work that needs to be done among communities of color. True change is achieved by empowering the community to facilitate their own liberation.

Analyzing gang membership from an intersectional perspective is essential to capturing the complexities of the *legal violence* gang members endure (Menjívar and Abrego 2012). I illustrate how violence is rooted in an "imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy," not in individuals (hooks 2004). I call for further research on gang members as family units as well as ending punitive laws and practices that criminalize our youth.



## REFERENCES

2021. "Attorney General Bonata Annoucnés Stipulated Judgement with the Bakersfield Police Department to Strengthen Policing Policies and Practices." California: State of California Department of Justice.
- Abdill, Aasha M. 2018. *Fathering from the Margins: An Intimate Examination of Black Fatherhood*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.
- Alexander, Michelle. 2012. *The New Jim Crow*: The New Press.
- Alexander, Norman C. Jr. and Gordon W. Knight. 1971. "Situated Identities and Social Psychological Experimentation." *American Sociological Association* 34(1):65-82.
- Anderson, Elijah. 2000. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Anderson, Pamela, Karin Coyle, Anisha Johnson and Jill Denner. 2014. "An Exploratory Study of Adolescent Pimping Relationships." *Journal of Primary Prevention* 35:113-17.
- Archer, L. and A.M. Grascia. 2006. "Girls, Gangs, and Crime: Profile of the Young Female Offender." *Journal of Gang Research* 13(37-49).
- Aziz, Laila. 2020. "Commentary: Gang Suppression Units Are a Waste of Money. Invest in Our Black and Brown Communities Instead." in *The San Diego Union Tribune*. San Diego, California: The San Diego Union Tribune.
- Barnes, J. C., Brian B. Boutwell and Kathleen A. Fox. 2011. "The Effect of Gang Membership on Victimization." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 10(3):227-44. doi: 10.1177/1541204011429948.
- Batchelor, S. . 2009. "Girls, Gangs, and Violence: Assessing the Evidence." *The Journal of Community and Criminal Justice* 56(4):399-414.
- Becker, Howard. 1963. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*: Free Press.
- Bell, Derrick. 1995. "Who's Afraid of Critical Race Theory?." *University of Illinois Law Review*:893-910.
- Beresford, Hayley and Jane Wood. 2016. "Patients or Perpetrators? The Effects of Trauma Exposure on Gang Members' Mental Health: A Review of the Literature." *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice* 2(2):148-59.
- Blasko, Brandy L, Caterina Gouvis Roman and Ralph B. Taylor. 2015 "Local Gangs and Residents' Perceptions of Unsupervised Teen Groups: Implications for the Incivilities Thesis and Neighborhood Effects." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 43:20-28.
- Bliss-Holtz, Jane. 2011. "Broken Schools + Broken Homes + Broken Neighborhoods = Street Gangs?." *Issues in Comprehensive Pediatric Nursing* 31.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2014. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Presence of Racial Inequality in America*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Jean-Claude Passeron. 1977. *Reproduction of Education, Society, and Culture*: Sage Publications.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1979. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by R. Nice. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." *Handbook of theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*:241-58.

- Brown, W.K. 1977a. "Black Female Gangs in Philadelphia." *Internal Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Ciminology* 21:221-28.
- Brown, Waln K. 1977b. "Black Female Gangs in Philadelphia." *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 21:221-28.
- Bureau, U.S. Census. 2014. *San Diego County Incomes by Zip Code* Congress, (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sandiegocitycalifornia,sandiegocountycalifornia,CA/PST045219>).
- Bureau, U.S. Census. 2018. *San Diego County, California* Congress, (Race and Hispanic Origin) (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sandiegocountycalifornia,CA/PST045218>).
- Burks, Megan. 2014. "The Scope of San Diego's Gang Problem." in *Voice of San Diego*. San Diego, CA.
- CalGang. 2018. *Regualtions Outline- Penal Code Section 186.36* Congress, (<https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/calgang/regs-outline.pdf>).
- Caliskan, Aylin, Joanna Byrson and Arvind Narayanan. 2017. "Semantics Derived Automatically from Language Corpora Necessarily contain Human-Like Biases." *American Association for the Advancement of Science* 356(6334):1-14.
- Campbell, A. 1984a. *The Girls in the Gang*. New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Campbell, Anne. 1984b. *The Girls in the Gang: A Report from New York*. New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Carpenter, Ami and Jamie Gates. U. S. D. o. Justice, O. o. J. Programs and N. I. o. Justice. 2016. "The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County." Vol.: University of San Diego
- Point Loma Nazarene University.
- Carter, Prudence L. 2006. "Straddling Boundaries: Identity, Culture, and School." *Sociology of Education* 79(4):304-28.
- Chabria, Anita and Leila Miller. 2020. "Reformers Want California Police to Stop Using a Gang Database Seen as Racially Biased." in *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times.
- Chang, J. S. 2017. "The Docent Method: A Grounded Theory Approach for Researching Place and Health." *Qual Health Res* 27(4):609-19. doi: 10.1177/1049732316667055.
- Chapkis, Wendy. 1997. *Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor*. New York: Routedge.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 1980. *The Social Reality of Death: Death in Contemporary America*: Addison Wesley.
- Chesney-Lind, Meda and John M Hagedorn, eds. 1999. *Female Gangs in America: Esays on Girls, Gangs and Gender*. Chicago: Lake View Press.
- Chughtai, Alia and Christian Mugarura Mafigiri. 2020, "Know Their Names: Black People Killed by the Police in the Us": Aljazerra. 2021 (<https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2020/know-their-names/index.html>).
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2008. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politicis of Empowerment*: Routledge Classics.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2009. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politicis of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge Classics.
- Connell, R. W. and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* 19(6):829-59. doi: 10.1177/0891243205278639.
- Connolly, Eric J. and Kevin M. Beaver. 2014. "Guns, Gangs, and Genes." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 13(3):228-42. doi: 10.1177/1541204014539522.

- Coston, Bethany M. and Michael Kimmel. 2012. "Seeing Privilege Where It Isn't: Marginalized Masculinities and the Intersectionality of Privilege." *Journal of Social Issues* 68(1):97-111. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4560.2011.01738.x.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum*:139-68.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1995. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writing That Formed the Movement*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Curry, G.D. 1998. "Female Gang Involvement." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 35:100-18.
- Davis, Daniel. 2019. "How Sociology's Three Identity Theory Traditions Clarify the Process of Entrepreneurial Identity Formation." *World Scientific Publishing Company* 27(4):355-84.
- Deci, Edward L and Richard M Ryan. 1985. *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. New York: Pleumn.
- Decker, Scott H. 1996. "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence." *Justice Quarterly* 13(2):243-64.
- Del Carmen, Alejandro, John Rodriguez, Rhonda Dobbs, Richard Smith, Randall Butler and Robert Sarver III. 2009. "In Their Own Words: A Study of Gang Members through Their Own Perspective." *Journal of Gang Research* 16(2):57-76.
- DuBois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co.
- Durán, Robert. 2013. *Gang Life in Two Cities: An Insiders Journey*: Columbia University Press.
- Erlanger, Howard. 1979. "Estrangement, Machismo and Gang Violence." *Social Science Quarterly* 60(2):235-48.
- Esbensen, Finn-Aage, D. Peterson, T. Taylor and A. Freng. 2010. *Youth Violence: Sex and Race Differences in Offending Victimization and Gang Membership*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Farley, Reynolds, Reynolds Steeh, Maria Krysan, Tara Jackson and Keith Reeves. 1994. "Stereotypes and Segregation: Neighborhoods in the Detroit Area." *American Journal of Sociology* 100(3):750-80.
- FBI, San Diego Division. 2014. *North Park Gang Members Indicted in Racketeering Conspiracy*Congress.
- Feagin, Joe. 2006. *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression*. New York: Routledge.
- Featherstone, Richard and Mathieu Deflem. 2003. "Anomie and Strain: Context and Consequences of Merton's Two Theories." *Sociological Inquiry* 73(4):471-89.
- Fernandez-Kelly, Patricia. 2015. *The Hero's Fight: African Americans in West Baltimore and the Shadow of the State*: Princeton University Press.
- Fine, Adam, Sachiko Donley, Caitlin Cavanagh, Sarah Miltimore, Laurence Steinberg, Paul J. Frick and Elizabeth Cauffman. 2017. "And Justice for All: Determinants and Effects of Probation Officers Processing Decisions Regarding First-Time Juvenile Offenders." *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 23(1):105-17.
- Fishman, Laura T. 1999. "Black Female Gang Behavior: An Historical and Ethnographic Perspective." in *Female Gangs in America*, edited by M. Chesney-Lind and J. M. Hagedorn. Chicago: Lake View Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*: Vintage Books.
- Franzese, Robert, Covey Herert and Scott Menard. 2016. *Youth Gangs*. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C Thomas Publisher.

- Froyum, Carissa M. 2013. "Leaving the Street Alone: Contesting Street Manhood as a Gender Project." *Journal of Gender Studies* 22(1):38-53. doi: 10.1080/09589236.2012.681188.
- Garrick, Garrick. 2020. "Two Men Jailed under Controversial Gang Law Will Get 1.5-Million Payout from San Diego." in *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles.
- Gerassi, Lara. 2015. "A Heated Debate: Theoretical Perspectives of Sexual Exploitation and Sex Work." *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 42(4):79-100.
- Goffman, Alice. . 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*: The University of Chicago Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday & Company.
- Goldman, Liran, Howard Giles and Michael Hogg. 2014. "Going to Extremes: Social Identity and Communication Processes Associated with Gang Membership." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 17(6):813-32.
- Goodwill, Janelle R., Nkemka Anyiwo, Ed-Dee G. Williams, Natasha Johnson, C., Jacqueline S. Mattis and Daphne C. Watkins. 2019. "Media Representations of Popular Culture Figures and the Construction of Black Masculinities." *Psychology of Men & Masculinities* 20(3):288-98
- Grant, Jonathan and Shameka Thomas. 2018. "Capital Punishment: The Tie between Death Row and Lynching in the United States' Context." Paper presented at the Southern Sociological Society, April 5, 2018, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Gravel, Jason, Blake Allison, Jenny West-Fagan, Michael McBride and George Tita. 2018. "Birds of a Feather Fight Together: Satsu-Enhancing Violence, Social Distance and the Emergence of Homogenous Gangs." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 34(1):189-219.
- Greenberg, David. 1981. *Crime and Capitalism: Readings in Marxist Criminology*: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Guevarra, Rudy 2012. *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego*: Rutgers University Press.
- Hagedorn, J. M and M.I. Devitt. 1999. "Fighting Female: The Social Construction of Female Gangs." Pp. 256-76 in *Female Gangs in America: Essays on Gender and Gangs*. Chicago: Lakeview Press.
- Harris, Angela. 2000. "Gender, Violence, Race, and Criminal Justice." *Stanford Law Review* 52(4):777-807.
- Hill, Shirley A. and Joey Sprague. 1999a. "Parenting in Black and White Families." *Gender & Society* 13(4):480-502.
- Hill, Shirley A. and Joey Sprague. 1999b. "Parenting in Black and White Families: The Interaction of Gender with Race and Class." *Gender & Society* 13(4):480-502.
- Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*: University of California Press.
- Hitlin, Steven. 2003. "Values as the Core of Personal Identity: Drawing Links between Two Theories of Self ". *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66(2):118-37.
- hooks, bell. 2004a. *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*. New York and London: Routledge.
- hooks, bell. 2004b. *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*. New York: Washington Square Press.

- Howell, K. Babe. 2016. "Gang Policing: The Post Stop-and-Frisk Justification for Profile-Based Policing." *University of Denver Criminal Law Review* 5:1-32.
- Howle, Elaine. 2016. *The Calgang Criminal Intelligence System* Congress:1-115.
- Huard, Ray. 2019. "North Park Draws Apartment Developers." NBC San Diego Local News.
- Hunt, Geoffrey and Karen Joe-Laidler. 2001. "Situations of Violence in the Lives of Girl Gang Members." *Health Care for Women International* 22:363-84.
- Hunter, Andrea G. and James Earl Davis. 1992. "Constructing Gender: An Exploration of Afro-American Men's Conceptualization of Manhood." *Gender and Society* 6(3):464-79.
- Jackson II, Ronald L. and Celnisha L. Dangerfield. 1997. "Defining Black Masculinity as Cultural Property: Toward an Identity Negotiation Paradigm." Pp. 120-31 in *Co-Cultures Living in Two Cultures*.
- Jackson, P. Tony. 2015. *Black Male Violence in Perspective: Toward Afrocentric Intervention*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Joe, Karen and Meda Chesney-Lind. 1995. "'Just Every Mother's Angel': An Analysis of Gender Ethnic Variations in Youth Gang Membership." in *Female Gangs in America: Essays on Girls, Gangs, and Gender*, Vol. Lake View Press, edited by M. Chesney-Lind and J. M. Hagedorn. Chicago.
- Jones, Nikki. 2008. "Working 'the Code': On Girls, Gender, and Inner-City Violence." *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 41(1):63-83.
- Jones, Nikki. 2009. "I Was Aggressive for the Streets, Pretty for the Pictures": Gender, Difference, and the Inner-City Girl." *Gender & Society* 23(1):89-93. doi: 10.1177/0891243208326676.
- Jones, Nikki. 2010. *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner-City Violence*: Rutgers University Press.
- Katz, Charles M., Vincent J. Webb, Kate Fox and Jennifer N. Shaffer. 2011. "Understanding the Relationship between Violence Victimization and Gang Membership." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 39:48-59.
- Kelling, George and James Q. Wilson. 1982. "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety." *The Atlantic*.
- Koffman, Stephen, Alice Ray, Sarah Berg, Larry Covington, Nadine M. Albarran and Max Vasquez. 2009. "Impact of Comprehensive Whole Child Intervention and Prevention Program among Youth at Risk of Gang Involvement and Other Forms of Delinquency." *Children & Schools* 21(4):239-45.
- Koppel, Nathan. 2011. "They Call It Rico, and It Is Sweeping." *The Wall Street Journal*.
- Kyle, Gerard, Alan Graefe and Robert Manning. 2005. "Testing the Dimensionality of Place Attachment in Recreational Settings." *Environment and Behavior* 37(2):153-77.
- Ladson-Billings, Gloria and William F. Tate. 1995. "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education." *Teachers College* 96(1):47-68.
- Lane, Jodi and Kathleen A. Fox. 2012. "Fear of Crime among Gang and Non-Gang Offenders: Comparing the Effects of Perpetration, Victimization, and Neighborhood Factors." *Justice Quarterly* 29(4):491-523.
- Marcus, Anthony, Jo Sanson, Amber Horning, Efram Thompson and Ric Curtis. 2016. "Pimping and Profitability: Testing the Economics of Trafficking in Street Sex Markets in Atlantic City, New Jersey." *Sociological Perspectives* 59(1):46-65.
- Massey, Douglas S. and Nancy A. Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

- Mayeda, David Tokiharu and Lisa Pasko. 2011. "Youth Violence and Hegemonic Masculinity among Pacific Islander and Asian American Adolescents." *Critical Criminology* 20(2):121-39. doi: 10.1007/s10612-011-9132-1.
- McCorkle, Richard C. and Terance D. Miethe. 2002. *Panic: The Social Construction of the Street Gang Problem*: Pearson.
- Mehan, Hugh. 2012. *In the Front Door: Creating a College-Going Culture of Learning*. New York: Paradigm Publishers.
- Melde, Chris, Terrance J. Taylor and Finn-Aage Esbensen. 2009. "'I Got Your Back': An Examination of the Protective Function of Gang Membership in Adolescence." *American Society of Criminology* 47(2):565-94.
- Menjívar, Cecilia and Leisy Abrego. 2012. "Legal Violence: Immigration Law and the Lives of Central American Immigrants." *American Journal of Sociology* 117(5):1380-421.
- Merton, Robert. 1938. "Social Structure and Anomie." *American Sociological Review* 3(5):672-82.
- Mesman, Judi and Marleen Groeneveld. 2018. "Gendered Parenting in Early Childhood: Subtle but Unmistakable If You Know Where to Look." *Child Development Perspectives* 12(1):22-27.
- Miller, J. and R. K. Brunson. 2000. "Gender Dynamics in Youth Gangs: A Comparison of Males' and Females' Accounts." *Justice Quarterly* 17(3):419-43.
- Miller, J. . 2002. *Young Women in Street Gangs: Risk Factors, Delinquency, and Victimization Risk*. 190351Congress. Responding to gangs: Evaluation and research.
- Miriam, Kathy. 2005. "Stopping the Traffic in Women: Power, Agency and Abolition in Feminist Debates over Sex-Trafficking." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 36(1):1-17.
- Mohler, George, Martin Short, Sean Malinowski, Mark Johnson, George Tita, Andrea Bertozzi and P.J. Brantingham. 2015. "Randomized Controlled Field Trials of Predictive Policing." *Journal of American Statistical Association* 110(512):1399-411.
- Moore, Joan. 1978. *Homeboys: Gangs, Drugs, and Prison in the Barrios of Los Angeles*: Temple University Press.
- Moore, Joan. 1991. *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change*. Philadelphia Temple University Press.
- Morawska, Alina. 2020. "The Effects of Gendered Parenting on Child Development Outcomes: A Systematic Review." *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 23(4):553-79.
- Morris, Monique W. 2016. *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*. New York: The New Press.
- Muniz, Ana. 2014. "Maintaining Racial Boundaries: Criminalization, Neighborhood Context, and the Origins of Gang Injunctions." *Social Problems* 61(2):216-36.
- Natapoff, Alexandra. 2009. *Snitching: Criminal Informants and the Erosion of American Justice*. New York: New York University Press.
- Novich, Madeleine and Geoffrey Hunt. 2019. "'Get Off Me': Perceptions of Disrespectful Police Behavior among Ethnic Minority Youth Gang Members." *Drugs, Education, Prevention and Policy* 24(3):248-55.
- Oppel, Richard A., Derrick Bryson Taylor and Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs. 2021. "What to Know About Breonna Taylor's Death." in *The New York Times*. New York.
- Orozco Flores, Edward and Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo. 2013. "Chicano Gang Members in Recovery: The Public Talk of Negotiating Chicano Masculinities." *Social Problems* 60(4):476-90.

- Owens, Timothy J., Dawn T. Robinson and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2010. "Three Faces of Identity." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36:477-99.
- Padilla, Felix M. 1992. *The Gang as an American Enterprise*: Rutgers University Press.
- Patton, Desmond Upton, Robert D. Eschmann and Dirk A. Butler. 2013. "Internet Banging: New Trends in Social Media, Gang Violence, Masculinity and Hip Hop." *Computers in Human Behavior* 29(5):A54-A59. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2012.12.035.
- Patton, Desmond Upton, Jun Sung Hong, Megan Ranney, Sadiq Patel, Caitlin Kelley, Rob Eschmann and Tyreasa Washington. 2014. "Social Media as a Vector for Youth Violence: A Review of the Literature." *Computers in Human Behavior* 35:548-53. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2014.02.043.
- Pitt, Richard and George Sanders. 2010. "Revisiting Hypermasculinity: Shorthand for Marginalized Masculinities." Pp. 33-51 in *What's up with the Brothers?: Essays and Studies of African American Masculinities*, edited by W. Harris and R. Ferguson: Men's Studies Press.
- Proshansky, Harold, Abbe Fabian and Robert Kaminoff. 1983. "Place-Identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3(57-83).
- Pyrooz, David C., Jean Marie McGloin and Scott H. Decker. 2017. "Parenthood as a Turning Point in the Life Course for Male and Female Gang Members: A Study of within-Individual Changes in Gang Membership and Criminal Behavior." *Criminology* 55(4):869-99.
- Pyrooz, David C., Kendra J. Clark, Jennifer J. Tostlebe, Scott H. Decker and Erin Orrick. 2020. "Gang Affiliation and Prisoner Reentry: Discrete-Time Variation in Recidivism by Current, Former, and Non-Gang Status." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 58(2):192-234.
- Ray, Ranita. 2016. "Exchange and Intimacy in the Inner City: Rethinking Kinship Ties of the Urban Poor." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 45(3):343-64.
- Rinker, Jeremy and Jerry Lawler. 2018. "Trauma as a Collective Disease and Root Cause of Proteacted Social Conflict." *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 24(2):150-64.
- Rios, Victor. 2011. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*: New York University Press.
- Rios, Victor and Rachel Sarabia. 2018. "Synthesized Masculinities: The Mechanics of Manhood among Delinquent Boys." in *Exploring Masculinties: Identity, Inequality, Continuity, and Change*, edited by C. J. Pascoe and T. Bridges. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ryan, Richard M and Edward L Deci. 2000. "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being." *American Psychologist* 55(1):68-78.
- Sampson, Robert J., Jeffrey D. Morenoff and Thomas Gannon-Rowley. 2002. "Assessing "Neighborhood Effects": Social Processes and New Directros in Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28:443-78.
- Sanders, William B. 1994. *Gangbangs and Drive-Bys: Grounded Culture and Juvenile Gang Violence*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Serano, Alessandra and Joseph Orabona. 2016. *North Park Gang Member Sentenced to 11 Years in Prison for His Leadership Role in Racketeering Conspiracy Involving Sex Trafficking and Prostitution*Congress.

- Shabazz, Rashad. 2015. *Spatializing Blackness: Architectures of Confinement and Black Masculinity in Chicago*: University of Illinois Press.
- Shapiro, Thomas. 2004. *The Hidden Cost of Being African American*: Oxford University Press.
- Sharp, Elizabeth A. and Jean M. Ispa. 2009. "Inner-City Single Black Mothers' Gender-Related Childrearing Expectations and Goals." *Sex Roles* 60(9/10):656-68.
- Shute, Jon. 2013. "Family Support as a Gang Reduction Measure." *Children & Society* 27:48-59.
- Snethen, Gretchen. 2010. "Preventing Female Gang Involvement: Development of the Joint-Interest Core and Balance Model of Mother/Daughter Leisure Functioning." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 15:42-48.
- Solórzano, Daniel, Miguel Ceja and Tara Yosso. 2000. "Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American Students." *The Journal of Negro Education* 69(1/2):60-73.
- Somers, Margaret. 1994. "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach." *Theory and Society* 23(5):605-49.
- Sutherland, Edwin. 1947. *Principles of Criminology*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company.
- Sutton, Tara. 2017. "The Lives of Female Gang Members: A Review of the Literature." *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 37:142-52.
- Swan, Richelle S. and Kristin A. Bates. 2017. "Loosening the Ties That Bind: The Hidden Harms of Civil Gang Injunctions in San Diego County." *Contemporary Justice Review* 20(1):132-53.
- Taylor, Terrance J., Dana Peterson, Finn-Aage Esbensen and Adrieene Freng. 2007. "Gang Membership as a Risk Factor for Adolescent Violent Victimization." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 44(4):351-80.
- Thomassin, Kristel, Jessica A. Seddon and Rachel Vaughn-Coaxum. 2020. "Development and Validation of the Parents' Gendered Emotion Beliefs Scale." *Journal of Child & Family Studies* 29(3):855-66.
- Thrasher, Frederic. 1926. "The Gang as a Symptom of Community Disorganization." *Journal of Applied Sociology* 1(1):3-27.
- Thrasher, Frederic. 1927. *The Gang*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tita, George, Jacqueline Cohen and John Engberg. 2005. "An Ecological Study of the Location of Gang "Set Space"." *Social Problems* 52(2).
- Towns, Armond R. 2007. "Ghetto Blues: The Organizational Street Culture of Black "Masculine" Gang Members in a White World." *Kaleidoscope* 6:39-60.
- Trueba, Henry T. 2002. "Multiple Ethnic, Racial, and Cultural Identities in Action: From Marginality to a New Cultural Capital in Modern Society." *Journal of Latinos and Education* 1(1):7-28.
- Valdez, Avelardo. 2007. *Beyond Risk: Mexican American Girls and Gang Violence*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Venkatesh, Sudhir and Steven Levitt. 2000. "'Are We a Family or a Business?'" History and Disjuncture in the Urban American Street Gang." *Theory and Society* 29:427-62.
- Venkatesh, Sudhir. 2008. *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*: Penguin Books.
- Vigil, James Diego. 1988. "Group Processes and Street Identity: Adolescent Chicano Gang Members." *Ethos* 16(4):421-45



- Vigil, James Diego. 2002. *A Rainbow of Gangs: Street Cultures in the Mega-City*: University of Texas Press.
- Vigil, James Diego. 2007. *The Projects: Gang and Non-Gang Families in East Los Angeles*: University of Texas Press.
- Wacquant, Loic. 2000. "The New 'Peculiar Institution': On the Prison as Surogate Ghetto." *Theoretical Criminology* 4(3):337-89.
- Walton, Kari A. and Cori L. Pederson. 2021 "Motivations Behind Catcalling: Exploring Men's Engagement in Street Harassment Behavior ". *Psychology & Sexuality*:1-16.
- Weitzer, Ronald. 2009. "Sociology of Sex Work." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35:213-35.
- Whyte, William Foote. 1943. *Street Corner Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, William Julius. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, William Julius. 2016. "Black Youths, Joblessness, and the Other Side of 'Black Lives Matter'." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39(8):1450-57.
- Wing, Adrein K. and Christine A Willis. 1999. "From Theory to Praxis: Black Women, Gangs, and Critical Race Femimism." *La Raza Law Journal* 4(1):1-16.
- Winkle-Wagner, Rachelle. 2010. "Foundations of Educational Inequality: Cultural Capital and Social Reproduction." *ASHE Higher Education Report* 36(1):1-144. doi: 10.1002/aehe.3601.
- Winkley, Lindsay and Michelle Gilchrist. 2015. "'Sd Murder Rate Still Lowest of Big Cities'." in *San Diego Union Tribune*.
- Winton, Richard. 2016. "California Gang Database Plagued with Errors, Unsubstantiated Entries, State Auditor Finds." Pp. 1-6 in *The Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles, CA.
- Wolpert, Stuart. 2015. "Predictive Policing Substantially Reduces Crime in Los Angeles During Months-Long Test." in *UCLA Newsroom*. Los Angeles: University of California, Los Angeles.
- Wu, Jun, Xiaochen Hu and Erin A. Orrick. 2021. "The Relationship between Motivations for Joining Gangs and Violent Offending: A Preliminary Test on Self-Determination Theory." *Victims & Offenders: An International Journal of Evidence-based Research, Policy, and Practice*:1-16.
- Yoshino, Erin R. 2008. "California's Criminal Gang Enhancements: Lessons from Interviews with Practitioners." *Southern California Review of Law and Social Justice* 18(1):117-52.
- Zatz, Marjorie and Edwardo Portillos. 2000. "Voices from the Barrio: Chicano/a Gangs, Families, and Communities." *Criminology* 38(2):369-401.