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Examining Family Hierarchy Through the Eyes of Former Mac Baller Gang Members

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Abstract

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Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Criminal gang membership is growing, which corresponds to a continued breakdown of the family unit in the United States. Most of the young people who form gangs come from broken families or single-parent-headed households. This study explored the role of family hierarchy on gang membership. A qualitative case study approach was used to gather information on what motivates young people to join criminal gangs. A random sampling technique was used to recruit seven former members of the Mac Baller Brim gang. Ethical concerns were addressed to minimize the risks to the participants. The collected data from interviews were analyzed using an interpretive research philosophy to determine the contribution of family hierarchy on motivating the participants to join gangs. Interpretive research philosophy indicates that reality can only be understood by subjective interpretation and intervention. An action research strategy was also used in an attempt to provide a practical solution for the people studied while adding to existing theories. The findings of the study indicated that there are 5 reasons why young people join gangs: protection, respect, money, fun, and because a friend was in the gang. This study may contribute to social change by identifying factors that lead to gang membership to aid policy and program interventions that lower the likelihood of youth joining gangs.

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Introduction to the Study

According to James (2015), the Mac Baller Brims crime gang is currently

regarded as the most dangerous and violent in New York City. They are a ruthless group

of drug dealers who are extremely violent, highly organized, and very powerful. James

states that this gang has been linked to many criminal activities including kidnappings,

street muggings, home robberies, drug trade, prostitution, and extortion. The young

population is drawn by the reputation the gang has garnered and the life of riches it

promises. As a result, the rate at which the younger generation is joining criminal groups

has become a significant problem in the United States corresponding to the systematic

breakdown of the family unit in the United States (Billingsley, 1977).

There is evidence in existing research to show that crime rates related to street

gang activities such as kidnapping, street muggings, home robberies, drug trafficking,

prostitution, and extortion have risen in the recent past as a result of youths joining

criminal gangs (Ayling, 2015). This increase in gang crime rates is furthered by the

enrollment of young people into gangs in the United States (Howell & Egley Jr., 2005).

Howell , (2005) added that the Major Cities Chiefs Association held a summit in

Washington to deliberate on the issue. It was found that the current crime rates are a

severe threat to the social fabric of the United States. Statistics show that homicide cases

have increased in at least ten of the major United States cities, including New-York,

Washington, and Chicago in the recent past due to gang-related cases (Siegel, Ross, &

King III, 2013). A large number of homicide cases can be attributed to the activities of

gangs such as the Mac Baller Brims (James, 2015). The increase in the amount of

criminal activity and number of homicide cases has attracted considerable political attention. This has been a concern evident in the initiatives put in place by various stakeholders to address the issue (Curry & Decker, 2003).

Contemporary research shows that there are gangs spread out all across the 50 states (Katz, Maguire, & Choate, 2011). However, there have been challenges in establishing the dynamics that contribute to their growth. In effect, it has become difficult for law enforcement stakeholders to develop successful strategies to combat the groups. For instance, the motivations that give rise to the existence of such gangs are still not well understood given that even the closest doctrine (the social learning theory) has not been exhaustively used to discuss the concept of gang affiliations in the absence of familial support structures (Abadinsky, 2012). However, a handful of gang prevention programs have been put in place to address the problem. They include youth education, addressing family dynamics, and reducing conflict among the younger population (Esbensen et al., 2011). According to Decker, Melde, and Pyrooz (2013), the majority of the individuals who form these gangs come from broken families or single-parent-headed families. Howell (2010) corroborates the information by noting, "From birth, parents are critical in promoting child development" (p. 7). The author adds, "Weaknesses in family structure (e.g., a single-parent household, multiple family transitions, or caretaker changes), poverty, and general financial stress are potent risk factors [and] diminish effective parental supervision and control and disturb the development of strong family bonds" (Howell, p. 7). There are significant ties between family hierarchy and the propensity to join violent gangs (Ayling, 2011). Primarily, a family structure determines the education

level attained on average in each family, their income level, living standards, and the acquired values. Research has shown that people who come from single-parent families are most likely to join gang groups (Howell & Egley Jr., 2005).

Contrary to the common belief that most of the youths are forced to join gangs, there is also a critical mass of literature pointing to the fact that some individuals join gangs voluntarily out of social pressures rather than for economic reasons (Howell & Egley Jr., 2005). Gangs provide an appealing experience of life, which makes the gangs attractive to the younger population. The contemporary value system (as supported by pop culture) feeds the craving to have a responsibility-free life characterized by parties, drugs, money, fear under the guise of respect, and emotional protection among other cravings that parents and the society either do not recommend or which are so rare they can only be found in functional families uncommon in low-income inner-city homes (Gatti, Tremblay, Vitaro, & McDuff, 2005). In this researched study I used this information to examine family hierarchy through the eyes of former Mac Baller gang members. In doing so, this research provides an insight into how family hierarchy influences gang membership and what can be done to address the problem. The research will thus be significant in establishing ways of minimizing the rate of juvenile involvement in gang and gun-related crimes.

Background of the Study

The number of local gang groups has been on the rise in the United States since the mid-1990s (Abadinsky, 2012). James (2015) notes that only 19 states reported gang-related problems in the 1970s. However, by the turn of the decade in the early 1980s,

each state in the United States had acknowledged the existence of gang activity within their territory (Webb, Ren, Zhao, He, & Marshall, 2011). The law enforcement within the National Youth Gang Survey reported a peak in gang problems in the mid-1990s, which later witnessed a quick decline (Webb et al., 2011). Webb et al. (2011) go a step further to say that he National Youth Gang Survey reported a consequent 15% increase in the gang cases from 2002 to 2008. According to reports, suburban counties reported a 22% increase, rural counties reported a 16% increase, and smaller cities had 15% as the larger cities reported 13% increase in gang crime rate (O'Brien, Daffern, Chu, & Thomas, 2013, pp. 418-21).

Moreover, other reports noted similar cases among students in inner-city schools as early as the turn of the 21st century (Curry, Decker & Egley, 2002). Previously, in the mid-1990s, a countrywide sample of students indicated that 28% reported that gangs existed within their learning institutions (Howell, 2010, pp. 334-354). In 1999, the figure had dropped to 17%, but it later started to increase. By 2007, crime rate attributed to youthful (school going) criminal gangs stood at a new high of 23% of all crime in the country (Kerig, Wainryb, Twali, & Chaplo, 2013, p. 773-795). A study by the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth that involved a countrywide representative sample size of 9,000 teenagers found out that 8% of the youths surveyed belonged to a gang at one point in their lives (Hannon, DeFina, & Bruch, 2013, p. 281-295). A study carried out in 11 cities involving 6,000 eighth graders with well-known gang problems established that 9% of the participants admitted to being gang members (Hannon et al., 2013, p. 281-295).

Kerig et al.(2013) point out that there was a variation in gang membership among teenagers ranging from 4% to 15% based on the location under study. In yet another study that involved a sample of teenagers aged about 13 years from 15 cities, results demonstrated that approximately 8% of the minors in low-income inner-city neighborhoods belonged to a gang with criminal proclivities. The gang membership was even higher among the youth in large cities that were considered to be less safe (Pyrooz & Sweeten, 2015). The current study is significant because it examines the impact of family hierarchy on juveniles joining gang groups, with a specific focus on how the disintegration of the family unit is providing a constant supply of gang-members to criminal gangs in inner-city neighborhoods in New York City.

Statement of the Problem

The Mac Ballers criminal gang has terrorized the American public for at least 10 decades now (James, 2015). This trend has been increasing in most of the major U.S. cities (Abadinsky, 2012). Various researchers have observed that many factors motivate people to join gangs (Abadinsky, 2012; Howell & Egley Jr., 2005; James, 2015). They include child negligence, violence, and drug use. However, all of these factors can be traced back to a family hierarchy, leading to disillusioned minors joining gangs as a way of fulfilling the social and emotional gaps left by broken families. Family hierarchy refers to the order of the power structure in a closed group of people bound by a high degree of consanguinity (Decker et al., 2013). A typical family involves a husband, a wife, and children. The parents are at the top of the hierarchy while the children are the subordinates (Ayling, 2011). A change in the social dynamics of the family unit weakens

the structure as the roles of each member become blurred, and it becomes easy for alternative negative influences to usurp the influential role that parenting offers to minors (Akers & Borg, 2004). Moreover, as pointed out by Demuth and Brown (2004), the social growth that the children gain from stable families is influenced by a change in the family dynamics. Changes in the family structure may refer to single parenting, caretaker changes, or many family transitions (Hoffmann, 2006). If the system fails to work properly, a problem affecting the children could arise.

Researchers have carried out studies to establish a link between family structure and gang membership (Ayling, 2011 ; Decker et al., 2013; Decker, Pyrooz, Sweeten, 2014). The hypothesis is that vulnerable individuals may join gangs to make up for their perceived losses (Decker et al., 2013). A good case in point would be why minors join gangs. Children from single families are more likely to join gangs because they tend to miss their parents' affection and love (Ayling, 2011). Struggles in such families start with the children getting limited attention from their parents (Ayling, 2011). The insufficient recognition motivates them to seek such affection elsewhere (Decker et al., 2013). Gangs are usually a typical attraction because they provide much-needed recognition while promising young individuals riches and popularity in the future (Ayling, 2011). Minors who are disenfranchised from hostile or inadequate family structures join the gangs to acquire what they cannot get from their families. They may identify with their peers as a way for dealing with the stress coming from their homes (Decker, Pyrooz, Sweeten, 2014). Teenagers from broken homes are more easily persuaded by peer pressure

(Ayling, 2011) and may be drawn to social conclaves with characteristics similar to those of the Mac Ballers gang members.

Purpose of the Study

In this study, I examined the impact of family hierarchy on gang membership among youth who were Mac Baller gang members. The study was designed to determine the impact of family hierarchy on gang membership. The numbers of those joining criminal gangs have been on the increase in various metropolises around the country (Ayling, 2011). This is a concern for policymakers and the institutions charged with maintaining law and order such as courts, police officers, and school counselors, who often lack information and insight regarding the issue. Lack of information has constrained programs and efforts meant to combat growth of gangs. Gangs can lead to deteriorating performance of institutions such as schools and disorder in society (Annest, 2013). In this study I used a qualitative approach to address the gap in the research. The data were analyzed to determine how family hierarchy has contributed to gang-membership in society.

The Significance of the Study

This research study will fill the gap that exists in understanding the motivation behind gang-membership in the Mac Baller Gang Family as bolstered by the breakdown of the nuclear family in New York neighborhoods that are relatively poor and economically segregated with limited social and economic mobility. Understanding the nuances of the family hierarchy is vital towards comprehending its role in an individual joining a street gang (Decker et al., 2013). Gang membership could be an outcome of

family dynamics (Gatti et al., 2005). Therefore, it was useful to study the family hierarchal characteristics through the lens of how the Mac Baller gang was created and how it evolved to be the most prominent gang in New York City with high youth membership (Hamilton, 2016). This study established whether family dynamics play a crucial role in motivating young people to join the group.

Studies show that gangs and gang-related activities like street-mugging, vandalism, and prostitution pose a great threat to national security (Abadinsky, 2012; Fox & DeLateur, 2014). This study fills the knowledge gap regarding the motivation behind young people joining gangs, similar to Bradshaw's (2011) study's conclusion on how youth in low-income neighborhoods join gangs not just for financial rewards, but also to experience the sociological belonging that comes with close relation.. The research will fill the gap that exists in understanding the reasons that motivate teenagers to join gang groups. The project is unique as it brings new insight and perspectives regarding the role of family hierarchy in gang membership.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What are the family characteristics of Mac Baller gang members?

RQ2: What type of relationship exists between Mac Baller gang members and their immediate family?

Theoretical Framework

Using the social learning theory, Akers and Borg (2004) explained that individuals attain specific attitudes and behaviors through social learning. Bradshaw

(2011) supported the argument relating the strength as well as the extent of the associations between peer relationship factors and deviance. Additionally, according to Akers (2011), "virtually every study that includes a peer association variable finds it to be significantly and strongly related to delinquency, alcohol and drug use, abuse, crime, and other forms of deviant behavior" (p. 116). Additionally, the theory explains that individuals can learn new things from others who do them as a result of social connectedness (Bradshaw, 2011). The theory gives a clear reason why the people in a population join gangs because it offers an alternative social structure to the broken family systems in low-income family settings such as in the New York neighborhood with the Mac Baller family gang.

In this case, young gang members tend to learn criminal activities from older Mac Baller gang members. The social learning theory posits that rewarding behavior and reinforcement of repeated episodes of the action facilitates its continuity. On the other hand, if action is punished, the perpetrator becomes discouraged from repeating it, and hence it decreases. Lee, Akers, and Borg (2004) agree that this scenario leads to the notion that gangs facilitate instrumental conditioning. As such, if there are no parents who are interested in providing their children with moral and ethical values, then the potential gang recruit takes up gang behavior by interacting with older gang members. The appropriate or inappropriate behavior reverses their value system, thereby making them perpetrators of criminal acts (Bradshaw, 2011). This underscores the importance of parents offering and reinforcing their childrens' ethical upbringing through consistent

punishments for wrongdoing, rewards for good behavior, and offering proper guidance on human relations.

Majority of the research studies over the years have pointed out that gangs speak to the needs of the adolescents regarding affiliation, belonging, and social status (Akers & Borg, 2004; Bradshaw, 2011; Young, Fitzgibbon, & Silverstone, 2014). According to Akers and Borg (2004), gangs provide the much-needed audience for bravado deeds as well as for showing off one's prowess. Gangs also offer a sense of family as well as group membership through furnishing friends and giving comfort to youngsters who feel unloved and unwanted (Akers & Borg, 2004). While most people appreciate the need for education and the belief that it provides upward mobility, the harsh socioeconomic status does not facilitate the adoption of education as a suitable approach unless there are parents or members of an extended family who appreciate the contribution of hard work on success (Tanga, 2013). According to Bradshaw (2011), the immediate environment often discourages young individuals from pursuing success through the usual avenues. As a result, they end up being vulnerable to exploitation and become targets for gangs.

Another concept in play is the differential association (Winfree, & Freng, 2015), which is one of the most important explanatory factor that this study looked at regarding the propensity to join gangs by vulnerable youths. Usually, gangs do not encourage their members to have close friends outside the gang. This is for fear of having their secrets revealed or losing their members when they get other friends who are right-thinking and who may seek to get them out of the gang life (Bradshaw, 2011). Winfree and Freng

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(2015) added that the more friends that a person has in gang groups, the higher the social force compelling them to join the gangs.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was to explore the reasons motivating teenagers to join criminal gangs by assessing the contribution of family hierarchy to gang membership in society. For this study I used a qualitative approach to explore key factors motivating teenagers to join gangs. In contrast to a quantitative method, a qualitative approach could provide insightful information on the role of family hierarchy on motivation to join gangs (see Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). Furthermore, I collected data in natural setting, thus allowing I to gain a greater understanding of the gang practices and behavior. Contrary to a quantitative approach that uses structured questions, a qualitative approach employs unstructured and semistructured interview techniques (Lewis, 2015). However, unlike the quantitative method, qualitative research is dependent on the skills of the researcher and subject to the personal bias of the researcher.

The gang members of Mac Baller formed the population of the study. A small sample of 12 individuals were selected from the group using random sampling technique. Random sampling technique is preferred to purposeful sampling because it gives each subject an equal chance of participating in the study. This is essential in generalizing the result findings to the target population of study. A small sample of 10-12 participants is sufficient in qualitative inquiries that seek to gather perceptions, opinions, and experiences of participants on the study phenomenon (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010). Instruments of gathering information included focus group discussions and interviews

where I used semistructured questions for guidance. Interviews with individual members helped provide information on family characteristics of gang members and the type of relationship existing between gang members and their immediate family, while I used focus group discussion to gain information on other factors motivating teenagers to join criminal gangs.

The procedure of data collection started by getting the consent of members to participate in the study. This is necessary given that members are criminals. Their safety was assured prior to carrying out the study (see Bryman, 2016). Furthermore, the participants were assured that information gathered including identification of participants would kept confidential during and after the study and only used for purposes of the study. In line with ethical standards, the study must be of minimal risk to participants and reduce the chances of harming or causing discomfort to participants (Harriss, & Atkinson, 2015). Ethical concerns are fundamental in protecting human subjects from any possible harm occasioned by the study. Therefore, I took care to ensure that subjects of study fully understood the nature and purpose of the study and that participation was voluntary.

The collected data was recorded in the form of field notes. This data was in the form of explanation of the participants. The data was transcribed into word processing to make it understandable and then coded into common themes or categories (see Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Finally, the data from themes was generalized and interpreted in line with reviewed literature to construct a clear and compelling idea of how family hierarchy contributes to gang-membership in society.

In summary, the study used the qualitative approach as opposed to quantitative methods for purposes of gathering insightful information on motivation to join gangs. A random sampling technique was used to obtain the study sample. This technique gave each member an equal chance of participating in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Ethical concerns were addressed to minimize the risk to the participants. The collected data in the form of explanations were analyzed to determine the contribution of family hierarchy on motivating teenagers to join gangs.

Scope and Delimitations

Every study has to be undertaken within the confines of certain parameters. These limits within which a study is carried constitute the delimitations of the study. The study delimitations refer to the scope within which the study had to be undertaken. The scope of the present study had to be narrowed down in order to make it easier to carry out the study within the limited period of time that was available as well as to ensure that the study made original contributions to knowledge.

First, the study was only concerned with exploring the role of family hierarchy on gang membership and therefore did not cover the roles played by other factors in influencing gang membership. It sought to determine how family hierarchy could motivate young people to join the gang. It did not examine the role of family hierarchy in motivating young people (or any other people for that matter) to leave the gang. Second, the study was carried out using the Mac Baller Brim gang members only. Therefore, members of any other criminal gangs were not included. Third, the present study only focused on former members of the Mac Baller Brim gang, including those who have

since become old enough not to be considered young people any more. Such ones were the only exception to the rule requiring that only young people be targeted. Present members or those keen on joining the gang in future were not covered. Fourth, the study targeted only those former members of the Mac Baller Brim gang who are still resident in the US. Those former members who are no longer resident in the US were beyond the scope of the study.

Operational Definitions

Implicit stereotyping: The labeling of African Americans as criminals with violent tendencies in society (Carroll & Gonzalez, 2014).

Family hierarchy: The social order that dictates the rights and responsibilities of a close-knit sociological unit.

Gang membership: The collective unit of people embracing the ties typically found in a family, but where there are no nuclear familial ties.

Racial hierarchy: "The grouping of ethnicities according to their social value and legitimacy in society" (Domke, Garland, Billeaudeaux, & Hutcheson, 2003, p. 608).

Racial profiling: "Any situation in which race is used by a police officer or a police agency to determine the potential criminality of an individual" (Barlow & Barlow, 2002, p. 352).

Assumptions

This research study was based on two central assumptions: First, I assumed the subset of the population that was being studied is a representative of the whole community. The former Mac Baller gang members who were interviewed and their

statements recorded were assumed to represent a significant part of the youth population who are targets for gangs. The generalized traits include their behavior, reasoning, characteristics, beliefs, and reasons behind their decision to join the gang groups. The second assumption was that the participants, that is, former Mac Baller gang members, would respond to the questions tabled before them without fear of victimization from the current gang members. This means that the respondents will be willing to share everything they know. This assumption implied the information given was explicitly significant in this study and can be widely used and relied upon in substantiating and deliberating on the subject matter.

Factors Affecting Research Credibility

One of the main factors that adversely affects the reliability of qualitative research data (from key informant interviews for instance) is that the results of those exercises are prone to subjectivity that may not meet the threshold of face validity (Nabi, Wei, Zhao & Shabbir, 2015). Memories tend to be subjective and selective with time and hence may provide various interpretations of the "truth" when looking at the role that family plays in facilitating gang membership and criminality. Given that the truth of a situation is subjective as well as objective and that the experience differs depending on the perception, politics, positioning, and power, it is wise to understand that the findings presented in this report are versions of the truth as provided by the participants. Another limitation is that because the sample size of the project was small and the sampling purposive (the respondents were chosen with the guidance of the research aims and

objectives), the findings should not be taken to be representative of experiences of all individuals involved in criminal gangs.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the study, which focuses on what role hierarchy and relational family shortfalls play in promoting the entrenchment of gangs in America communities. Chapter 1 entailed an explanation of how and why criminal gang membership is a crime and contributes to an increase in criminal activities in the country. Chapter 2 relates family hierarchy to increased crimes using the social learning theory. The theory emphasizes that individuals attain certain attitudes and behaviors through social learning, which includes negative learning of criminal activity. The third chapter gathers qualitative data and records, interprets, and analyses it to establish the connection between the factors under investigation (namely family and family hierarchy) and the research questions. The various aassumptions made were useful in ensuring that it was practically possible to carry out the research. However, the study is limited by insufficient substance from the interview data and the project's small sample size resulting from purposive sampling. The research is relevant because it fills a gap in understanding what influence teenagers to join criminal gangs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In Chapter 2 I present the literature that is already available on the subject of this study. The main objective was not just to illustrate the importance of other scholars' work to the subject, but also to show the position that this paper will occupy in the prevailing body of scholarship. The literature review will reviews various aspects of behavioral conditioning and social growth with specific regard to their utility in this paper. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the role that family plays in preventing or increasing propensities to join criminal gangs. I discuss how shortcomings in familial structures in low-income neighborhoods facilitate youth joining gangs. I discuss the importance of family structures and how the lack of those structures at home lead young men and women to join criminal gangs.

Overall, the purpose of the study was to show how social learning breeds crime. There is a serious crime issue in inner-city neighborhoods that are characteristically populated by low-income earners (Curry & Decker, 2003). In this study I look into the role of the family in creating a value system in the individual. Through this literature review I point out the purpose of the family in molding the characteristics of an individual, specifically the perception that a person has of crime in the specific context of familial values. I discuss the factors that form or fail to form familial bonds and attract disillusioned youth into the Mac Baller Brims Gang. The demographic in question is the young and psychosocially vulnerable youth in inner-city neighborhoods.

The second aspect of this literature review sheds light on the impact that sociological strata have on the upward mobility of an individual. Though the literature review I aim to provide an understanding of what it means to be from a minority that is largely excluded from the economic, social, and political mainstream of American society. There is a long history of marginalization of minority populations in American society. In the literature review I examine how American society has evolved in the past century, taking into consideration the role that economic, political, and social minorities have played in shaping the social contract of the country.

Thirdly, in the literature review I look into recent and relevant older scholarship on the relationship between minorities to crime. This comes as the culmination of the chapter, connecting the different focus areas of the paper. The initial area of discussion is focused on the generality of human behavior as created by the interaction of children with their parents or authority figures. That sets a foundation for the value systems in families, creating a bridge from family relationships that because human beings are social creatures, can lead to gang membership. The stratum of society affects the possible structure of the family. The discussion in that section connects the internal and external factors that increase the likelihood of eventual gang membership, the covert and overt effect of family structure on the propensity of a person to join criminal gang activity.

An Overview of Chapter 2

For the literature review I used a thematic approach in that all the sections of this chapter address a different aspect regarding how criminal gangs operate. In the first section of this literature review I look into the Mac Baller Brims gang, a notorious

criminal enterprise in New York City. That section will introduce the different dynamics of the workings of a gang that draws membership from the youth in low-income sections of neighborhood in the Bronx in New York City.

In this literature review I explore how human beings learn through being in contact with each other and forming associations with the people around them, especially when they are at their most impressionable in their youth. In the literature review I use Solakoglu's (2015) thesis on Akers' social structure and social learning theory as a way of discerning the influence that gang leaders have on young people to the point of causing them to join these groups. The evolution of gangs was a focus of the paper. I review how individuals in society have an impact on the development of the psyche of the youth specifically the demands of psychosocial development on the target demographic. In this chapter I provide a section on the influence that social, cultural, and ethnic dynamics have on the development of a value system in young people growing up in a community, the effect of value systems in social conditioning in society, and the influence of family on a child as compared with gangs. The main theme of the paper is how the lack of strong family links is a fertile ground for implantation of gang ideals with youth in the Bronx.

The literature review will strive to show how gangs gain membership by mimicking the social security that a family should typically provide. Because the basic structure of a gang rarely has a mother and father figure, youth acquire the social security and "moral" approval that they need to belong to the gangs from their peers through the theory of social learning. This involves the psychosocial grounding of developing teenagers in low-income sections of areas of urban America. I discuss the workings of a

gang, its evolution, and the role of technology in gang development. I also focus on the support structures in the gang and the external/social factors that create optimal conditions for gang recruitment; growth, and entrenchment in the society from which the members came.

Human Behavior and Value Systems

Human beings are social creatures. Many people consider their actions right because of the approval of those around them (Akers, 2009). That means that the sociology of a community determines what is right or wrong in the conduct of its members (Akers, 2011). While there are many theories that attempt to explain human behavior through the value systems in a community (Aspin & Chapman, 2009; Seligman, 2009), in this study I used the utilitarian theory of social order. This theory speaks to what drives human behavior as a microcosm of the value systems that order the entire society (O'Connor, 1997), in this study the social exclusion and economic disparities in urban communities.

John Stuart Mill wrote that the behavior of the typical human being does not rely on any other factor other than the pleasure that an act or omission will give to them (Clark & Elliott, 2001). In other words, the individual tends to choose the input that has the highest likelihood of giving rise to pleasurable outcomes. That urge has nothing to do with social order, and that is why the state of nature in man had anarchy as its major distinguishing trait (Su, 2013). Theories on the structures of social order and the collectivization of interests delineate the good of society (Akers Borg, 2004). Obviously, good only resides in those actions that help a majority of the people in society to be

happy, and that happiness is nothing more than the absence of pain, or the existence of less pain on an aggregate. It is this sort of thinking that creates a value system. That means that a value system is nothing more than the coincident interests of the majority of people in a society (Lee, Akers & Borg, 2004). The value system is that to which most people in a community aspire. In effect, utilitarianism gives the people in society the justification to only pursue those courses of action that avoid pain (Winfree & Freng, 2015). I used the theory of utilitarianism to explain social learning in gangs by looking at the joy in gang activity. When the leadership and vast majority of people in a community share a desire, then the next typical step is to moralize any behavior that encourages that outcome. Over time, these beliefs crystallize into truths that appear self-evident when they consistently bring about the desired outcomes (Solakoglu, 2015). That is how the predisposition to commit an act because it brings happiness becomes a moral duty over many generations, and the historic origin of that duty may be lost, giving the belief both normative and utilitarian legitimacy for all the people in society (McCann, 2004).

The Role of Family in Behavior and Value Systems

The family is the basic unit of human affiliation. Families have existed from the beginnings of human procreation. The family has played various roles through human history. However, the common denominator through time has been that families have been the fundamental support structure of the individual.

Young, Fitzgibbon and Silverstone (2014) argue that the value systems practiced in a family automatically become the default setting for younger family members. The inculcation of these values is systematic and long-lasting. This view is supported by

Giuliano and Alesina (2007) who contend that children's attitude towards life and

society, their tenacity, and their values are a direct result of all their interactions with core

family members. According to Hoffmann (2006), the atmosphere in a family plays a

major role in the propensity of a member to seek affection elsewhere and that well-

adjusted families rarely suffer from delinquency or criminal gang affiliation problems.

Thus, the basic dimensions of a family such as trust, affection, and compassion, or the

lack thereof, are significant factors in whether an individual will adapt to social norms in

general or reject them for an antisocial alternative such as gang membership (Aspin &

Chapman, 2009).

> The Psychology of Values by Seligman is a book that makes a deep inquisition of

the various values that make up the core tenets of any familial relationship. Seligman

holds that families are glued together with an integrated set of value systems (2009).

Each of the members of the family loves and values the other differently. That is how the

different roles in a family come up. Therefore, one must consider the fact that the

different ways of showing familial relation comprise of an order.

> The discussion in this paper is about illustrating the manipulation of the

psychology of these values in criminal gangs. Aker (2009) notes that one of the ways of

showing affection is through demonstrating the fulfillment of the individual's place in the

hierarchy that is already in place. That is how fathers show love to their family by

providing, mothers by caring, children by obeying, and so on. If one extrapolates that

mode of thinking to the question of gangs, then it becomes easier to see that there is a real

possibility of the gang creating some particular idea of parallel order to the typical order

in the family. If one takes that thought in line with the fact that there is a large-scale

breakdown of the family unit in impoverished inner-city neighborhoods, it suddenly

becomes easy to see how criminal gangs are slowly but surely usurping the place of the

family in the psychological and emotional health of people living in run-down

communities. Family plays a vital role in molding the value systems of all the members

The Evolution of the Definition and Traits of Family

One of the most iconic images of the enduring family can be found in Japan. The

mass entertainment media is awash with examples of individuals that value their families

and the honor of their family honor so much that they would rather fall on their swords in

suicide than bring disrepute to the family name. There is a scholarly provable point

behind this stereotype. The traditional Japanese family was a closely-knit institution.

There is even a common Japanese saying that relatives separated by a generation;

grandparents and parents, that is children and their parents; should live close enough to

each other to carry a bowl of soup to each other. That closeness meant that the traditional

family was an economic unit as much as it was a social one since traditional Japan

depended on subsistence agriculture. Giuliano and Alesina (2007) point out that with the

passage of time, the market economy forced individuals to have a more liberal

interpretation of the value of closeness and traditional values in society.

Today, even though children may not necessarily spend as much time with their

parents as was previously possible, there is still a strong culture of obedience and familial

respect in children. The purpose of going into established social developmental

scholarship on culture is to show how families provided not only social security but also

economic stability in the context of social, cultural and possibly even economic productivity as well. Families make the initial investment into a person so that they can be an economical addition to the general stock of the family same as before the emergence of the market economy, but without the requirement of physical proximity that typically characterizes the composition of a family. Physical proximity is a recognized parameter of determining whether a group of people are a family; the approach is accepted in both the official government census procedures and informal measures of whether people live together.

That understanding percolates even to the modern understanding of family. In the United States of America, the transformation has also been the same. Charles Nam (2004) identifies the possibility of the family not changing substantively. He bases his discussion on the fact that there is a cogent scholarship showing that the family is merely adapting to the market economy. This paper reiterates that a family is a basic unit of economic production (Nam, 2004). Therefore, the crux of Charles Nam's argument is that the definition of a family only encompassing those that live under one roof is outmoded changes in the market economy and demands from education and commerce have seen to this (Nam, 2004).

So long as the family maintains its economical focus, then there is no substantive change in the form and objectives of the family. The standard demographical approach to defining a family has always been people brought together by blood, or even adoption. Nam (2004) points out that the perception persists with the understanding of enjoying perpetuation by the fact that the definition still finds common usage as an acceptable unit

of statistical measurement in the population census. Federal authorities use the family as the smallest quantifiable unit for delivering the variables necessary in social security endeavors such as housing, healthcare, education, and food. It has led to a situation where the entire demographic data is captured using the classical definition of a family.

Nam (2004) notes that the statistical inaccuracy of using blood relations and living in the same quarters makes it harder to capture the various shades of a family fully. He points out that the demographic data in current use do not even consider people living in different houses as being the same family, even when the rest of the family members live just next door (Nam, 2004). That classical definition results in injustice. There is no logical reason why a college student should not be considered a part of a family simply because they live on campus; away from their home. Of course, there is a counter-argument to this, stating that the family maintains its unit by having a similar timetable and keeping in touch. But then that definition fails to hold water in the face of information that shows how social security and financial stability can be transposed across different geographies by dint of the developments seen in Information and Communication Technology.

So far, the paper has already identified the fact that the traditional concept of a family: same residence, constant communication, was satisfactory only in the past where social and economic productivity solely depended on the proximity of family members. That definition does not aptly capture the same parameters in principle since the focus on routine and exact living quarters does not make sense in the presence of a fast-moving

world where economic and familial productivity can easily be far-divorced from geographic proximity.

The most appropriate definition of what the family has become in modern society is more functional than genealogical or by any other pedagogy. That makes the functionality of a family the more accurate way of defining what constitutes a family.

The Functional Definition of a Family

The late twentieth century and the early twenty-first century have witnessed fundamental changes in the composition of the family as a unit in society. One can hypothesize that it is the direct consequence of the fact that the government is distinctly pro-individual rights. In fact, we live in the rights era. The contemporary social contract models itself around the sanctity of rights that focus on the individual. The government protects the right to life, to individual liberties today more than ever before. That has had a rollover effect on the structure of the family. Initially, the nuclear family was the fundamental factor of economic production and provider of social security. However, today the government has taken over most of the core functions of the family. For instance, there are child protection services which play the role of protecting the best interests of the child. Giuliano and Alesina (2007) note how this function was previously a preserve of the extended family, as the input of uncles, aunts, and grandparents were detached enough from the nuclear family objective, yet close enough to warrant some form off locus over family matters.

In addition to that, there is also the issue of provision of basic needs, all of which the government has taken over to a large extent. One can find shelters or abused children,

impoverished parents could use food stamps to feed their minor dependents, and there are even housing projects (in the inner city neighborhoods that are the subject of this paper). Today the subject is so evolved that the welfare of minors is no longer considered a social duty, but a means of actualizing intergenerational justice. Elizabeth Bartholet (2014) makes a useful addition to this concept by interrogating the relationship between intergenerational justice and child welfare. More specifically, she looks into how reproductive rights of expectant mothers, adoption policies and the impact of the use of these rights by prospective parents on both unborn babies and children/babies in the pre-adoption stage.

All these factors point to only one logical conclusion that the traditional concept of family is no longer the sole guarantor of socio-economic security in society. However, since human beings are social creatures, and the family is still intrinsically the first (and therefore strongest) form of social bonding to a child, then the role of the family merely evolves to take care of more pressing, but unlegislated needs that are central to a successful family. That is how the concept of a functional family comes into the discussion.

Functionality in a family comes from the conformity of the input and outcomes of the relationships between the people in that unit. Elizabeth Baker and Lucinda Ferguson identify the intrinsic traits of a functional family. Their discussion rests on the premise that modern society precipitates a neutral definition of the family because there are multiple sociological nuances that have changed in society.

Freng (2000) understands that normativity has been the standard of definition for families in the past. It has been the only commonality between both formulators and critics in the field of family law. Baker and Ferguson begin their conceptualization of the family from a common point, making it a venture from the known to unknown. That, they say, is the care that people have express to each other dutifully under the aegis of being in a family (Freng, 2000). Even though there is normativity to this expression of what a family is to its members, it is important to maintain the perspective of inter-personal relations outside of any moral duty to do so; since it is impossible to describe the family unit without referring to the societal understanding of familial relationships.

Communities share value systems; therefore, what they consider to be the identifying traits of a family form the formal definition of a family. Cierpka, Volker, Thomas, and Sprenkle, (2005) argue that it is a society that often determines what constitutes a family. It is imperative that the reader takes into consideration the date of this publication. Cierpka, Volker, Thomas, and Sprenkle use that definition to allude to the economic and socio-cultural utilities of being in a close-knit group of individuals. The biological resemblances that people in a family share are also another outwardly visible sign in identifying a family.

Cierpka, Volker, Thomas, and Sprenkle (2005) point out that what the traditional conception of the family had functionality that simply does not carry in the modern context. They use three parameters to justify their claim. For one, they reiterate Levine and Murray's (2004) position that families comprise of people who, by birth marriage, adoption, or some shared commitment to care for each other to the most feasible extent.

By this rule, a familial relationship is an unconditional sense that there is affection to every duty and right. But then the point of difference occurs in the sense that the authors hold that it does not conform to the formal (and by formal, this paper means the definition adopted by the government in its programs) definition of what a family means (Levine & Murray, 2004). One can thus see that the formal definition adopted by public institutions differs from the social and more personal definition of functionality. That is because the legal definition of a family does not pay any attention to affection.

That difficulty in definition makes it hard to determine whether it is moral to love a family member as per the law, the letter of the law only insists on rights and duties, the same way that it does or other forms of criminal and civil codes. There are 'deep, personal commitments' (Levine & Murray, 35) in familial relations that glue families together. It creates some controversy around the morality of the legal definition of what morality constitutes. Morals are informed as much by the law as they are by social norms. In fact, one can even say that laws are nothing more than codified morals, with morality arising from the normative expectation that gains legitimacy from social acceptance (Bickenbach, 1989).

The utility of this review is to show that the main motivation behind the creation and maintenance of quasi-familial bonds in gangs arises from the extrapolation of the routine bonding 'impulses.' The gist of the main thesis in this paper is that all of the factors to be mentioned in the length of the research paper are those factors which would traditionally be available in the makeup of a family. Typically, they occur in a place where those social bonds are perhaps the only thing that maintains some form of social

order in society. Low-income regions are especially prone to the influences of gangs because they fill in gaps in the member's societal inclusion that are not only psychosocial but are also economic, addressing the root of the vulnerability to join criminal gangs in the first place.

The Psychology of Family Ties

Families are held together by bonds that are not just biological, but also a social and emotional one. That means that a review of the literature that interrogates the psychology behind familial bonds will undoubtedly elaborate the psycho-social elements of a family.

The first echelon that this paper will identify as being essential to the development of this discussion elaborates on the foundational role that intrinsic human traits pay in the solidification of bonds that eventually aggregate to paint the picture of whatever form a family exists; whatever the form or functionality so decides. Frey, Stormer, and Willfuhr (2010) conduct extensive research on enabling psychology in a family unit and came up with a very intriguing conclusion; the beliefs that create emotions are static. They do not change due to social pressures, and that is why there is so much resistance whenever one proposes any change to the formula that already works for the people that live in families. However, the fact that there are alternate explanations to the psychologies that facilitate familial relations means that these ideas are little more than illusions.

The authors point out that most of the relationships that human beings have arisen from illusions of what many think are the peculiarities of being human beings (Frey,

Stormer, & Willfuhr, 2010). To be more specific, human beings relate to each other using a framework that they believe sets them apart from all other creation. For example, the development of the concept of religion and the attendant moral and legal definitions are the foundations for a vast majority of the values of the modern-day family. It is essential that one notes that these principles of human engagement are nothing more than illusions. That is because science has proven that they are not the foundational blocks of building a family; biologically and socially.

A little digression from the topic is necessary for one to understand the true impact of saying that all those people in most societies believe are the foundations of the family are illusions. Biologically, the illusion is that it takes a man and a woman to procreate. However, there is scientific evidence to show that it is possible for same-sex couples. Indeed, trans-sexual couples in the first world are using hormonal therapy to enable these couples to bear children. Even when the relationships predicating a family is heterosexual, advanced technologies that facilitate the implantation of zygotes in the mother or to a surrogate defy the traditional perception that a man and a woman are the foundational blocks of a family. The rationale for going to the trouble of substantiating the fact that men and women are not the foundational blocks of familial relations is to show that the stipulation is nothing more than a perception.

The Illusions of Family and the Resultant Values in Society

The authors of the book (Frey, Störmer, & Willführ, 2010) in question note that there are four illusions that we hold as human beings; they give the impression that human beings ought to live in families and offer their undying loyalty to these social

units. It is an illusion that human beings are exceptional creatures. It is a position that marks a rare convergence in both religious and atheistic thought processes. Religious books say that man was created to rule over the world and all flora and fauna in it. Atheism calls to man the embodiment of the benefits of millennia of constant evolution and natural selection.

Frey, Störmer, and Willführ (2010) argue that the creation story gives human beings similar traits to God, making the pseudo-gods with absolute dominion over society in the world. Frey, Störmer, and Willführ (2010) further note that human beings tend to create a duty of commiseration out of the perception that we have a shared superiority. Families concentrate this perception as they not only represent biological bonds but also come with nepotistic social bonds the same rationale that human beings feel makes them superior to all other entities that are not human. In this way, Frey, Störmer, and Willführ (2010) discuss how family espouses the tendency in people to discriminate between their grouping and others who are not I the direct precinct of the definition.

The third factor that Frey et al. (2010) say that aligns value systems in the family is that humankind has the manifest ability to understand the world through the first person. It is essential that one understands that the ability of human beings can perceive themselves and the world around them. That means that the ordinary human being has a more detailed understanding of themselves than of the people around them. If one were to extrapolate that thinking, individuals know friends more than they know strangers. Logically, that would mean that people would naturally hold their family in higher esteem than they would those that are not in their familial circles.

Frey et al, (2010) hold, and rightly so, that the more familiar a person is with someone, the more important that person, species or group is to the individual. That distinguishing element of exceptionalism makes family bonds have the added strength not present in other relationships in society. That automatically translates to attributional biases that see people allocate good qualities to themselves and those that they know/ are familiar with, and accordingly ascribe neutral or negative traits to those that they do not know, or who they not familiar. The reason that Frey, Störmer and Willführ's (2010) discussion is pivotal to this conversation is that people tend to ascribe positivity to their families to the detriment of all the other individuals. The concordant thought process is that individuals express a bias for the values of their families, creating a rationale for the superiority of family values.

The Social Structures of Gangs

Contrary to popular belief, criminal gangs are not disorganized entities of themselves. They are merely organizations that do not conform to the social contract to a particular society. In a way, they are families of people that subscribe to the common ideals of propriety, and they have intrinsically criminological. Even though the subject of criminology has multiple theories, all jostling for prominence in explaining why people resort to habitual criminal behavior the reader must maintain the focus on criminal gangs as extensions of the initial family. Cooper (n.d.) noted that social structure and social process are crucial elements of the formation and continued existence of gangs.

The initial premise that a person must consider when discussing the social structure of gangs is the economic and resultant economic influence that predispose those

in run-down neighborhoods to find gangs attractive. Cooper (n.d.) stated that these low-income areas are typically home to low-income members of society. Cooper (n.d.) mentioned that the main reason why this demographic is attractive to the gang recruiter is that of the inter-generational disillusionment in the population. That automatically results in the disorganization of the segment of society since the deciders and enforcers of the social contract are not present in these places. That is why these run-down areas are vulnerable in the first place. There is an obvious lack of access to basic social and cultural amenities that are typically plentiful in the media community. That absence leads to social disorganization.

Cooper (n.d.) noted that social disorganization in inner-city neighborhoods has a direct impact on the levels of crime in the areas. The author pointed out that the individuals that become a part of gangs do not feel the need to preserve the well-being of the environment that they live (Cooper, n.d.). Cooper (n.d.) also noted that there is no pride in their neighborhoods, an essential element in the maintenance of social order. The disorganization is borne of the ineffectiveness of public amenities, denying an overwhelming majority of the individuals the legitimate expectation that the system will work for them and cause a sustainable meritocracy to subsist after had/smart input of the factors of production once there is widespread disorganization of public resources and private goodwill. However, these individuals still feel the need to be a part of a productive cycle. Therefore, one will find that the most effective ways of making something of their lives are to join hands with a ubiquitous authority in the neighborhoods, criminal gangs.

Social strain pushes many people in a society to crime because they feel that there is no legal way of achieving their aspirations while following the normally acceptable channels of wealth creation. Cooper (n.d.) adds that the most prominent social theorists claim that disproportionate sharing of wealth and power in a society is the main proponent of social strain. That lack of equality of opportunity eventually leading to glaring substantive inequalities makes people frustrated. There is a strain in relationships hence the significance of the social theory in conceiving gangs.

When individuals from general society observe criminals make ends meet from the proceeds of criminal non-conformity, it is only a matter of time that they are drawn to seriously considering, and eventually joining criminal gangs that promise the same level of material success as a consequence. The strain theory is the tool that Cooper (n.d.) uses to explain the depravity in the quality of life that people in side-stepped communities. The author notes that the social strain that exists in these communes comes from the lack of legally sanctioned causes and effects of a functional social superstructure (Cooper, n.d.). As a result, people will begin to deviate from the normal expectations that would subsist if they lived in a functioning environment. Cooper (n.d.) notes that deviance often becomes the most sustainable approach to individuals that live in these areas.

The crowning moment of Cooper's (n.d.) analysis comes when the two initial precipitative factors of gang social structures; social disorganization and social stress; combine to give rise to deviance. A sub-culture that tolerates criminal deviance often seems to be the only way that people in a dilapidated society get ahead in the lie. Xiong (2016) notes that the quintessential theorist of cultural deviance would aver that seeing no

plausible way of self-improvement and systematic discrimination, the subjugated people more often than not resort to breeding criminal elements. And since human beings are social creatures, they form associations that help them to proliferate their agendas more effectively as groups, rather than individuals.

The Social Stress Theory

Aneshensel (1992) delves into the social stress theory and identifies the fact that it is a composite of various mini-concepts, she holds living in a functional society predisposes the individual to many stresses, all of which may have a positive or adverse influence on the growth of an individual (Aneshensel, 1992). She argues that the central distinguishing factor, between whether some pressure results in an outcome that the affected party. Aneshensel (1992) goes on to report that the recent research that she evaluated flowed along with two parameters: how stress attached to classes across society and the different ways that individuals responded to those stressful stimuli. One of the most sustainable ways that she identifies in her discussion is that self-efficacy is the most sustainable way of responding to the systemic stressors in a place. Relating that information to this study sees the relevance of Anehensel's information is that there is a significant propensity to react to systemic stressors negatively, especially when the factors are both social and economic, as is the case with children growing up in the Bronx, the main catchment area of the Mac Ballers Brims Gang.

Social distress is a condition where the factors of production in society remain skewed in favor of an elite class. The tension of the inequities and inequalities of a society grates on the hierarchies and relationships between classes in society. Mendenhall

(2012) notes that what then results in is a situation where the people in a cadre of society begin to lose faith in the inter-relational aspects of the society that people use to interact with the both of them. However, one of the most intriguing, and perhaps unfortunate, effects of social stress is that it makes it causes implosion in the values and rights that give a society its functionality. That is how cases of violence increase in communities that are financially and socio-culturally excluded. The frustrations that segments of society feel cannot be taken out on the perceived oppressors. The only outlet that the disenfranchised elements of society can come across easily in these areas is the vulnerable cadre in society. That is how children and women are caught in the crossfire; syndemic suffering in other words (Mendenhall, 2012).

McCubbin, Sussman, and Patterson (1983) go a step further and relate social stress to the specific precipitating factor of crime in this research paper: the family. Their book takes on a descriptive approach. In so doing, the interrogator is able to appreciate all the advances that research on family stress has made in the preceding decade. One of the relevant highlights that the author's debate involves the critical transitions that happen in the relationships present between family members over its lifespan. When children are young, they look only to their guardians for sustenance and social skills. However, the older they get, the more social order weans them off institutional influences that may have been benevolent in their early years (McCubbin et al., 1983). Often, that predisposes them to negative influences, the sort of which the Mac Baller brims comprise. Their research not only describes the evolution of scholarship on social stress in the family, but it also connects Anehensel's arguments on individual coping efforts (self-coping

efficacy) to the general body of literature on responding to social stress. McCubbin et al. (1983) speak of family ties as a conditional enabler of crime in children, where the role models engage in degenerate habits.

Antisocial behavior linked to gang behavior almost always leads to violence. Cultural and economic factors create stressors that not only face the individual but also weigh down on entire communities. Kelly, Anderson, Hall, Peden, and Cerel (2012) argue that constant exposure to the violence that comes with gangs predisposes adolescents to be more violent. Gang activity is a growing public health concern in the United States, where the authors (Kelly et al., 2012) holds that adolescents get increasing influence on their psyche. The authors note (Kelly et al., 2012) that the Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children provides a guideline that used six community shelters as a sample of the total subject. The main utility of the article is to point out the fact that young boys are more likely to be adversely impacted by the violence that they see in their community than girls. The long-term result of exposure to gang violence is that it makes the affected individuals more likely to join environments where gang activity facilitates violence.

While there has been a lot of extant research on the characteristics of gangs, there is barely any scholarship on the sociological differentiation between gangs. That is the sort of research that would alert one to the fact that criminal gangs are not just the simplistic group of people engaging in delinquent or criminal activity (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2003). They ought to be viewed as a collective response to the social and economic injustices that the people face in that society. Sanchez-Jankowski (2003) is categorical in saying that the social structure of the urban areas that the gangs are found.

The paper concentrates on gangs in the United States of America. The objective is to look at the common features of gangs, in a bid to show that these are merely rejected social responses to the stresses that living in society places on a community (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2003). The relevance of this paper is that it provides a background understanding of criminal gangs as something more than just rogue elements of society.

Impact of Society on Youth Development of Values

Before embarking on a wide assessment of what the society needs, it is prudent to first look at the family, and consider it as a micro-cosmic exercise. From that premise, it becomes possible to find out what specific aspects of social order can best form the substance of an analysis into the role that dysfunctionality in impoverished families plays in crime rates in neighborhoods. The family plays a central role in the development of a child's mental disposition. Clark-Stewart's (2006) reflections from research on the risk of juvenile tendencies in youth and the factors that enable resilience show that the family structure determines how children relate with authority figures. The research paper considers this book in a microcosmic light, such that the role of the family in strengthening or weakening social bonds can be easily interspersed with the societal institutions such as the courts, the church and other socially relevant factors that affect young adults in society.

The general conformity of youth to the social contract that they live in is an indication of the efficiency of the overall society in instilling those values in the children. Conversely, the wholesale compunction to joining an active criminal activity, or even abet its complicity, is also another indication of the fact that there is a problem with

society. Nakkula, Foster, Mannes, and Bolstrom (2010) make an effort to show how molding a child into a functional human being, or even demanding functionality from a grown man is the only way that social order stays constant. That is especially true for the youth since these are individuals that are still malleable to ideals and ethical standards, but who have the physical and mental ability to cause real damage to society as well. Therefore, building healthy communities for the proper development of the young is both a short-term and long-term strategy in the reduction of crime (Nakkula, Foster, Mannes &Bolstrom (please check APA guide), 2010). The relevance of that information is essential towards this paper is that it is crucial in using the ethics in this book as a backbone for finding the contextualized solutions that this research paper will offer at the end of the discussion.

Most of the youth in the country do not engage in crime for sustenance, the major reason adduced through almost all of the literature in the public domain today is the lack of direction and focus on the right things in life. It shows that the value of criminal gang activity does not get its motivation from money; cash is a by-product of criminal engagement. Therefore, an individual that looks into the value system of young people will understand the motivations behind criminal gangs. Sheila Brown proposes a novel method-listening. In her text, she says that the youth live in an entirely different subculture. Often, the differences are so vast that two siblings could have different value systems predicated by their age groups (Jankowski, 2003). The consistent evolution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has made it possible for individuals to associate with whomever they like. Therefore, it is no longer necessary for people to

bond with just on a physical plane, there are also internet forums and social media

platforms to help 'fine-tune' and constrict the number and quality of people with whom

they interact

The Social Disorganization Theory

Sociological studies attempt to explain the persistence, geographic distribution,

and etiology of gangs. The social disorganization theory is the best-known of all these

theories. Short and Hughes (2016) point out that the early scholars in Chicago evolved

the concept of the criminal enterprise from the aspect of disorganization of the typical

social order. A criminal reorganization of the affected individuals into a clique of

individuals that break the law was the widespread response. Following that classification,

they came across those factors that precipitate the criminal value system. Short and

Hughes take the liberty of pointing out that what other scholars call disorganization is the

creation of a social order that has adapted to the chaos and unreliability of the current

social order (2016). Therefore, one can see that the main utility of the writings of these

authors and their established contributors rests on giving an explanation of the

disintegration of the social fabric in communities affected by criminal gang activity.

Social disorganization is a phenomenon that describes the disintegration of the

basic precepts that make it possible for a society to exist in a functional state. Therefore,

the theory that addresses social disorganization is one that focuses all its literature on the

correlations between the social context that individual lives in and the amount of social

control of the institutions of that community on the individual (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003).

It goes on to attempt to explain how these two concepts come together to affect the crime

rates in a community. Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) point out that the most recent

scholarship on the subject points out that the traits in a community have a direct impact

on the criminal propensities of the young members of the society to join criminal gangs.

Kubrim and Weitzer (2003) go on to say that there is proof that even though the

community plays a significant role in the outlook of the individual, it is only the

individual that has the autonomy to dictate their reactions to social stresses.

The political life of the average American is tumultuous, to say the least. For a

very long time, the causes and effects in the political scene have had heavy repercussions

on other aspects of life in the nation. That is because the social contract of the country

weaves it together so tight that it is impossible for ripple effects not to move from one

domain to another, provided the circumstantially facilitative factors are in place. A book

by Thobaben, Schagheck, and Fenderburk (2015) is the latest take (the fifth to be precise)

of the effect that the American political life has on the economy, people, and violence.

The main assertion here is that the amount of violence is inversely proportionate to the

amount of money in societies, all of which are microcosmic of the national state

(Thobaben, Schagheck, & Fenderburk, 2015). They go on to show that the interplay

between those two factors creates an environment, the biology of which characterizes

every community in the country (Thobaben et al., 2015). The book is useful to this

discussion because it shows the clear correlation between poverty (in the Bronx, New

York) and the rates of criminal gang activity. The book brings an added perspective to the

discussion; to talk about social disorganization as a dysfunction in the social and financial

relationship between different classes in society.

Akers and Jensen (2009) discuss how social disorganization, as identified through the parameters of social and economic subjugation acquire an inter-generational sheen. The point comes through in a protracted manner, with each section of the book adding a thought to the whole (Akers & Jensen, 2011). In this instance, the perceptions percolate down multiple generations and are enforced by continuing macrocosmic social injustices; which may not have a microcosmic correlation; but still cause ripple effects. The authors note that a feeling of communal powerlessness is a sure recipe for criminal compunctions since the individuals that feel oppressed will always want to 'get back' at a system that discriminated against them (Akers & Jensen, 2011). The discussion makes a strong point for the argument that crime is a coping mechanism for most of the criminals who are involved. These people often feel as if there is no other alternative, and that sort of hopeless is prevalent in disorganized societies, where the input rarely matches the outcome in a situation.

Hierarchy in Gangs

Gangs and other forms of criminal organizations operate using an order. That order makes it possible for the individuals concerned to identify leadership, aspire to lead the outfits and a framework of the rules and regulations of the organization. Gaines and Kremling (2013) go into the details of the general structure of organized criminal activity in the organization. One can see that there are several hierarchical levels to the contemporary organization: kingpins, captains, lieutenants, up to the lowest level of street vendors (Gaines &Kremling, 2013). It is essential that all the individuals in the criminal enterprise relate to each other as those in an ecosystem would since there is a clear

indication that all the parts move together in a 'symbiotic' existence. The structure of gangs is constant, and the relevance of that information to this paper is that it helps the paper to hypothesize on the structural discipline that working in a gang gives. There, fidelity to the law is maintained by the threat of violence (Gaines & Kremling, 2013).

The hierarchy in gangs is a question of a drawn-out debate. That is because gangs have multiple ways of assessing their 'meritocracies' and in so doing, determining who gets promoted or even demoted through the ranks. However, there is a universal method of discerning the person that gets to rising violence. There is a critical mass of literature that shows that there is a strong link between drug abuse and sale with violence. Bellair and McNulty (2009) hold that violence is a major indicator of the upward mobility of an individual working in a criminal organization. Therefore, that creates a direct causal link between hierarchy and violence as a measure of the 'success' an individual may achieve as a member of a gang. Their analysis determines that, firstly, gang members that sell drugs are more violent compared to those that are not. Furthermore, it is easier for gangs to recruit sellers in environments that are disadvantaged. All these findings allude to the fact that people who come from disadvantaged neighborhoods are more prone to joining gangs and since there impoverished individuals have the most impetus to succeed; they end up being the most violent in criminal activity. The relevance of the analysis to this paper is to show that there is a direct causal link between the discipline or lack thereof, and the overall compliance of the same individuals to social norms.

Criminals have a growth curve that is abnormal, but one that exists anyway. Understanding hierarchy in gangs is an essential component of being able to explain the

overall structure of the organization. The book looks at a criminal's world from the inside, looking at how they move upwards from the lowest rungs of the criminal world to the end of their careers. 'Drugs and the American Dream: An Anthology' by Adler, Adler, and O'Brien (2012) is a glimpse at Maslow's hierarchy of needs from the perspective of a criminal. It fits perfectly into the need for this research paper to illustrate how youth in impoverished urban areas consider crime as a vocation, much the same way that other socially and financially included individuals would consider getting jobs and starting typical call career. Rising through the hierarchy obeys some of the laws that conventional productivity has, making such a study essential for the consideration of criminal gang activity as a full-blown career with the people in it making hierarchical strides. It places some understanding on the reader of the expectations that disadvantaged youth see in crime. First of all, they see it as a way out of poverty, and a conduit for access to a family structure that they never had before. Most of the members of criminal gangs seem to come from dysfunctional families, as the rest of this review points out (Adler et al., 2012).

The social structure of gangs, therefore, comes about as responses to the injustices that cause disorganization, strain and ultimately social deviance. It is imperative we understand that the criminal enterprises in communities exist as parallel microcosms to the mainstream society. Therefore, the reader should conceive violent gangs as a cry for help in a society that does not value the minority. A keen look at the inner structures of these organizations reveals a microcosmic congruence between cause and effect in

society. The parallel meritocracy of criminal gangs is the main causative element of the emergence of the Mac Baller Brims Gang in inner-city New York from the Bronx.

The Mac Baller Brims Gang: Scourge of New York

The primary reason for the effort in this literature review is to give the reader a working idea of the group that is the subject of this paper's analysis-the Mack Baller Brims gang. It is an exercise borne out of necessity since it seems counter-productive to invest large tracts of research into the effects of an organization on the society it exists in without actually identifying the group itself. The information in the news article is mainly descriptive, since the only thresholds that information on legitimate mass media posts is that they rely on a factual basis. Therefore, this paper will not vouch for any scholarly utility of the information. All that matters is that the newspaper article paints a picture of this dreaded criminal enterprise.

Several gangs have emerged and operated in New York. However, the Mack Baller Brims gang stands out not only because of the severity of its crimes but also the broader area of coverage and complexity of its structure. Mack Baller Brims is regarded to be one of the most ruthless and dangerous gangs in New York. Hamilton (2014) retraces the origins of the group back to the sixties to a team then known as the LA Hat gang. Over the next decade, they changed names to be the 5-9 Brims, before finally becoming the Mac Baller Brims that existed before 2001. Overall, there are four different Brim gangs in the city of New York; collectively, they are called the New York Blood Brim Army.

Mac Baller Brims is made up of drug dealers, killers and gun runners who engage in complex crimes that have led to the loss of life and property. It is imperative to state that Mack Baller Brims consists of Bloods gangs that terrorize people living in New York City and other neighboring areas (U.S. Attorney's Office, 2018). This dangerous gang controls the trade in contraband, decides those who die and live, and torment law enforcement officers on a frequent basis. Blood gangs are often loosely structured street groups that engage in criminal activities and operate under a common leader. Most of the members of these groups are males who may have some things in common such as the ethnic background. Each Blood has unique membership requirements and operates under a hierarchical leadership structure (U.S. Attorney's Office, 2018). Members belong to different positions within the hierarchical structure depending on their experience and years in the group. Unlike other blood gangs that tend to be loosely structured, the Mac Baller Brims is extremely powerful and highly organized. Also, the gang meticulously arranged its operations so that it can successfully execute its criminal plans within the citizens (U.S. Attorney's Office, 2018). The existence of additional tentacles across the citizens and in areas such as Staten Island and New Jersey has allowed the organization to execute its plans successfully.

Asbury (2008) points out that the Mac Baller Brims is a Bronx-based gang that dabbles mostly in the trade of narcotics and gunrunning. It is a part of the larger Blood gang that is spread out over much of the country. The group, also known as the 'Mac Baller Family,' operates out of its base in the Morrisania section of the Bronx in the low-income sections of the city. In New York, as is the case in most cities dealing with gang

activity, such gangs evolve from neighborhood associations of young men with no outlet for their energies teaming up to make a profit out of crime and other illegal activity.

The propensity of Mac Baller gang member to use gory violence sets them apart from all the other gangs in the city; to the point that other gangs reportedly fear them. There is even a body count of innocent bystanders that have lost their lives as collateral for just being around the place in the series of violent interactions (Kramer, 2012). For example, a fifteen-year-old called Vasquez almost died from a stray bullet from a firefight between the Mac Baller Family and the Gorilla Stone Bloods (Asbury, 2008). Three teenage girls were not so lucky to escape fatal injury; while in yet another incident, Samantha Guzman (Bronx prom queen) lost her life when she and her friends walked into a Mac Baller shootout in Morrisiana. From the article by Asbury (2008), one can see that the group's activities stretch out from the base in the Bronx to Brooklyn, upstate, New Jersey, and even Staten Island.

Other authors and commentators have noted that Mac Baller Brims is an established and well-organized mafia group that can dominate the drug trade and criminal operations within the New York City streets and other far-flung areas. One of the main factors that have contributed to the success of the group is its organized structure and a clear ranking system (Asbury, 2008). In this particular group, members have unique and distinct roles to play. Furthermore, they are expected to abide by the existing ranking systems that keeps everyone in check. The ranking systems adopted by groups such as the Mac Baller Brims has its unique pros and cons (Asbury, 2008; Kramer, 2012). On the positive side, the ranking keeps the group organized and sets out boundaries that

members must not cross when engaging each other. In addition, it gives the leaders some

form of control over the members and ensures that all the operations are done as planned.

On the downside, the ranking system can be a source of friction among members

especially when one group feels that some people are favored over others. Similarly, the

ranking system can lead to conflicts when a specific group thinks that another subset of

members is doing their roles. These limitations notwithstanding, Mac Baller Brims has

managed to create a system that enables it to remain a leader when it comes to the selling

of drugs and launching of successful criminal and violent operations in New York

(Asbury, 2008). It is believed that the leader of the Mac Baller Brims was Larry 'O'

Calderon, a convicted criminal who has spent more than 15 years in prison for various

crimes (U.S. Attorney's Office, 2018). Although Larry 'O' Calderon is presently in

custody, The Mac Baller Brims continue to operate around the city. The existing

leadership and power structure has ensured some form of continuity and allowed the gang

to function event with the apprehension of its purported leader.

The membership process is the other interesting aspect of the gang that has

attracted the attention of law enforcement agencies and members of the public. Presently,

there are non-conclusive reports regarding the actual number of people belonging to the

Mac Baller Brims. However, it is believed that the organization has a high number of

direct members, associates, and wannabes who benefit from it. In recent years, there has

been a rise in the number of young people joining the group (Asbury, 2008). One of the

oldest members of the Mac Baller Brims gang is on record as acknowledging the

increasing youth of new entrants to the gang as he does not know most of the new faces

he sees. That is a clear indication of the pull that the gang is increasingly exerting on impressionable youth in the catchment area of the gang (Akiyama, 2003). The initiation rites in the Mac Baller Brims are not different from those in other gangs. They include enduring group beating, committing a serious crime or agreeing to undertake a hit. Unfortunately, not all those who decide to undergo these rites survive. Some usually die or are killed by the police in the process. This shows the complex nature of the gang and the challenges one faces before being accepted. Thus, there is a clear incentive to understand the gang and its membership to unravel its true nature and operations.

The group has two 'wings'; one that controls an underground economy and the other that principally perpetrates murder and other violent crimes. These groups are categorized as the murder and the money unit. The murder group is engaged in all forms of killings and violent crimes that take place within their areas of operations and outside New York (Asbury, 2008). This unit engages in contract killings and executions. Furthermore, it has been linked to several homicide cases in New York (Asbury, 2008). The money unit, in contrast, focuses on making millions through illegal trade. The group engages in heroin, pot, and prescription pill trade. Furthermore, they earn cash through a street mugging, kidnapping, and extortion. Together, these two distinct but highly organized groups have enabled Mac Baller Brims to evolved into one of the most successful and dangerous gangs in New York.

Human Beings and Social Learning

Human beings learn through interacting with others; that being the basis of the social learning theory. That process of learning new behavior is a central component of

this review since it will look into the modalities social learning that is proven to help individuals to build a repertoire of social skills to be criminals (Kirschner, 2002). The discussion will base on an analysis of Aker's structure and social learning theory. The substance of this review will come from OgurSolakoglu's PhD dissertation (2015) as supported by other illustrative scholarship.

The reason that the thesis is preferred to the original work by Akers is that he (Akers, 2009) takes the time to contextualize the theory into a scenario that is closely related to the discussion in this paper; he looks at the impact of Aker's theory on delinquency among Turkish adolescents. In this research paper, the focus is on Mac Baller gang membership; typically, adolescents within the same urban environment as in the thesis. The PhD looks at the vulnerabilities of teenagers in a metropolitan environment; where the stimuli and incentives to participate in delinquent activity are closely related to New York, a different environment with the same transformative factors (Harris, Lowery-Moore, & Farrow, 2008).

Solakoglu's thesis (2015) looks at the development of criminal psychologies in teenagers from the bivariate and multivariate dimension. The discussion in this paper will only look at family and its hierarchy as the main factors or issues of interest. However, the only difference is that the role modeling in this instance runs along a negative path. Solakoglu (2015) says that the reason these children choose the path of crime is that the negative people in their lives (inducting gang members) take the place of leaders in their social circles. It is a position bolstered by the fact that there is a definite hierarchy of gangs makes sure that there is twice as much impetus to follow the negative role models.

The young people not only look up to the gang inductors in admiration but are also compelled to support them through a command structure (Freng, 2000). Both these factors result in an operant condition on the student, forcing them to adopt both the criminal mindset and habits. The review makes a strong case for the learning curve that bivariate social learning takes impressionable learners. It supports an assertion arising from the fact that the substance of the thesis seeks to explain how adolescents learn criminal behavior That strikes a balance with this paper by making it possible for the rationale in the discussion to have a sustainable and defensible way of both identifying negative social learning stimuli and recommending the most appropriate methods of stunting gang member growth by substituting social learning stimuli in the Mac Baller gang.

There is a consistent body of scholarship that shows how social learning facilitates the development of criminal elements in the members of society. Ronald Akers makes the brave move of attempting to condense the principles of social learning as it applies to criminal propensities. Overall, the effort is satisfactory since the main correlational concepts are appealing to this discussion because there is no dissonance between his findings on the paper and the hypothesis of this paper; that breakdowns in family relations facilitate criminal gang recruitment.

Evolution of the Gang

Julie Ayling (2011) conducts a brilliant evaluation of gang changes and the reaction to the evolution theory; the purpose of this review at this particular juncture is to show that there is an actual causal link between gangs and social organization. The band

is an aberration of the social contract, being groupings that come together to defeat the purpose of order as per the mainstream social contract. Not only does Ayling (2011) illustrate how gangs are social units, but she also goes a step further to rationalize their evolution into organized communities capable of creating a value chain which continuously mentors recruits and inculcates the values of the criminal group in the inductee.

Ayling (2011) details how the gang has begun showing the propensity to become increasingly sophisticated organizations of criminals. She explains how some of them show these traits by increasing networked membership (Ayling, 2011). Networks not only help in the communication of information but also in the protection that such enterprises need so that they can continue their criminal entity. These networks are not always voluntarily created since Ayling (2011) points out that blackmail and other forms of extortion are also a viable manner of building networks in this type of socialization.

Ayling (2011) develops the subject by making it contemporary, asserting how gangs are becoming more sophisticated by using ICT more often and with greater accuracy to the desired demographic. Not only does that increase their potential targets, but it also multiplies their recruit catchment area by the number of people in their demographic (Bouchard & Spindler, 2010). Today, they have appealing social media messages to lure in new members and begin their induction process. All these factors create gangs that are larger, and that not only leads to surges in the scope of criminality, but it also tends to make gangs use more violent tactics to achieve their objectives.

The text provides an interrogator with a viable hypothesis of the evolution of gangs which correlate with the definite parallels between Julie Ayling's assertions and the direction that this paper will take; seeing as the growth of gangs closely correlates to the development of familial relationships. It can also be a demonstration of how family relations deteriorate with the increased dislocation of communication (Matei&Dumitrescu, 2012).

In her analysis, Paisi-Lazarescu (2014) points out that most gangs tend to be more violent the larger they grow. In the same way, the discussion in this paper will use this review to show how the inverse deterioration of familial hierarchies and increasing proclivity to use social media has made teenagers more prone to joining the Mac Baller gang. The criminal outfit easily outstrips traditional and acceptable associations in families through its allure of material things and the pride of association so often denied to young men in discriminated ethnic minorities (Young & Silverstone, 2018).

Crime and Public Policy

It is futile to concentrate on the people that commit a crime, and the responses that the governments have towards crime since that is a reactionary cycle. The discussion in this paper will seek to be unique in the sense that it will even look into the principles in policy that can precipitate the reversal of hierarchy as a means of joining and maintaining gang membership. The first text that helps to prove this point is Wilson's 'Crime and Public Policy.' The author alleges that there is a clear correlation between the policy focus of the government and the outcomes of crime prevention and reduction in the civilian population (Wilson 2001).

The initial premise in the paper is that there is such a large focus on the offenses that adults commit that little time and resources are left to interrogate the behavioral triggers of that undesirable behavior later in life (Wilson, 2001). The relevance of this study to the discussion is to show that the first step towards achieving sustainable outcomes on stopping hierarchy, or any other sociological trait, from being a building block of criminal gangs; then it is essential that there is a scholarly focus on the youth segment of society.

James Howell (2010) pushes the notion that understanding young people's need for hierarchy can address crime even further. The main objective of this research paper on the Mac Baller Brims gang is to identify the role the hierarchy plays in sustaining the gang in its impoverished inner-city habitat. The discussion that Howell brings out in his book is one that interrogated the types and levels of gang activity, closely correlating them to the social, cultural, and economic norms of society (Howel, 2010). For instance, one of his main findings is that policies that promote access to a basic acceptable work regime. A reasonable path of upward social mobility has the ability not just to reduce the incidences of people joining gangs, but can eliminate the urge to gain economic, social or even psychological mileage in society by joining a gang (Howell, 2010). To Howell, comprehensive inclusion is the only way to prevent people from joining gangs justifiably. Equity in the distribution of public resources and cultural attitudes help to keep hierarchical social disorganization at bay, negating the urge to form gangs in the first place.

Correlating Gang Membership with Drug Abuse and Violence

Beth Bjerregaard (2010) begins her analysis on the premise that there is a manifest relationship between the people in gangs and criminal activity. Her paper takes an illustrative approach as far as the description of gangs and criminality is involved (Bjerregaard, 2010). She quotes other researchers' work and uses that to show that there is a direct link between drug sales and gang membership. The ethnographic nature of Beth Bjerregaard's work is set out in such a way that it can distinctly identify children from single-parent or non-parented homes as an ethnicity. The fact that the analysis does not reveal the factors that cause these criminal relationships to form in the first place is not fatal to this discussion is because it has already identified poor parental hierarchical structures as the possible causation of the formation of criminal gangs (the Mac Baller gang to be precise).

Bjerregaard's evaluation is useful to this paper because she shows the behavioral differences between people involved in gang-related activities and those that are not a part of the gangs. While the paper does not show a definitive relation between drug abuse and sales with gang membership, it creates a platform for the discussion of the influence of gang membership in criminal activity.

Kevin Deutsch (2014) offers an interesting perspective to the discussion. The uniqueness of his contribution is not analytical; rather it is a detailed description. The award-winning criminal investigative journalist goes into the Neighborhood where gang violence is commonplace and immerses himself in the context so that he can express what goes on there in the greatest detail. For instance, it is only through the diligence of

his investigation that he brings to the attention of the reader that the Mac Baller Brims gang is merely a part of a larger gang problem that spreads out to the rest of the United States of America. Deutsch (2014) identifies the fact that Mac Baller is an extension of the Bloods hegemony. In effect, it means that the group inherits all the violent foundations that drug abuse, sale and social delinquency played in the evolution of the original blood gang. The author notes that there is a concerted war going on in the lower-class neighborhoods of New York (cite). Bloods and Crips go at each other with a disproportionate vengeance, using military-grade weaponry to continue a war that has no basis in legal justification.

The writer, Deusch (2014) traces the conflict between the Mac Baller Brims gang and other Crip-affiliated gangs and the role that those who take part in the hostilities play. He arrives at one conclusion that violence is the most consistent method one could use rise the gangland hierarchy. That is why conflicts such as the kind he notes one can observe at Hempstead, Long Island, Linden Avenue, and Linden Place only escalate, the more time passes. The author also notes another intriguing correlation between the violence in the once-peaceful neighborhoods and the general society: these areas have been left behind (Deautsche, 2014). But then the only difference occurs when one looks at the current situation and sees that there is next to no progress in the neighborhoods where the gang activity is most intense. It points to one thing that the violence and drug abuse in criminal gang activity is a response to the exclusion of sections of society.

The relevance of the book to this discussion is that it brings an unbiased description into the context of the discussion. From the book, one can see that there is a

clear methodology for the increased violence in gang-infested neighborhoods. As a result of the sustained violence, gangs grow since the intense fighting forces people to take sides for their protection the exclusion from the general social contract often means even necessities like quick reaction times by the police are not necessarily available in these places.

Lastly, one notes that gang hierarchies vary depending on the utility that the differentiation offers the group. The organized criminal outfits that have complex hierarchical structures function because there is a manifest need for that layering to their leadership structure (Kontos, Brotherton, & Barrios, 2012). The authors note that as criminal gang ideology spreads and takes a firmer hold on the psyche of a community, violence becomes a separating factor between gangs, and even a determinant of gang affiliation: for instance, Kontos et al. (2012) point out that there is an emerging class of delinquents that survive in gang-riddled neighborhoods because they consistently fail to identify with any side in the conflict. These youth engage in drug abuse, they sell drugs, engage in typical violence when acting in an antisocial way, but survive persecution by any side because they do not ascribe to any gang. The rationale for the existence alongside gangs is while this class of youth is not gang members themselves, the gangs recognize their presence due to the similarity in lifestyles that they have.

The Impact of Society on Youth Psyche Development

It is essential that one realizes that the socio-economic place of the immigrant has changed immensely in this period. It has come from a place where immigrants were welcomed for their economic and industrial productivity to pariahs that are a hot-button

topic at every election cycle (Strydom, 2008). The purpose of this article is to show the correlation between crime, poverty and immigrant communities in a localized environment, which is the city of New York.

The paper begins by stating the obvious, that the stigmatic link stereotyping of immigrants as criminal deviants has persisted. Therefore, the primary objective of the article is to identify the correlation of immigration's poverty to crime. Instead, it is an attempt to evolve the discussion towards the subject of the paper; though it must be said that targeting the immigrant population is not a bid to prove the immigrant community's deviance (Davies & Fagan, 2012). Immigrants are socially displaced individuals that find themselves in a new country/region with a new social contract (Hughes & Short, 2006). Therefore, their decisions are based more on the need to satisfy immediate needs and survive in an environment that is hostile to them. That is also the way that many people in the Mac Baller gang find themselves placed in social circles; in addition, immigrants are also subject to a strange hierarchy, be it social or legal (McGarrell, 1995). The paper is essential to this analysis since it provides a platform for extrapolation and juxtaposition on a true level.

Adolescents deal with trauma more severely because they are typically unequipped to deal with intense emotions or the difficult attrition of living in difficult surroundings. That is because adolescence is a period of transition. The individuals in question are moving from one stage to another, childhood to adulthood. That comes with a host of emotions and awareness that not only confuses many teenagers but can also leave them with a diluted sense of belonging. Trauma from events involving gun

violence, domestic abuse, police brutality, and other forms of abuse stays with minors during their adolescence, shaping their view of the world and normalizing all the behavior that they constantly see (Hanley, Humphrey, & Lennie, 2013). That is how teenagers that grow up in violent neighborhoods have a higher tolerance for violence and overt aggression than those who are in peaceful neighborhoods where there are no incidences of the kind. Clare Lennie, Neil Humphrey, and Terry Hanley (2012) make it possible to consider the role of violence in instigating criminal gang activity, either for protection or sustenance.

Adolescence is also the time that most individuals form their attitudes towards figures of authority in the larger society. Teenagers roam, constantly exploring the limits of the society that they will join as adults. Thus, the attitudes that they see adults employ in their interactions act as templates for their own habits later in life. That is why there is literature to suggest that the attitudes that the police and other law enforcing agencies have towards teenagers fuel criminal gang violence on the long-term (Flowers, 1990). Flowers (1990) identifies the fact that violence in gangs increased the more gang recruitment areas suffered more violence under the police. He goes on to correlate the fact that the violence meted out by criminal gangs is identical to the type that the police mete. For instance, the objective of a gunfight involving the police is to neutralize the target. The youth picked up on this, and soon, gangs come up that place a premium on murder through weapons (Flowers, 1990). Therefore, the adolescent criminal is a creation of the larger society.

Recent social work in juvenile criminal justice identifies the fact that there is a strong likelihood that criminal tendencies in the youth follow a cure that tallies with their age. Possibly, that growth curve tallies with the adolescents continued exposure to crime and violence in a normalized context. Springer and Roberts (2017) make a concerted effort to bring as much empirical evidence to the fore as possible; asserting that the universal tendency in young offenders is for the scale of their criminality to peak in their late teenage years. The intention of the study is to explain the occurrence. One rationale that Springer and Roberts (2017) advance is that the individuals in society that engage in escalating crime do so because of the receding amount of social control that is present over them. Adolescents can evade the social controls that conventional society places on them more easily than children. However, even this evasion cannot protect them from the social stresses that precipitate degenerate responses.

The authors explain that the reason there is such a widespread move to criminality among defiant teenagers is that there is no positive model for these individuals (Springer & Roberts, 2017). And the pressure to conform to societal measures of success never leaves the teenagers. The parameters of being an adult typically involve financial independence and emotional self-containment. Criminal gang activity still encompasses these two ideas. Therefore, the youth in question will differentially go for the most available means of measuring up to the community's standards by joining gangs, as participation in the common social contract keeps becoming less of an option the deeper they mire themselves in criminal gang activity (Springer & Roberts, 2017). The relevance of this book to the study is that it illustrates and explains the typical growth curve that

youth go through when they resort to crime as a means of self-development. Springer and Roberts (2017) offer cogent insight to the disillusionment of continued gang affiliation and the impact it has on an ordinary individual's proclivity to join a gang.

Familial vis-à-vis Gang Influence

The family is one of the most influential elements in the development of a child; it is crucial that the leaders in a family set out to make a good example for the younger members of the family. Just the same way those children learn good values in functional families, so do they acquire detrimental traits from broken or dysfunctional homes. The role that the family plays in making gang membership more prevalent. Similarly, the report talks about the essential elements of criminality and their causal links in the family as the paper also goes into the details of how families can heal and help members that have joined gangs to leave.

Families have one definitive character; they share a lot of their personal lives together because the first premise in this paper is that gangs always affect the family. That impact varies with indicators like geography, power, and ethnicity as the study catchment area spread out over the West Midlands, Scotland, and London. It shows that gang activity is a consequence of deep-seated problems within the family structure since there is the physical element of abuse in gangs that inevitably traces its roots back to broken or dysfunctional families. The discussion in this literature review will look into the vulnerability that being a child in a single-parent family predisposes an individual. The typical setup in the gang is put up in such a way that there is a central figure of authority that dispenses rewards and punishes, just as a parent would in the home setting.

That simulates the security and certainty of the home environment, regardless of the activities in the gang go against the basic tenets of family law.

In addition to owing causation, gang activity also brings up emotional and psycho-social discord in the family. The report by Shoemaker (2009) illustrates that even though families may benefit from the proceeds of crime, there is a steep price for the benefits that accrue from deviant behavior. That often comes with shame and helplessness. The parents of children involved in gang-related activity feel even more powerless when the kids are adolescents (Shoemaker, 2009). The report by shoemaker shows that families play an increasingly crucial role in resistance; the parent is a central authority figure that can offer the stability that troubled youth perceptibly see in gangs. It is partly because gang members may think that there are no viable alternatives for their needs The report is useful to this research paper because it shows the effects that gang-related activity has on the family, in addition to the role that the nuclear and extended family will come through to enable exit from the illicit habits.

Peer to Peer Influence

Young people have a very high proclivity to be social and learn through peer observation due to the constant interaction between them in a way that transfers influences across peer groups (Gunton, 2010). The article by Gunton (2010) states that the motivating factors that make young people join peer groups and the relationship between that and delinquent behavior; that is why peer influence is such an influential factor in the behavioral patterns in the youth. Gunton (2010) bases his discussion on the statistical results from a sample population of 200 youth that identified themselves as

being a part of various groups. These groups form enclaves that 'envelop' individuals and make them immune to influences that originate from outside the sphere of influence of the patriarchs and matriarchs of the social order of the gangs that they belong.

The substance of the article unravels the motivations that make specific groups desirable to individuals from particular demographics. That is the foundation of the paper going on to show how these motivations vary between delinquent and non-delinquent group members. Lachman, Roman, and Cahill (2012) make a point of using statistically proven methods of analysis to test their hypothesis. These regression models show that young people that join groups for an active particular purpose tend to exhibit delinquency more freely. The study proves that youth who make affiliations with groups just to fill a void tend to resort to conforming to delinquency less readily (Lachman et al., 2012).

The study is of great utility to this analysis because it can show the building blocks that would make children in a single-parent home turn into delinquents. Often, many scholars hypothesize that their living in broken homes predisposes one to criminal gang activity since there is either a missing mother or father figure (Meranze& Colvin, 1999). However, this paper goes so far as to create space for a scholarly discussion on the hypothesis that children that go into criminal activity in gangs do so mainly on their own merits. The paper is an informative read for professionals planning interventions and attempting to understand the motivations behind minors joining criminal organizations.

Another book that points to the major role that peer-to-peer influence plays in the general make-up of a developing individual is the book by David Farrington and Brandon Welsh titled 'Saving Children from a Life of Crime'. In the book, the authors take their

time to identify risk factors that are present whenever there is the possibility of a minor joining the ranks of a criminal gang. The book gives real meaning to the saying, "show me your friends, and I will show you who you are." The book draws on the authority of the Cambridge Study to assert that children that associated with friends who were noted delinquents by the time they were 14 was a major indicator of the possibility of them being convicted later in life for criminal offenses. That means that those who succumb to peer influence to join criminal agency find a hard time receding into normal social functionality.

Farrington and Welsh (2007) go a step further to identify the main reason that underlies recidivism from the crime that owes its roots to peer pressure-changing company. The authors again point out that an overwhelmingly large percentage of the individuals that displayed recidivism towards the end of their teenage years (in the progression into adulthood) typically stopped being in the constant company of their friends. The researchers used interviews with the youth in question to further prove this point (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). The authors noted that unsolicited and often spontaneous comments with juveniles exhibiting recidivism from the criminal lifestyle said that changing their clique was one of the first steps that they made in their path back to conformity with societal conformity and legal probity; that is, normalcy in their daily lives (Farrington & Welsh, 2007).

Farrington and Welsh (2007) develop the discussion even further, they say that joining a gang is an even greater contributor to the commission of delinquent offenses in the community. The authors quote the Seattle Social Development Project, where the

research illustrated the fact that people in a gang are guaranteed to commit some misdemeanor or felony as long as they were a member of a gang; irrespective of whether their membership was active or not at the time. That means that there are hierarchical expectations that being in a gang places on one since the major objective of social coalescence among young people is for subsistence and cultural approval (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). The discussion goes further to show that the increased delinquent activity almost always translates to selling and consuming illegal drugs, violence and property crime. All these factors point, so an increased propensity to have the most increases in crime just by association.

The most significant finding of the groundbreaking work by Farrington and Welsh (2007) is their realization that there is a direct correlation between changing company and ceasing to engage in behavior that would place one at risk of running afoul of the law. The authors allude to a research paper published in 2005 that pointed out the fact that the number of offenses typically decreased back to normal after the individual left the sphere of influence of the criminal gang activity (as cited in Farrington & Welsh, 2007). That is why there is always the possibility of recidivism in a criminal. The researchers point out that the selection and facilitation hypothesis ring true whenever criminal behavior is concerned (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). The selection hypothesis states that individuals who commit criminal offenses while in gangs do so mostly because they are selected to do so; that shows that there is a hierarchy in criminal gangs that compel the members to do as someone bids.

Secondly, there is the facilitation hypothesis which states that peer influence makes it possible for an individual to commit criminal acts and gain approval for it because there is no reason for them to shy away from their wrongs. Hierarchy is also a key element of facilitation, whenever a recruit joins the ranks of a gang, they come under the direct jurisdiction of other gang members. The typical determinant of hierarchy in criminal gang associations it the time spent in the gang and the number/severity of the criminal acts that a person has to commit to becoming a member of the fraternity. The discussion in the book is essential to acquiring a sociological grasp of the effect that peer-to-peer influence has on the growth of gangs and the effect that hierarchy has on the development and possibilities of recidivism of criminal tendencies whenever criminal gangs are involved. Recidivism is thus eliminated without the presence of undesired stimuli.

Conclusion

The literature review in this discussion aims to paint a proper picture of the values in a family. From the onset, the objective has been to make it clear that hierarchy has a central role to play in the creation and sustenance of relationships in the family. The objective of the entire paper was to illustrate how the various literature pieces already in the public domain could provide a cogent idea of what it means to be in a family, to understand hierarchy, and how criminal gangs attempt to usurp the hierarchical situation in the family. That process led to the review of multiple works, just to prove the position of this research paper in the general body of scholarship on hierarchy and its effect on human beings.

The discussion showed that human behavior is a composite of all the influences that an individual feels in the course of interacting with society. The paper takes on a comprehensive approach, covering both juvenile and adult reactions to the pressures in society. That brought about the discussion of social stress and social disorganization. These two concepts were introduced, defined and discussed in an effort to merge them to the flow of this discussion. For one, social stress was identified as the primary method through which discrimination in the social, economic and cultural way occurred. On the other hand, social disorganization came to be understood as the disorder that comes from an unequal status quo in a society that expects the same of everyone

The review illustrated that it is the apparent injustice that creates frustration in the subjugated members of society. As a result, this paper sought to show the reader that criminal gang affiliations are not just a mindless activity that people living in poor regions manifest. Rather, the object was to show that criminal propensities come about when a critical mass of people become so disenfranchised with the societal factors of production that they become willing to explore options outside of the common bounds of the typical society. That is how the literature review created a platform for the juxtaposition of hierarchy in the family to that in criminal gangs like Mac Baller Brims.

All through the discussion, the discussion was careful to keep in focus on the role of the family in creating the monster that criminal gangs have become. The chapter portrayed hierarchy as the trait that keeps families together; and also as the factor that makes it possible for criminal gangs to exert such a strong influence over the adherents. The review illustrated the state of inner-city urban neighborhoods where poverty and

exclusion from the economic, educational and cultural mainstream left a basic human need lacking-association. The chapter showed that association is an intrinsic human trait, and since the quintessential family in the catchment area of the Mac Baller Brim gang is broke, the theory behind the gang's pull is explained. The rationale that emerges from the constant chain of information coming in through the review is that the family is not just a unit of human reproduction but also defines, to a large extent the qualities that the members possess. For one the review identified that membership to a gang automatically increased the chances of an individual engaging in criminal acts. Conversely, those that left the gangs or did not join are seen to have a limited proclivity to engage in criminality and trouble with the law.

The chapter has shown the hierarchy binds together families by having each person perform roles that are expected of them. In the same way, the chapter has reviewed the literature to illustrate how gangs use hierarchy to determine the order. Seeing as there have already been justifications to show that criminal gangs are a response to the social stress of communal exclusion, the paper went on to show how the criminal response to the resultant social order creates hegemonies that require a form of discerning merit. Since the social contract in gangs is different from that in normal society, violence came up as a means of determining hierarchy due to the absence of widely recognized roles of association.

The chapter illustrated violence to be the main preoccupation of gang activity. That position crystallized in the wake of multiple empirical and descriptive studies proving that the more violent a person is, the more likely they are to succeed in their roles

in the gang. From that premise, the paper then found the leeway to discuss how the vicious Mac Baller Brims gang has evolved the capacity to deal in drugs and have its members also partake of the same. The review identified literature that validly asserts that violence is a tool for climbing the hierarchy of a criminal organization. Therefore, one can see that the entire course of the chapter made it possible for the reader to discern that hierarchy is the only component holding together gangs such as Mac Baller Brims.

In a nutshell, the chapter discerns that the creation of an alternate set of values finds an audience in the disgruntled youth who happily join just to access acceptance and a means of eking out a living under the intense social stress of economic, socio-cultural, and political exclusion from mainstream society. After that, foundational propensities towards violence, crime, and drugs work together to push the youth deeper into criminal gang activity, something that could easily be avoided by psychologically integrating youth into a productive use of their time. Violence is normalized and becomes a viable way of exerting membership to the new status quo in the new criminal family. That brief incursion into the theoretical constructs of hierarchy supporting criminal gangs brings this chapter to an end. The expectation is that the reader will see that the lack of family hierarchies in low-income neighborhoods precipitates an enabling environment for gang recruitment. Over time, those bonds are reinforced by violence, which is fueled by drug abuse and sales

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the way data will be collected, analyzed and used in research (Taylor et al., 2015). In the current study, the research philosophy indicated how data was obtained from former Mac Baller gang members. The two opposing terms, epistemology, what is known to be true, and doxology, what is believed to be true, form the bases for different philosophies of the research approach. Therefore, the purpose of research is the transformation of things believed into the known. The current research had the purpose of transforming the things believed about family hierarchy about gang member into known. The two main research philosophies are positivist and interpretive.

Positivists believe that reality is stable and is observable and can be described from an objective perspective (Smith, 2015). That is to say that reality is observed without affecting the phenomena being analyzed. This indicates that features of reality should be separated and that observations are repeatable. Positivism involves the change of reality by varying one independent element to determine its impact and relationship between a few components of the social environment. However, positivist research philosophy was not suitable for the current study because it is not possible to vary the factors determining gang members' experiences in a family within the short time of the study.

Interpretive research philosophy indicates that reality can only be understood by subjective interpretation and intervention (Bryman, 2016). In the interpretative

philosophy, it is important to study phenomena within their natural surroundings. It incorporates acknowledgment that science must also influence those phenomena during the study and acceptance that there are many interpretations of reality, but it indicates that there is a component of scientific knowledge that is being pursued. The current study used an interpretative research philosophy to study the former gang members to determine the impact of family hierarchy on gang membership.

Research Strategy

Research strategy refers to the general plan of how the research will answer the research inquiries (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). Various research strategies have been identified that include experiments, surveys, case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, action research, and archival research. The first research strategy used in the current study was surveys. A survey of the former Mac Baller gang members was done to determine the effect of family hierarchy on them becoming a gang member. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2017), the survey research strategy allows the researcher to get data about practices, situations, or views at one point in time using a questionnaire or interview.

Qualitative methods of analysis are applied to obtain data about the real association between the two factors under investigation namely family and family hierarchy (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). The survey method of research was used for this study because it enabled the study of more than one factor at a time. The same could not be said of laboratory experiments which, though still capable of dealing with two factors (variables), only one variable (the independent variable) can be changed to test the

dependent variable. The main limitation of using a survey method of research is that is not possible to get insights into the causes and the processes in the event of study. This often makes it hard for large amounts of in-depth (detailed) data to be collected. Since detailed data also tend to be more credible. Also, a survey has a few sources of bias such as the possibility of self-selection of the respondents.

The second research strategy in the current study was that I used a case study design. The current research conducted a case study of former Mac Baller gang members to determine the impact of family in gang membership. Case studies are used to attempt to describe the phenomenon (under under investigation) in great detail and possibly determine the association between the phenomenon and other phenomena (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). In the current research, the only organization is the Mac Baller gang and the case study in the current research was interpretive. The main advantage of the case study is that it yields more details by analyzing a single organization than can be found in an experiment or a survey.

The third research strategy used in the current study was action research. Action research is used to provide a practical solution to the people the researcher works with while at the same time adding to the existing theories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). In the current study action, I attempted in the research to give a solution to the young people attracted by gang activities and at the same time add value to the theory about membership into gangs. The research strategy of the current study involved survey, case study, and action research. The survey used the interview method to obtain data from the respondents. The case study in the current research involved analysis of the experiences

of former Mac Baller gang members. The action research involved providing a solution to the young people who may be attracted to joining a gang.

The research strategy of the current study was a case study. The case study is an in-depth study of the research problem rather than a sweeping statistical survey (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It was used to reduce a large field of study into one or a few researchable examples. In the current study, the case study helped to narrow the population of Mac Baller gang members to a few former members. The case study helps to test if a particular theory and model applies to a phenomenon in the actual world. In the current study, I sought to know from the former gang members if the proposed solutions apply to the real-life world.

The case study is qualitative. Qualitative research is exploratory. It is applied to get an understanding of the opinions, motivations, and experiences. It can provide insights into the issue or create ideas or hypotheses (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Qualitative research is also applied to determine trends in thinking to understand the problem better. The qualitative method of data collection used in the current study was the interview.

Research Design

Research design refers to the overall method selected to integrate the various components of the research coherently and logically to make sure that the research problem is addressed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It comprises of the plan of collection, measurement, and analysis of the data. The research problem determines the kind of strategy that should be used. The purpose of the research strategy is to make sure the

evidence collected effectively and logically addresses the research issue. The research design is subclassified into conclusive design and exploratory design. Exploratory research is done for an issue that has been studied more clearly and the intent of the researcher is to establish priorities, create operational definitions, and determine the research design to be applied. Exploratory research design helps to determine the preferable method to collect the data and select the subjects. It provides definitive conclusions only with caution.

Exploratory research designs depend on techniques like secondary research that involves reviewing the present literature (Meyers, Gamst and Guarino, 2016). It also relies on informal qualitative methods such as discussions with stakeholders and formal qualitative methods such as interviews, projective methods, pilot research, focus groups, and case studies. The exploratory research design is used when the researcher aims to become familiar with a phenomenon or to get new insights to formulate a more accurate problem or create a hypothesis. In the case when the theory is too general or too specific making it impossible to develop a hypothesis, exploratory research may be done to gain experience that enables creation of a relevant hypothesis for further research. The findings of the exploratory research are not adequate for the researcher to draw conclusions regarding the issue under investigation. Instead, such findings have to be investigated further through an exploratory research. Simply put, exploratory research is only undertaken as a precursor to an explanatory research. On the contrary, explanatory research is usually enough for relevant conclusions to be drawn. This in turn explains

why I had to use explanatory research (as I had to obtain deeper insight into the issue

under investigation.

Researchers using a conclusive research design have the intention of obtaining

information that helps in reaching a conclusion or making a decision (Marczyk,

DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005). Conclusive researchers intend to give a reliable picture of

the population using valid study instruments. In the conclusive research design, the data

collection and objectives of the study must be well-defined. The results of conclusive

research have particular uses. The conclusive research design gives a method to verify

and quantify the results of exploratory research. Conclusive research design involves the

use of quantitative methods of data collection and data analysis (Glesne, 2015). Also,

conclusive research design tends to be deductive, and research objectives are achieved

using a test of hypotheses. The conclusive research approach was not used in the current

study because it uses quantitative data, while the present study was qualitative.

Research Approach

Research approaches are subclassified into the deductive, inductive, and

abductive research approaches (Manning & Stage, 2015). The relevance of the hypothesis

in research is the key distinction between inductive and deductive approaches. A

deductive approach to research seeks to determine the validity of the assumptions. It

includes creation of a hypothesis using the present evidence. The deductive approach

involves reasoning from a specific point in general. If a situation seems to be indicated by

a particular theory or an example of a case it may be true in most of the events. The

deductive approach tests to see if such a relationship exists or to identify more general

circumstances. The deductive approach is explained using the hypothesis that is developed from propositions of the theory. A deductive approach would be concerned with reaching a conclusion about gang membership based on the premises. Because the current study did not have any premise about gang membership, a deductive approach was not appropriate.

An inductive approach contributes to the development of new theories and generalization (Marshall, Coleman, & Reason, 2017). The inductive research approach is also called inductive reasoning. It begins with observation, and theories are proposed at the end of the study. The inductive approach involves finding patterns from observations and creating explanations for the patterns using various hypotheses. At the beginning of the study, no theory or hypothesis is applied in the inductive research and the researcher is free to change the position of the research (Smith, 2015). However, inductive research does not indicate ignoring theories when creating research inquiry and aims. The current study used an inductive approach to determine if there is a relationship between gang membership and family hierarchy. The inductive approach has the objective of creating meanings from the data gathered to determine patterns and association to create a theory

The abductive research approach involves stating facts and seeking to explain to them. This approach is dedicated to addressing weaknesses related to deductive and inductive approaches (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The deductive approach is mainly limited by the fact that it is often only useful in testing theories; and this may not be possible in researchers that do not entail testing the applicability or suitability of a theory to new phenomena. The inductive approach is criticized because empirical data cannot

enable the creation of theory. The adductive approach overcomes this shortcoming by using the pragmatist view. However, the current study did not use this approach because an inductive approach was the most suitable for the study of the impact of family on gang membership.

Data Collection Method

The data collection was very important in the current study. Nevertheless, a few elements came into play during the collection of the data (Fallon, 2016). The three main factors considered in data collection included the cost of selecting the data, the accuracy and the efficiency of the data collection. The current study used the primary method of data collection to determine the impact of family on gang membership from former Mac Baller gang members. Primary data refers to the data that is obtained directly from the subject of study. In primary data collection, the researcher collects the data themselves using various qualitative and quantitative methods. The data collected using the primary method is usually unique to that specific study. They are various methods of collecting primary data that includes a questionnaire, interviews, focus groups, observations, case studies, and scientific experiments.

The current study conducted a face-to-face interview with former Mac Baller gang members. Each interview lasted for no more than a period of one hour. Face-to-face interview refers to the interviewer communicating directly with the respondent according to a prepared question (Bryman, 2016). The advantage of using the primary method of data collection is that the data is collected at first hand following careful methods and applying precisely selected procedures. The study also considered what it was collecting

regarding data so that it was about real life. The data was made valid because the method of data collection was created and done for the research. The second advantage of the primary data collection method was that it was considered trustworthy (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoagwood, 2015). It is because the primary data collected using a face-to-face interview with former Mac Baller gang members was considered more valid then secondary data.

In the primary collection of the data, the researcher obtained data that was specific to the research (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoagwood, 2015). On the other side, the primary collection of the data had its shortcomings; first, it was expensive. It is because the researcher had to start from the beginning of the study and follow the entire study by obtaining participants, organizing the materials and running the research. The second limitation of the method of data it was limited to place, time and the number of respondents, in comparison to secondary study that can use various sources and give a range of details.

Face-to-face interviews are still a popular method of data collection despite the cost and the time associated with those researches (Silverman, 2016). Face-to-face interview refers to a method of data collection where the interviewer directly communicates with the respondents according to prepared questions. The method of data collection was key because it enables to get facial expressions from the respondents, attitudes, preference and other data obtained from the respondents. A standardized face-to-face interview is a tool for research. It was used to determine the effect of the family on the gang member of former Mac Baller gang members.

The face-to-face interview was used because it enabled the researcher to obtain more than the data in the prepared question. The face-to-face interview enabled to capture the emotions and behaviors of the respondents. The face-to-face interview allowed the respondent to get the emotional behaviors of the respondents. It is because the interviewer observed non-verbal signs of communication from the respondents (Duncan and Fiske, 2015). The interview can be able to detect the possibility of the respondents giving false information by observing the physical expressions in face-to-face interviews. The interviewer can capture non-verbal communication like body language that may show a certain discomfort with the questions (Duncan and Fiske, 2015). Also, the body language may indicate a kind of enthusiasm about the issue being discussed. In comparison to another method of data collection like telephone survey that could have been used. Capturing the non-verbal communications was not possible with the other method.

In the selection of the interview method of data collection, various factors were considered that included time, the geographical location of respondents, sensitive to the issue, technology, interviewer safety, note-taking and interaction impact. The clearest component of the interview context is cost and time (Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). The face-to-face interview was used in the current study is due to the accuracy of the screening. The use of face-to-face interview enables screening that is more accurate. The respondent cannot give false data like the age, gender or race. It is unlike another survey like telephone interview methods where the respondents can give false information while been screened. In an online survey that gives incentives to the

respondent, there may give wrong demographic data that able them to participate and get the rewards. It may lead to misleading information, confusion and even false results.

The interview method of data collection is to enable the respondents to remain focus (Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). The interviewer has full control of the survey and allows the respondents to remain focused. In case of questions that may lead to the emotional reaction, the interviewer can control the respondents. The face-to-face interview has been identified to take a lot of time and cost due to the requirement of traveling to the respondent. However, in the current case, the respondents are located in the same location. Therefore, the travel cost is relatively low. However the interviews took some time to complete, it was estimated that every interview would take around one hour.

Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to the process of cleansing, inspecting, transforming and modeling data with the aim of knowing crucial information, making conclusions and enabling decision making (Bernard, Wutich and Ryan, 2016). Data analysis has various dimensions and approaches that involve various tools under many names. Analysis of the data refers to the sub-classification of the whole data into different parts for examination. It involves getting raw data and changing it into information that is used to make decisions. The purpose of data analysis was to answer the research questions (Bernard, Wutich and Ryan, 2016). Data analysis is subclassified into descriptive statistics, exploratory data analysis, and confirmatory data analysis. The descriptive statistics were used in the current study to indicate the distribution of family hierarchy among former

Mac Baller gang members. The exploratory data analysis was used to discover new features in the data. In the current study, the exploratory data analysis was used to determine the effect of family hierarchy in the gang membership of former Mac Baller gang members.

The confirmatory data analysis is used to prove the theories (Silverman, 2015). The main purpose of the current was to answer the research questions about the effects of family hierarchy Mac Baller gang members. Therefore, it did not use confirmatory data analysis it is because it depended more on exploratory data analysis. The data collected was required to be processed, processing the data involved organization to allow for the analysis. After processing the data, it was cleaned for any incomplete information, duplicates, and errors. The need to clean the data arose from how it was entered and stored (Silverman, 2015). Data cleaning involves prevention and corrections of the errors that may have occurred during the data entry. Tasks in data cleaning included record matching, determining inaccuracy and determining the quality of the data.

The reports of the interviews were coded, and the data was analyzed using MAXQDA Qualitative Data Analysis Software. MAXQDA is software designed for the computer-enabled mixed method, data, text and multimedia analysis of data. The software is created to analysis qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method data. The software in the current study was primarily used to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the former Mac Baller gang members (Friese, 2014). The software is in various versions that include MAXQDA standard, MAXQDA plus, MAXQDA analytic pro, MAXQDA reader and MAX App.

MAXQDA standard gives tools for organization and analysis of qualitative information. The data includes audio, text, videos, images and bibliographical files, survey information, tweets and transits from focus groups (Friese, 2014). The data is analyzed in a four-screen window with the assistance of codes and memos. MAXQDA visualization functions and exports tools allow for the presentation of the data. MAXQDA standard comprises a few quantitative tools for analysis. MAXQDA Plus is an extension of the MAXQDA standard version and comprise of MAXDictio module. MAXDictio is applied in the creation of dictionaries and searching and filtration of text files. The version also enables vocabulary and word frequency analysis to help in the qualitative results.

MAXQDA analytic pro is the most advanced version of MAXQDA (Friese, 2014). In addition to the MAXDictio dictionary, it has a compressive module for statistical analysis of the qualitative data. The statistical module gives tools to enable the statistical analysis of the data or import data from other locations like excel or SPSS. MAXQDA reader enables users to search and read MAXQDA projects without having a license (Friese, 2014). MAXApp is a free mobile application that has the main functions of MAXQDA. It allows users to create and code data and notes in the field. It also allows the export of the data into a computer and MAXQDA project.

Ethical Consideration

Ethics enables the study to know the variation between unacceptable and acceptable habits. Ethical considerations are important in research because they prevent falsifying or fabrication of data. Ethics help to promote the pursuit of knowledge and

truth, which are the main aim of the research (Roberts, 2015). Ethical behavior is also crucial for collaboration since it encourages an environment of accountability, mutual respect, and truth. It is crucial in considering factors associated with co-authorship, data sharing, confidentiality, copyright, and various issues. The researchers are needed to adhere to the standards to get support from the public.

The first ethical consideration in the current study was the use of human subjects. The main study elements of the current study were people (Armstrong, Langlois, Laparidou, Dixon, Appleton, Bath and Siriwardena, 2017). Ethical behavior requires that the safety of the human subjects is ensured and human's right is not violated during the research. In the current study, all the interviews were conducted with the presence of an officer. The officer ensured that the safety and the human rights of the respondents were considered in the study. The current study used the Institutional Review Board (IRB) that gives guidelines on the use of human subjects. The use of the board helps to protect the researcher against any legal action.

The second ethical consideration in the current study was about informed consent. The researcher informed the respondents about the purpose of the study (Armstrong, Langlois, Laparidou, Dixon, Appleton, Bath and Siriwardena, 2017). The respondents were also told how the data they gave how to be used. The interviewer asked them to give consent for their data to be used in the study. The current study only interviewer those respondents who gave consent for their data to be used in the study. The third ethical consideration was about voluntary participation. The interviewer did not threaten or gave

any incentives to the subject to participate. Participation in the study was purely voluntary.

The fourth ethical consideration in the current study was the confidentiality of the data. The data for the study was obtained from criminals; also, it was very sensitive and private (Roberts, 2015). The data remained confidential and was not shared by any third party. The data obtained in the study was used only for research purpose that it was intended. The fifth ethical consideration in the current study was honest (Roberts, 2015). The study strives to provide honest findings and recommendation. To achieve the objective of honest it honestly reported the data, results, procedures, and methods. The information was not fabricated, falsified or misrepresented the data.

The sixth ethical consideration was objectivity (Roberts, 2015). The study strives to avoid interview bias or data analysis, interpretation and peer review (Armstrong, Langlois, Laparidou, Dixon, Appleton, Bath and Siriwardena, 2017). The researcher did not have any personal or financial interests that could have influenced the study. The last ethical consideration in the current study was integrity during the study. The promises and agreements made with the respondents or any other party during the study were kept. Also, the entire research did not obtain any information or permission using falsified methods

Limitations of the Study

The use of interview method of data collection has a limitation on the scope of the respondents (Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). It is because the study observed only a small proportion of the target population. The interview method limited the study

by reducing the scope of the research. It is because the study only observed the former Mac Baller gang members who had already been convicted. The finding of the current study cannot be generalized for the population of former Mac Baller gang members. It is because the study only relates to the convicted former Mac Baller gang members.

The interview method is also subject to selection bias of the respondents (Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). The selection bias limited the study because the observation was not well distributed in the population. The findings may have bias associated with the selection of the respondents. The other limitation of the current study relates to the use of the qualitative method of data analysis. Some of the element of the study could have been studied well using quantitative or mixed-method research. The use of the qualitative method of research limited the findings of the current study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of family hierarchy on gang membership among the youth who were former Mac Baller gang members. The number of people joining criminal gangs is increasing across all metropolitan areas in the United States (Pyrooz & Sweeten, 2015); causing concerns among policymakers and administrators. Two research question guided this study and the subsequent collection of the qualitative data:

RQ1: What are the family characteristics of Mac Baller gang members?

RQ2: What type of relationship exists between Mac Baller gang members and their immediate family?

Analyzing these two questions gave an idea of how family hierarchies impact gang membership among the youth in society. This study involved ex-members of Mac Baller gang who were Afro-American males from low-income families. In the US, a significantly large proportion (though not necessarily the majority) of such families struggle to raise their children due to parents' inadequate income and/or the children's lack of jobs and their criminal behaviors. I conducted seven face-face interviews with these participants. This chapter presents the results associated with descriptive statistics to understand sub-code statistics as well as qualitative statistics to identify themes linked to the two research questions.

Descriptive Statistics

This section presents descriptive statistics on subcodes/subthemes associated with the key themes of family characteristics and family interaction-based relationships. Table 1 indicates all subcodes identified from the seven interviews while Table 2 highlights the subcodes appearing most in each of the seven interviews. Additionally, Table 3 shows the subcode with the highest number of coded segments across the seven interviews. In regard to the family relationship theme, I also identified different subcodes, and their descriptive statistics are highlighted in Table 4 to Table 9. Table 4 shows all subcodes associated with the family relationship theme while Table 5 highlights the count of the most frequent subcode in the seven interviews. Additionally, Table 6 indicates the subcode with the highest number of coded segments to the least. Table 7 shows the number of interviews in which the subcodes associated with family relationships appeared. Table 8 highlights subcodes associated with both family relationships and family characteristics in order of the highest number of coded segments to the lowest. Lastly, Table 9 shows the subcodes in both cases that had the most appearances in the seven interviews.

Family Characteristics

Table 1

Family Characteristics

	Documents	Percentage	Percentage (valid)
Birth location	7	100.00	100.00
Nature of parents	7	100.00	100.00
Nature of siblings	7	100.00	100.00
Moral support	7	100.00	100.00
Size of family	7	100.00	100.00
Family financial support	4	57.14	57.14
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	7	100.00	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00	-
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	7	100.00	-

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of characteristics of the ex-gang members' families based on the number of all subcodes identified after analyzing the data using the MAXQDA software. As shown, the birth location subcode was identified in all the seven documents representing the seven interviews (100%). Similarly, the subcodes, nature of parents, nature of siblings, moral support, and size of family all were identified in the seven documents (100%). However, the subcode family financial support was only located in four of the documents (57.14%). It is also clear from Table 1 that all documents had codes that I identified. I analyzed all the seven documents (100%).

Table 2

Family Characteristics

	Documents	Percentage	Percentage (valid)
Nature of parents	4	57.14	57.14
Nature of siblings	3	42.86	42.86
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	7	100.0	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00	-
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	7	100.0	-

Table 2 indicates the percentage distribution of family characteristics based on the number of the most frequent subcodes across the seven documents. One hundred percent of the documents were analyzed to identify the most frequent subcode. Table 2 shows that all seven documents (100%) had the identified codes. Among the subcodes, the most frequent one across four of the seven documents was the nature of parents with a 57.14% occurrence. Also, the nature of siblings had the highest count in three of the documents having an occurrence of 42.86%.

Table 3

Family Characteristics

	Segments	Percentage
Nature of parents	18	28.13
Moral support	14	21.88
Nature of siblings	13	20.31
Size of family	8	12.50
Birth location	7	10.94
Family financial support	4	6.25
TOTAL	64	100.00

Table 3 shows the percentage distribution of the subcodes associated with family characteristics based on the number of coded segments. In total, 64 segments (100%) were identified from the analysis. In these segments, the nature of parents subcode had 18 segments (28.1%), the moral support subcode had 14 (21.9%); and the nature of sibling subcode had 13 segments (20.1%). Additionally, the size of the family subcode had 8 segments (20.3%), the birth location subcode had 7 segments (10.9%) and the family financial support subcode had 4 segments (6.3%).

Relationship with Family Members

This section presents the distribution of types of ex-gang members' relationships with family members based on the count of all subcodes identified.

Table 4

Relationship with Family Members

	Documents	Percentage	Percentage (valid)
Empathy-based relationship	7	100.00	100.00
Conflict -based relationship	7	100.00	100.00
Indifference-based relationship	6	85.71	85.71
Defensiveness-based relationship	5	71.43	71.43
Compromise-based relationship	5	71.43	71.43
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	7	100.00	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00	-
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	7	100.00	-

As indicated in Table 4, all the seven document interviews (100%) were analyzed for themes associated with the relationship between the ex-gang members and their family members. I identified codes across all documents (100%). I identified the empathy-based relationship and the conflict-based relationship subcodes in all seven documents (100%). I identified the indifference-based relationship subcode in six documents (85.71%), while I identified the defensiveness-based relationship and compromise-based relationship subcodes in five documents (71.43%) respectively.

Table 5

Relationship with Family Members

	Documents	Percentage	Percentage (valid)
Conflict -based relationship	3	42.86	42.86
Indifference-based relationship	1	14.29	14.29
Empathy-based Relationship	1	14.29	14.29
Compromise-based relationship	1	14.29	14.29
Defensiveness-based relationship	1	14.29	14.29
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	7	100.0	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00	-
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	7	100.0	-

Table 5 highlights the distribution of the type of relationships associated with family interactions between the ex-gang members and their family members based on the count of the most frequent subcode only. All seven documents were analyzed to

determine the subcode with the most frequent count. As illustrated in Table 5, conflict-based relationships had the highest count in three documents (42.9%) while indifference-based relationship, empathy-based relationship, defensiveness-based relationship, and the compromise-based relationship had the highest count in only one document each (14.3%).

Table 6

Family Characteristics

	Segments	Percentage
Conflict -based relationship	19	28.36
Empathy-based relationship	17	25.37
Indifference-based relationship	14	20.90
Compromise-based relationship	11	16.42
Defensiveness-based relationship	6	8.96
TOTAL	67	100.00

Table 6 shows the distributions of familial interaction relationships between ex-gang members and their family members based on the number of coded segments. In total, I identified 67 segments from the seven documents (100%). The conflict-based relationship subcode had the highest number of coded segments at 19 (28.36%) followed by empathy-based relationship subcode with 17 (25.37%), indifference-based relationship with 14 (20.90%), compromise-based relationship with 11 (16.42%), and defensiveness-based relationship with 6 (8.96%).

Code Frequencies

This section presents results after examining both family characteristics subcodes and subcodes related to ex-gang member relationship with immediate family members. Particularly, the section shows the subcode with a higher number of appearance across the seven documents and the subcode with the highest number of segments.

Table 7

Frequency of Subcodes in the Documents

	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage (valid)
Empathy-based relationship	7	100.00	100.00
Conflict -based relationship	7	100.00	100.00
Birth location	7	100.00	100.00
Nature of parents	7	100.00	100.00
Nature of siblings	7	100.00	100.00
Moral support	7	100.00	100.00
Size of family	7	100.00	100.00
Indifference-based relationship	6	85.71	85.71
Compromise-based relationship	5	71.43	71.43
Defensiveness-based relationship	5	71.43	71.43
Family Financial support	4	57.14	57.14
DOCUMENTS with code(s)	7	100.00	100.00
DOCUMENTS without code(s)	0	0.00	-
ANALYZED DOCUMENTS	7	100.00	-

Table 7 highlights sub-codes in order of the number of times they appear in the analyzed documents. As shown, all seven documents were analyzed and all the seven (100%) documents had the identified codes. Empathy-based relationship, conflict-based relationship, birth location, nature of parents, nature of siblings, moral support and size of family sub-codes had a frequency of 7 appearing in all seven documents. The indifference-based relationship sub-code was noted to have appeared across the seven documents six times (85.71%). The compromise-based relationship and defensiveness-based relationship sub-codes had a frequency of five each, implying they appeared five times (71.43%) across the seven documents. Finally, family financial support sub-code appeared across the seven documents four times (57.14%).

Table 8

Frequency of Segments in Subcodes

	Frequency	Percentage
Conflict -based relationship	19	14.50
Nature of parents	18	13.74
Empathy-based relationship	17	12.98
Indifference-based relationship	14	10.69
Moral support	14	10.69
Nature of siblings	13	9.92
Compromise-based relationship	11	8.40
Size of family	8	6.11
Birth location	7	5.34
Defensiveness-based relationship	6	4.58
Family financial support	4	3.05
TOTAL	131	100.00

As indicated in Table 8 131 segments were identified and the number of segments in each sub-code are as follows: conflict -based relationship sub-code had 19 segments

(14.5%) nature of parents had18 (13.7%) empathy-based relationship had 17 (13.0%)

indifference-based relationship had 14 (10.7%) moral support had 14 (10.7%) nature of

siblings had 13 (9.9%) compromise-based relationship had 11 (8.4%) size of family had 8

(6.1%) birth location had 7 (5.3%) defensiveness-based relationship had 6 (4.6%) and

finally, family financial support had 4 segments (3.1%).

Table 9

Code Configurations Statistics

	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage (valid)
Conflict -based relationship	18	13.95	13.95
Nature of parents	18	13.95	13.95
Empathy-based relationship	17	13.18	13.18
Moral support	14	10.85	10.85
Indifference-based relationship	13	10.08	10.08
Nature of siblings	12	9.30	9.30
Compromise-based relationship	11	8.53	8.53
Birth location	7	5.43	5.43
Size of family	7	5.43	5.43
Defensiveness-based relationship	6	4.65	4.65
Family financial support	4	3.10	3.10
Nature of siblings + size of family	1	0.78	0.78
Conflict -based relationship + indifference-based relationship	1	0.78	0.78
TOTAL (valid)	129	100.00	100.00
Missing	0	0.00	-
TOTAL	129	100.00	-

Finally, data were analyzed to identify the frequency of code configurations as

shown in Table 9. In total 129, code configurations were identified and each sub-code

had the following number of code configurations (see Table 9): conflict-based

relationship had 18 (14.0%) nature of parents had 18 (14.05%); empathy-based relationship had 17 (13.2%); moral support had 14 (10.9%); indifference-based relationship had 13 (10.1%); nature of siblings had 12 (9.3%); compromise-based relationship had 11 (8.5%); birth location had 7 (5.4%); size of family had 7 (5.4%); defensiveness-based relationship had 6 (4.7%), and family financial support had 4 code configurations (3.1%). When combining the nature of siblings and the size of family, the number of code configurations was 1 (0.8%). Additionally, when combining conflict-based relationship and indifference-based relationship, the number of code configurations was also 1 (0.8%).

Theme Interpretations

The following section presents results associated with the two research questions to give conclusions regarding the impact of family hierarchy on gang membership among the youth coming from the premise of Mac Baller gang members. The section provides answers to questions one and two respectively.

Research Question 1

RQ1: What are the family characteristics of Mac Baller gang members?

Themes associated with research question one identified from thematic analysis of the data included birth location, nature of parents and siblings, moral support, family financial support and size of the family. In interpreting these themes, the researcher explored how family characteristics which inform the family hierarchy impact whether the youth to join gangs. The names of the participants used are pseudonyms.

Size of the Family

This section explores the number of siblings each of the participants has to give discover if this number influences their joining of the member a gang. To begin with, Anthony, Ernied, Leroy, and SliceMaggie said that in their families they have three siblings while Jason and Tremaine reported having one sibling each. In their family, Phil said, "We have eight siblings."

These results indicate that joining of the gangs in the society is not dependent on the number of siblings one has members of the gang came from homes with a small number of siblings while the other came from families with many siblings. For those from homes with any number of siblings, other factors may contribute towards the youth joining a gang including peer pressure, conflicts and/or low economic status. In essence, the size of the family alone does not seem to influence the youth's decisions to join member gangs in society.

Location of Birth

This section examines the place of birth of the interview respondents and explores if it influenced the participants joining the member gang. The seven participants as noted from the interviews were born in different places with different demographics, including poor and higher-class areas. For instance, Anthony and Leroy were born in Brooklyn, one of the most populous boroughs of New York which is an urban area. It is assumed that the number of white people in this region is half the population and this has contributed to the increase in the rent prices. This may imply that small businesses are closing due to lack of customers and as such crime from locals who are nonwhite is increasing owing to

the fact that they are unable to meet their family needs. Ernied, Tremaine, SliceMaggie, and Phil said that they were born in Bronx. Particularly, SliceMaggie said, "I was born in Bronx in February, 1971."

The Bronx is one of the boroughs of New York City located at the northernmost part of the city and is the poorest of all the borough. In this regard, it is assumed that many families are unable to fend for their families triggering the youth to join criminal gangs. Jason was born in Harlem which is considered the second poorest neighborhood of Manhattan and is widely perceived to be dangerous past the 96th street. In this view, it is more likely that the youths join gangs out of peer pressure or even out of family frustrations resulting from failed efforts to meet the needs of members.

Nature of Parents

This section examines all aspects associated with parents including their family background and religious beliefs and assumptions about how they are likely to influence youth into joining member gangs. For instance, Anthony reported that his mother was the youngest of eight siblings in her family. In this regard, it is assumed that like many family members who are the youngest in their families, they tend to evade responsibility and this may affect them as adult. Based on this assumption, it implies that the mother may have failed in her responsibility of bringing up her children in the right way owing to the fact that she had no or little experience and this led Anthony to join the member gang. Anthony also said, "[M]y father was always defiant against his family."

This simply means that the father was rebellious all throughout his teenage years. The characteristics of the fathers are assumed to be inherited by the sons as time

progresses, and in this view, parents become role models. In this regard, Anthony may have inherited this habit of rebellion from the father starting at their home and since the mother was more likely to have little experience raising children, the habit progressed to be a character. As such, Anthony may have found their home uncomfortable to live in and in the process moved out to join the member gang to find the desired satisfaction missing from his relationship with his parents. Additionally, Ernied pointed out that his parents lived a life full of drug addiction and on many occasions, they were incarcerated. In support of the assumption that parents are role models of their children, Ernied may have inherited this characteristic of drug addiction from his parents and progressed to make friends with drug users in the streets leading to the joining of the member gang. Anthony may have also followed in his father's footsteps of not being religious and took the path of destruction because he reported, "[M]y father's not being religious had a huge influence on my family." Jason, Ernied, and Phil reported that none of their parents was religious, and this led to a lack of moral support. Despite Leroy acknowledging that his parents were religious, he expressed a negative sentiment saying, "My parents are Christians, our beliefs are our foundation of decision making, but it didn't always work out."

This may have made it worse for him as he lacked guidance and moral support from the parents to make the right choices associated with the rightful living right, and thus ended up in a gang. For Jason, his mother was always on drugs and his dad was always in and out of the prison system. This may have made him desperate to look for companionship in the streets hence contributing to his decision to join the member gang.

In the above instances, the bad behavior of their parents and lack of moral support could have partially contributed to the interviewees' decisions to join a gang.

Nature of Siblings

This section explores the characteristics of the siblings of the participants to make assumptions about how they may have influenced the participants into joining the member gang. For instance, Tremaine acknowledged talking with his only elder brother regularly until he joined the army. This signifies a tight bond between the two which was broken when the elder brother joined the army leaving the younger brother lonely as the parents were working both on the day and night shifts. Loneliness may have led him to look for friends in the streets who may be gang members. In the case of Tremaine, his broken bond with his brother was may have been one of the reasons he chose to join a gang.

For SliceMaggie, who said he was not close to his siblings, explained how his older sister acted like his mother (assuming she acted as a disciplinarian) making them grow apart while the younger sister was always in conflict with other siblings. Also, Phil said he had a good and close relationship with all his siblings. However, he reported, "[B]ut sometime they were bullies.". Anthony also said. "My oldest brother was the disciplinarian, my second oldest was a rebel, I was the youngest, it wasn't easy going.". Likewise, Leroy said that his sister argued more often and the arguments consistently lead to fights and unending conflicts. This certainly may have made the homes of these four participants unconducive for positive family relationships, pushing them to join the member gang seeking consolation.

On the other hand, siblings that are reserved and we can assume he was not as well quiet and reserved. In this view, he may have felt isolated from the rest of his family and possibly this led him to look for the company outside the family. In this course, the likelihood of falling into the hands of a member gang are high. Siblings can also act as role models for becoming gang members. Ernied reported, "All of my siblings lived a life of crime.". This implies that he had no option other than taking on the steps of his siblings and in the end, he may have found himself in the member gang.

Moral Support

Family hierarchy also entails family moral support to guide children to live good lives. A lack of this vital element may be one factor that triggers a life of crime among children. Considering the interview participants, some of the values and behaviors that parents teach their children are essential in making good decisions to evade crime. For example, Anthony acknowledged that his parents often reminded him to be a man of conviction but he failed to identify the values that were difficult to uphold. While growing up n his grandmother's home, Ernied stated that his grandmother used to tell him to always stay out of trouble. However, for values that were more challenging to uphold, Ernied and Jason stated individually, "To do what is right.".

Doing what is right is what the two found more challenging to uphold as they grew. However, for Jason, he found it more challenging because his mom was not there to keep reminding him to do what is right. Following what is wrong may have been the choice that Jason and Ernied made leading them to find pleasure in doing what is wrong. For Leroy, his parents remind him to love the Lord, say no to drugs, and if someone hits

you, you should hit them back. But he failed to follow this advice and abused drugs which may have contributed to his joining a gang to satisfy his drug addiction. The parents of Phil used to advise him a lot saying, "Try always to be respectful and have a good attitude towards others.". However, being respectful was hard for him and this may have triggered family conflicts that aroused his desire to join a street gang. Generally, if parents fail to offer good moral support or if children fail to heed to the moral support given by parents, they are more likely to acquire bad behaviors that could push them to join gangs in society.

Family Financial Support

Family financial support is linked to the family's economic capability to meet the needs and requirements of the members of that family. This section examines the story of the participants to make assumptions on what made them join the member gang in society. Ernied, for instance, said that his parents were unable to financially support his family, especially as they used some of their money to feed their drug habits. In this regard, it can be assumed that lack of family financial support to the children when needed may force some of them to join gangs to earn money to take care of themselves and even their neglected siblings. Leroy also said, "Mom was an entertainer, schoolteacher, Dad was addicted to drugs.". It is clear that efforts to raise money to fend for the family were not enough and that triggered Leroy's urge to look for more money and the only easier way that does not require academic credentials was joining member gangs to steal money or rob people. Therefore, the lack of enough financial resources was the genesis of joining a gang in his case.

Research Question 2

RQ2: What type of relationship exists between Mac Baller gang members and their immediate family?

Themes associated with research question two included conflict-based relationship, indifference-based relationship, compromise-based relationship, empathy-based relationship, and defensiveness-based relationship. Examining these types of interaction-based relationships, the researcher was able to make assumptions and conclusions on how they impacted the participant's decision to join a gang.

Conflict-Based Relationships

A conflict-based relationship is a family interaction-based relationship in which family members are involved in continuous arguments and conflicts. From the seven interviewees, this theme was identified and this section presents results to explore its impact on joining member gangs. To begin with, Anthony while growing up, reported being angry towards his parents and in most cases, he said that his parents used to hold him responsible for whatever happened but he remained calm by respecting them. Based on Anthony's stories, conflicts could arise at times because his parents were biased. They showed favoritism among the siblings making others feel isolated and hated. On the other hand, Ernied argued conflict could arise if his parents use drugs causing them to leave the home for the streets where they believe they could find peace of mind Ernied said, "My mom died from drugs and dad was locked up most of the time." This implied there was no peace of mind in the home causing Ernied to look for an alternative home in the street where presumably he joined the member gang. Jason also acknowledged that favoritism

in the home brought endless conflict among his siblings leading to several to leave. Particularly, he said that his brother was obedient and good in school while he was considered a rebel. This may have triggered a sense of unworthiness in the family causing him to look for an alternative comfort from the street gangs.

According to Leroy, "Mom was always working, dad was running the streets." This signifies a conflicting family relationship and most cases no one was there for the children to give them moral or even financial support leaving them vulnerable to member gang recruitment. Tremaine reported that his conflict with his dad grew stronger each day and eventually he was thrown out of his house and had to seek shelter in the streets and may have joined a gang to get the support he needed.

Indifference-Based Relationship

This is the kind of family interaction relationship in which parents or siblings show a lack of concern or sympathy to some or the entire family. This theme highlights how such scenarios happen and if they are likely to influence participants joining a gang. According to Jason members showing a lack of concern caused him and his brother to keep their issues to themselves. Ernie also explained that his parents failed to talk about their relationships with the children as a sign of lack of concern. Regarding how the family's lack of concern contributed to their criminal activities, Jason said, "Not providing any time for me always focusing on work." Anthony said, "Sometimes by not supporting all my dreams, even if they were farfetched.".

This is a form of lack of concern and it implies that the family starting with the parents and the siblings failed to offer him enough time to interact together sharing their

woes and rectifying their conduct. Lack of concern may also be for self, that is,

individuals may never be concerned about their appropriate development or the family

consequences that will follow their choices but rather make decisions blindly or

ignorantly. Relative to how behaviors affect family relationships, Phil argued, "Being

around others and picking up their bad habits." Picking these bad habits shows limited

concern for positive self-development and increased family conflicts that trigger

decisions to leave home for the streets where the probability of joining member gangs is

relatively high.

Compromise-Based Relationship

Compromise-based relations in this research denotes interaction-based

relationships in which individuals accept values other than those that are desirable. This

section examines instances in which such kind of relationship was exhibited and how it

may have contributed to the joining of the member gangs by participants. While

elaborating how his behavior had affected the family relationship Ernied pointed out that

at one point he was the only person not locked up, implying he stood on good moral

standards, however, he compromised his standards by spending time in streets with

people with bad moral behaviors. This may have largely contributed to his decision to

join the member gang. Another example of a person who compromised his standards is

Leroy. Initially, he was taught moral values when growing as a child and to seek help

when in need to sustain him in keeping his focus in life. Additionally, Phil compromised

family values by engaging in destructive behavior regardless of the moral support from

his parents to have good attitudes and respect for self and others. However, he and Phil

acknowledged they made bad choices in life. Leroy said, "I wish I had made different choices in those days to prevent mom and sisters the stress . . . of wondering will I be killed tonight." Phil said, "I have become a better person and changed my life around."

On the other hand, compromise-based relations were highlighted in Phil's response to the question of seeking an explanation about the role of parents and relatives despite knowing his criminal history. Particularly, Phil said, "They are hard on me, but always there for me." Logically, to him, this may imply that the members of his family and other relatives support his behavior because they are always there for him when challenges like arrests may occur. This means a compromised family interaction relationship in which the family accepts standards lower than the desired, only to have one of their family members satisfied. This family and relative attitude result in the continued criminal activities because if anything bad happens, his family will come in his rescue.

Defensiveness-Based Relationships

Defensiveness-based relationship in this research represents interactions to avoid criticism or blame. To begin with, SliceMaggie pointed out that his mother used to talk of her uncle who used heroin. In this regard, SliceMaggie may have used this as a scapegoat when being asked why he was in a gang. The blame was transferred to the uncle who may not be alive to justify his actions. In such scenarios, it becomes difficult to convince children that if they get to know the bad habits and characteristics of their parents or close relatives and they will always use them for defense mechanisms when involved in similar

messes. When asked of the behaviors that affected their family relationships, Jason

mentioned, "I choose to follow my friends more."

In this regard, when asked why he was engaging himself with criminal activities

affecting family stability, he placed the blamed on his friends. Leroy also acknowledged

that lack of parental support and increased family conflicts may have made him behave in

a manner that was not welcome in society. He blamed his being in a gang on the nature of

the relationship between his parents who were never together. Particularly, Leroy said,

"Mom was considered single even though she was married, Dad was never really there"

This implies that any case the criminal behavior of Leroy was caused by his parents who

showed no concern for him as aforementioned in this chapter. Finally, Anthony also

acknowledged a defiant behavior among his siblings who often would argue. He

specifically said,

"They were very defiant, they would sit down and talk in an open forum." Such

behavior could have triggered family conflicts that may have contributed to his joining a

gang. To avoid criticism, he often starts with a statement when answering whoever is

asking saying, "I feel proud of myself, just understand that things could only get better

with hard work." This signifies that whatever he used to do in the streets whether stealing

or robbing people was hard work and that he was optimistic it would work out someday.

Empathy-Based Relationships

In this research, an empathy-based relationship is regarded as family interactions

supporting concern for others in society in this research. For instance, Leroy reported that

every night they prayed together as a family. Additionally, Ernied argued that their

parents never showed favoritism but rather offered equal care. His dad was always concerned with him and wanted the best for him. Specifically, he stated, "Dad wanted me to become better than him."

Showing a lot of concern may impact the behavior of children negatively. According to Anthony, as a family, they would always go out to movies together. Also, despite knowing his criminal history they stayed positive with regards to the energy in the room. Leroy also pointed out that despite being a criminal the family and relatives never abandoned him but rather offered him words of encouragement and love. For SliceMaggie, it was fun growing up because he said, "Growing up I had a good relationship with my mother." This simply means the mother showed concern and empathy for the son at all the times for her to say it was a good relationship. The mother even never anticipated that the relationship would end after realizing he had been recruited to a gang but tried to get her back on the right track by showing her more empathy. Similarly, Tremaine reported, "My dad reminds me of the effects of not listening to your parents, mom shows love."

However, if family members show a lot of concern and love for a member, he/she may feel secure and mostly continue with their undesired criminal behaviors. On the other hand, showing minimal concern for your children may create a negative feeling of isolation. For instance, Jason said that his mom tried when she could to provide guidance, however, this was possible when she found the time. From this result, we can assume that the mother failed to commit herself in showing concern for the son who ended up seeking sympathy from the streets by joining the member gang.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of family hierarchy on gang membership among the youth coming from the premise of Mac Baller gang members. Two research questions, what are the family characteristics of Mac Baller gang members? and what type of relationship exists between Mac Baller gang members and their immediate family? were answered to accomplish the purpose of the study. The results obtained indicated that family characteristics including nature of parents and siblings, moral and financial support and location of birth contributed towards the joining of member gangs by youth. Size of the family as indicated did not contribute towards the joining of member gangs by youths independently. Finally, relationship type with family members including conflict, indifference, empathy, defensiveness, and compromise-based interactions relationship types contribute toward the joining of member gangs by youth in society.

Chapter 5: Discussions

Overview

In this study I examined the impact of family hierarchy on gang membership among youth who were formerly Mac Baller gang members. Specifically, the study assessed the family characteristics of Mac Baller gang members and the type of relationship that exists between Mac Baller gang members and their immediate family. The objective was achieved through interpretation of the analysis results in relation to the available literature. In this chapter I describe the motivating factors for teenagers to join criminal gangs and the role played by the family hierarchy on gang membership in the society. The results help fill the research gap and promote understanding of the influences on youths to join criminal gangs.

Family Characteristics

The study highlighted six themes that were associated with the research question about the family characteristics of Mac Baller gang members. The themes included birth location, nature of parents, the nature of siblings, moral support, family financial support, and size of the family. Varying interpretations are presented regarding how the different family characteristics of the family hierarchy impacted the youth to join gangs. The descriptive statistics showed that the family characteristics of gang members varied significantly. The findings supported those of previous research. According to Alleyne, Wood, Mozova, and James, (2016), the demographic characteristics of gang members vary greatly, reflecting the different makeup of the youth populations. The major

demographic factors (variables) highlighted by previous researchers included race, gender, and age. The results for the current study are discussed in subsections of this chapter and related to the previous literature.

The findings support of the social disorganization theory as described in the literature review. Short and Hughes (2016) pointed out that the early scholars in Chicago evolved the concept of the criminal enterprise from the aspect of disorganization of the typical social order Resulting in a criminal reorganization of the affected parties into a clique of individuals who break the law. Short and Hughes (2016) pointed out that what other scholars call disorganization is the creation of a social order that has adapted to the chaos and unreliability of the current social order.

Size of the Family

In this study I explored the size of the family through the number of siblings a respondent had. Previous researchers have used the number of siblings as a measure of family size (Demuth & Brown, 2004; Hoffmann, 2006; Nam, 2004). However, Whelpton, Campbell, and Patterson (2015) argued that the size of the family unit is dependent on criteria used for establishing membership. A widespread application of the term family size refers to females alone and the number of their children, and that is what the current study used. Conversely, Rainwater (2017) argued that when the measurement is extended to a population, it would have a different value, especially when a sample survey is conducted. The reason given was that women with more children will have a high likelihood of their families being chosen for the study if the researcher targets children and asks them the number of siblings. In such cases, the mean family size will

misleadingly be higher than the actual value. Nonetheless, in the context of the current study, the number of siblings was used to measure the family size.

The finding of the study with regards to the family size was that the ex-gang members came from families of varying sizes. The observed values were 3, 1, and 8; with 3 being the mode value. It was evident that some of the members of the gang came from homes with a small number of siblings while the other came from families with many siblings. If this variation is anything to go by, then it may indicate that the joining of gangs may not necessarily been influenced by family size (as measured by the number of siblings in the family of the person joining a gang) the gang member has. However, these findings are the exception in that the commonest view is that family size is a critical factor in determining gang membership. For instance, Pyrooz, and Sweeten (2015) observed that family size (as distinct from the family structure) has a significant impact on the likelihood of joining the gangs.

For those from homes with a small number of siblings, other factors may contribute towards the youth joining the gang, and this may include peer pressure, conflicts, and low economic status. According to Decker et al. (2013), peer group pressure has, over the years, been a major problem for teenagers who end up joining criminal gangs. The pressure is caused by the requirement by their peers and the desire to fit into particular groups. Young people who associate themselves with criminal gangs often feel they gained prestige. However, research has shown that not all peer group pressures have a negative influence. Instead, others may lead towards positivity like it is in academic and athletic achievements (Lachman, Roman & Cahill, 2012; O'Brien,

Daffern, Chu, & Thomas, 2013). Also, low economic status was a significant cause of gang involvement among youths that was noted in the previous literature. Davies and Fagan (2012) observed that gang involvement was an avenue to gain respect and money. Many youth were found to have joined the criminal gangs in America following the belief that their survival would depend greatly on the earnings.

Conflicts were viewed as another reason why youth joined criminal gangs. Buchanan, Simonsen, & Krohn, (2019) argued that the members had feared for their safety and believed that joining the gangs would give them protection. Surprisingly, a significant body of researchers observed that some youths joined the gangs for fun. This contradicts a common public perception that youth are coerced into joining criminal gangs. Youth from families with a large number of siblings expressed similar factors motivating them to join gangs. In addition, they experienced a greater possibility of being influenced by siblings into joining gangs Youth from families with a large number of siblings also experienced peer pressure, conflicts, and low economic status. The findings indicated that the size of the family alone does not influence youth to join gangs.

Other authors (especially Smith, Gomez, Auyong, & Ferguson, 2019; Young, Fitzgibbon & Silverstone, 2014; Young, Fitzgibbon & Silverstone, 2018) claimed that the link between family structure, with size included, and the likelihood of joining criminal gangs is inconclusive, and they point to other influential factors. Smith, Gomez Auyong, and Ferguson (2019) argued that there is conclusive evidence of a link between family structure, with family size included, and the likelihood of joining criminal gangs. However, the neighborhood characteristics were found to be the most influential factors.

Smith, Gomez, Auyong and Ferguson (2019), Young, Fitzgibbon and Silverstone (2014).

And Young, Fitzgibbon and Silverstone (2018) observed that children living in

impoverished ethnic neighborhoods and high rates of male unemployment were highly

likely to experience behavior problems, which would lead them to gangs. The effect was

experienced in all families irrespective of the structure or size of the family. Conversely,

other studies (notably Giuliano & Alesina, 2007; Hoffmann, 2006) argued that when

family size is held constant, children growing up in socially disorganized communities

have a greater likelihood of joining the gangs than those from socially organized

communities even if these children are from two-parent homes. This is because the

pressures of parenting tend to be magnified by poverty and inequality (Hoffmann, 2006).

Location of Birth

The study assessed the location of birth and included how it might have

influenced the participation in criminal gang activities. The findings of the study were

that the locations varied significantly. The seven participants were born in different

places, some were from poor areas and others from high-income areas. The study

findings indicated that different locations of birth had varying factors that may have

influenced youth to join gangs and no location was exceptional.

Some youth came from high-income areas characterized by high rent prices and

the closing of small businesses due to lack of customers. As a result, some people who

were not as wealthy as the locals may have engaged in criminal activities with the aim of

meeting their family needs.

Those youth born in poor areas like the Bronx in New York may have had families that failed to meet their basic needs or been exposed to negative peer pressure. A study that aimed at identification and intervention of the youths at risk of joining gangs noted that youth who grow up in poor, marginalized urban areas were more likely than others to join gangs (Bjerregaard, 2010). According to Howell and Egley Jr (2005), the location of birth and area in which a person is brought up has a direct influence on joining a gang. The most common age for joining a gang in America was identified as 13 to 15 years old, with boys having a higher likelihood than girls to join the gangs (Howell & Egley Jr, 2005). Therefore, many gang members join the gangs while still within their birth locations; and it is only in rare cases that migration among children below 15 years takes place. This does not mean that young cannot join gangs. To the contrary, children as young as 5 years and below were found to face significant risk factors, including hypervigilance to threat, cognitive impairments, insecurity, and early aggressive behaviors (Davies & Fagan, 2012).

Nature of the Parents

The present study examined several aspects associated with parenting, including the family background, religion. The study observed that children of parents who were the youngest in their own families of origin, as was the case with Anthony's parents, had a higher likelihood of joining the gangs. This observation could be explained in different ways; including the possibility that last born children in most American families tend to be given more attention and to be treated more favorably by their parents and/or guardians than the rest of the children. Such favorable treatment often includes not being

punished for mistakes; and this encourages the children to engage in unruly behavior that persists even in adulthood (Demuth & Brown, 2004). In Anthony's case, his mother may have had little or no experience with child-rearing, and this led Anthony to join the gang.

Also, rebellious parents would also increase the chances of their children being rebellious, leading them into joining gangs. The study revealed that the characters of the fathers could be assumed to be inherited by the sons as time progresses, and in this view, parents become role models. In this regard, sons may pick the habit of rebellion from their fathers, and in case this is not countered by the mother, the habit may progress to be a character. Also, the children may find their homes uncomfortable to live in and in the process moved out to join the member gang to find the desired satisfaction.

Further, the analysis showed that parents who were addicted to drugs increased their children's likelihood of being involved in gang activities. This was pointed out in the case of Ernied, who claimed that their parents lived a life full of drug addiction, and on many occasions, they were incarcerated. The Ernied case was in full support of the assumption that parents are role models of their children. The researcher believed that Ernied might have picked up this character of drug addiction from parents and progressed to make friends with drug users in the streets, leading to the joining of the member gang. Similarly, the researcher believed that Anthony might have also followed in his father's footsteps of not being religious and took the path of destruction.

Recommendations were provided to the parents to have education basics on how to spot the signs of gang association, as well as how to work with their children to make them see gangs as less glamorous. According to the study, parents should warn their

children about the dangers of joining the gangs. The recommendation was build based on finding by Pyrooz, and Sweeten (2015), that joining gangs ruined the lives of the youths. In addition, the gangs led the youths to criminal records and ultimately taking them to prison. Most importantly, the study required that parents recognize the signs that their children are involved in a gang and seek the appropriate intervention.

The reaction of parents towards gang problem would have either a negative or positive influence on the children decisions to either quit or stay in the gang. Some parents have sufficient knowledge on how to help their children stay out of trouble. Such parents have information that is balanced with helpful and hopeful strategies that they use to turn their children away from gangs. To the contrary, some parents often tend to react strongly to the gang issues pushing their children more into the gang lives in search of protection.

Nature of the Siblings

The study assessed the characteristics of the siblings of the participants with the aim of making assumptions on how they could have influenced the participants into joining the member gang. The study, through the Tremaine case, recognized the role of the siblings bond in preventing decisions to join the gang. It was evident from the information provided that when Tremaine used to talk to his elder brother, all was well. However, upon joining the army, things changed since the bond was broken. Loneliness resulting from the broken bond may have triggered the feelings of looking for friends in the streets who may be gang members. The closeness of siblings is essential to ensure they remain united and out of danger of joining gangs.

Conversely, when the siblings control children so much, they push them into joining the gang for protection and comfort. This was highlighted in the case of Slice Maggie, who claimed that their older sister acted like their mother (assuming acting as a disciplinarian) making them grow apart while the younger sister was always in conflict with other siblings. Also, Phil said he had a good and close relationship with all his siblings. However, he reported that there were numerous cases of bullying. Similarly, Anthony was being disciplined by his oldest brother, while the other was a rebel. Some siblings may introduce regular fights within the homes, like the case of Leroy who claimed that his sister argued more often and the arguments in most cases lead to fights and unending conflicts. When the nature of the siblings is not friendly, the home environment becomes un-conducive for positive family relationship pushing youths into joining the member gang to seek for consolation.

Evidence was presented by Cepeda, Valdez, and Nowotny, (2016), showing that some youths who grow up in families where parents, siblings or relatives were active gang members or where joining the gang were part of family tradition, had a higher likelihood of being gang members in future.

Moral Support

The study observed that a lack of moral support was a significant factor that led youths to join criminal gangs. The study, through the cases of Jason, Ernied, and Phil, showed that parents with no religious background, provided less moral support to their children, making them engage in criminal gang activities. Also, Leroy acknowledged that his parents were religious but who believed they were the foundation of decision making,

a position which didn't always work out. This may have made it worse for Leroy as he lacked guidance and moral support from the parents to make the right choice associated with rightful living thus ending in the member gang. For Jason, the mom was always on drugs, and the dad was always in and out of the prison system. This may have made him desperate to look for a company in the streets hence contributing to his decision to join the member gang. Generally, it is clear from this passage that parents with bad behaviors and failing to offer appropriate moral support to children are more likely to influence their children into joining member gangs in society.

The study observed that families should help in dealing with their children who are at the risk of joining criminal gangs. Training in parental skills would enable parents and other experienced family members to have knowledge of how to help their children stay out of trouble. Most schools, law enforcement, and community-based organizations focusing on minimizing of the severity of the criminal gangs unanimously agreed that educating parents about gangs and was of ensuring they offer sufficient moral support to their children is critical and very necessary for curbing the growth of gangs.

Family Financial Support

The study linked the family financial support to the family's economic capability to meet the needs and requirements of the members of that family. The same approach has been used by many researchers in the past, who used the term family economy to describe the family as an economic unit. A financial capability was used to mean the knowledge of how to best manage the money, the willingness to put that knowledge into

practice, and the means to do so. Hence, financial capability in a family assessed financial inclusion.

The study observed that children from families with poor financial background were more likely to join criminal gangs. The case of Ernied was a good example since what the parents did for a living was not enough to meet the family needs. Particularly, the parents were using part of the money to buy drugs. In this regard, the researcher assumed that lack of family financial support to the children, when needed, might force some of them to join gangs aimed at looking for money to take care of themselves and even their neglected siblings. Similarly, Leroy was not well supported financially since the mother was an entertainer, school teacher, while the farther was addicted to drugs. It was clear, from the information obtained that efforts to raise money to fend for the family were not enough and that triggered Leroy's urge to look for more money and the only easier way that does not require academic credentials is joining member gangs to steal money or rob people. Therefore, the lack of enough financial resources is the genesis of joining member gangs.

The findings were in agreement with what was presented by the available literature. In previous research, it was argued that young people need support, especially in their puberty years. When the support, especially financial support, is not sufficient, these youths are at risk of joining criminal gangs. It was observed that when both parents were toiling in the informal sector and leaving their children to fend for themselves, the children were more likely to join gangs. A study by Cooper, (n.d.), termed families with many problems as troubled families and claimed that such families acted as precursors

for further trouble, including children engagement in criminal activities. Such troubles need to be curbed through interventions such as parenting order and family intervention projects. The interventions have been designed to intensively offer support to the most chaotic families which cause the most severe harm to society. Both initiatives have focused on locating the families, particularly female single-headed families, at the center of youth criminality, and continue the belief of supporting underclass.

In a general term, the findings of the study present family dynamics which need to be placed within their social-economic contexts. The dynamics offer an understanding of the true nature of the problems that beset parents and children. Also, the troubles in the homes were strongly associated with the nature of the homestead in the current and previous research. One of the previous studies observed that the rate at which children from non-traditional homes joined the criminal gangs was 10-15% higher that of children from traditional families. Similarly, the link between broken families and the likelihood of joining criminal gangs by the children was highly pronounced.

Relationship Between Ex-Gang Members and Family Members

The study made important assertions based on the assessed relationships. Themes associated with a research question about the relationship between the Mac Baller gang members and their immediate family included conflict-based relationship, indifference-based relationship, compromise-based relationship, empathy-based relationship, and defensiveness-based relationship. In this section, a discussion of the assumption and conclusions made from the interaction-based relationships was made.

Conflict-Based Relationship

First, the conflict-based relationship was observed as a family interaction-based relationship in which family members are involved in continuous arguments and conflicts. In all the interviews conducted by the researcher, the theme of the conflict-based relationship was identified. Through the case of Anthony, the study revealed that a child could be angry at the parents when conflict arose because of their biasedness. The worst scenario happens when parents show favoritism among the siblings making others feel isolated and hated as depicted by the Jason and Anthony cases. Some parents have a tendency of considering some children rebels and others good, making the ones termed as rebels to look for alternative comfort from the street gangs. Also, as described by the case of Ernied, parents who engage in drugs can have a high likelihood of arising conflicts. Such conflicts can be so dangerous while others may be fatal. Hence, the children lack the peace of mind in the home, making them look for an alternative home in the street where presumably he joined the member gang. Whenever there is a conflicting family relationship, no one is there for the children to give them moral and even financial support leaving them vulnerable to member gang recruitment.

Indifference-Based Relationship

The study identified the indifference-based relationship as a kind of family interaction relationship in which parents or siblings show a lack of concern or sympathy to some or the entire family. Whenever siblings or parents show a lack of concern, like in the case of Jason, Ernie, and Anthony, the situation contributes to the joining of criminal gangs. The relationship is strengthened by the failure by the families to offer children

enough time to interact together with giving them chances to share their woes and rectifying their conduct. The argument was supported by numerous authors in the previous research.

In different setups, the parental-youth relationship is largely determined by numerous factors. First, Akiyama (2003) highlighted that parental-youth relationship often takes the shape of parental monitoring where parents deliberately tend to control who their children are with and where they spend their free time. Different researchers claimed that high levels of parental-youth relationships are associated with a delay in sexual debut and low involvement in sexually risk acts. In research by Ayling (2011) about Gang change and evolutionary theory, age, and sex of the adolescent was found to influence the nature of the parental –youth relationship. A general observation was made that parents adjust their relationships as adolescents get older, allowing for more independent decision-making opportunities. Research on how children related to their parents showed that older adolescents reported lower parental-youth relationships than their younger counterparts.

Compromise-Based Relationship

The study defined a compromised-based relationship as an interaction-based relationship in which individuals accept values other than desired. The analysis of this theme aimed at examining instances in which such kind of relationship was exhibited and how it may have contributed to the joining of the member gang by participants. The study argued that one could compromise his/her standards by spending people with the wrong people. Once the standards are compromised, a child may end up joining the gangs. Such

cases were evident in the Ernied and Lorey cases where they compromised their standards by spending time with people who had bad moral behaviors. The study noted that some children can still compromise family values by taking the path of life to destruction regardless of the moral support from the parents to have good attitudes and respect for self and others. Surprisingly, many of the youths are aware that they made bad choices in life like it was the case of Leroy and Phil.

The results of the study supported the social learning theory as described by the Ajers and Borg (2004) in the literature review. The theory explains that individuals attain specific attitudes and behaviors through social learning. Similarly, Bradshaw (2011) supported the argument relating the strength as well as the extent of the associations between peer relationship factors and deviance in his literature. Additionally, according to Akers (2011), "virtually every study that includes a peer association variable finds it to be significantly and strongly related to delinquency, alcohol and drug use, abuse, crime, and other forms of deviant behavior" (p.116). Additionally, the theory explains that individuals can learn new things from others who do them as a result of social connectedness (Bradshaw, 2011).

Defensiveness-Based Relationship

The study defined a defensive-based relationship as interactions made to avoid criticism or blame. According to the study, children may defend themselves using their older siblings or relatives' actions. As described in the case of SliceMaggie, when a family member is engaged in drugs, children are tempted to use that family member as a scapegoat whenever asked why they engaged themselves with the gang members. The

blame is usually transferred to that member of the family who may not even be alive to justify the actions. In such scenarios, it becomes difficult to convince children if they get to know the bad habits and characters of their parents or close relatives and they will always use them for defense mechanisms when involved in similar messes. Also, according to Anthony's case, the fact that the street life is hard can be used to signify that whatever the youths do in the streets, whether stealing or robbing people, was hard work and that he was optimistic it would work out someday.

Empathy-Based Relationship

The study defined the empathy-based relationship as family interactions supporting concern for others in society in this research. Families with gathering such as prayer meetings, neutrality among children, and which showed concerns towards their children shaped the children in the right direction. However, as observed in the case of Ernied and Anthony, showing a lot of concern may impact the behavior of children negatively.

These assertions and claims were in line with the observed effects of the siblings and parent's nature on the likelihood of joining the gangs. Among the selected respondents, there was evidence of rewards to the behavior and reinforcement of repeated episodes of the action facilitates its continuity. Also, punishments of some actions by the parents or older brothers and sisters as seen in the case of Anthony, made the perpetrator to be discouraged from repeating it, and hence it decreases.

The empathy-based relationship was seen as a factor that made children get more to criminal acts. This is because, despite the children being criminals, some parents still

stay positive with regards to the energy in the room while the family and relatives fail to abandon them but rather offered them words of encouragement and love.

Evidence provided from the analysis showed that the mother showed more concerns and love for their children than fathers. Hence, children by single mother parents were more likely to suffer from an empathy-based relationship than those with two parents or with single father parents.

Conclusions

The discussion chapter aimed at describing the importance of the values in a family. The chapter attempted to interpret the research findings regarding the family hierarchy, the role of this hierarchy in the creation and sustenance of relationships in the family, and the effect it has on gang membership among youths. The chapter played a critical role in achieving the objective of the entire paper, which was to illustrate how the family hierarchy impacted the gang membership among youth. The discussion of the study findings in relation to the information revealed in the literature review provided a link between the research findings and the aim of leading to justifiable conclusions. Through the discussion chapter, the researcher was able to describe the family characteristics of Mac Baller gang members in relation to the discussed literature. Also, the researcher was able to describe the type of relationship that existed between the Mac Baller gang members and their immediate families and explain how the relationship impacted their likelihood of joining the gangs.

In support of the previous authors in the related studies, the study observed that gangs were obviously not a new phenomenon in the societies, though they remained as a

major problem that needs to be addressed. In many states in the US, criminal street gangs

are considered as among the most serious crime issues. The most common gang violence

include drive-by shootings, assaults, brutal home-invasion robberies and homicides, and

they account for one of the highest, single, personal threats to the safety of people of the

United States of America.

According to the study, there are numerous factors that contribute to a child's

decision of joining a criminal gang. Two broad categories of these factors, namely

attractions and risk factors, were found to increase the likelihood of joining the gangs

jointly. According to the study, while a common public perception is that a significant

majority of youths are coerced into becoming gang members, the study revealed a

contrary situation where most youths join the gangs out of their liking. The gangs were

found to be often at the center of appealing social actions such as hanging out, drugs,

parting, music, and socialization opportunities with members of the opposite sex. Hence,

the gangs were found to be appealing as they met the social needs of the youths.

Through the discussion section, five reasons were highlighted as to why the

youths joined the gangs. The most common reasons were protection, respect, and money.

Other reasons included fun and because a friend was in the gang. The current study

claimed that a particular reason drives youth into joining the gang. The finding was found

to contradict what was revealed by the literature. According to previous research, youths

experimented with gang life in several aspects. A study by Huerta, (2016) about middle

school students, more than half of the sampled youths who had never been in a gang

claimed that they had engaged in at least one kind of gang involvement. A proportion

greater than one-third of the youths who had not been involved in any gang activities had at least one gang member as a friend. Nearly one-third, one quarter, and one-fifth of the youths had worn gang colors, hanged out with gang members, and flashed gang signs respectively.

The study highlighted the need to minimize the severity of the gangs through children's discouragement programs, which would see less or no intentions of joining the gangs among youths. The prevention measures should be implemented at homes, schools, and communities simultaneously. Previously, some steps have been made towards achieving this goal. The state and counties have spent large sums of money trying to keep gang members and their associates on correctional facilities. The California Youth Authority indicated that there were over 10,000 gang members or associates in their correctional facilities and this has played a key role in preventing youths from joining gangs.

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