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GANG INVOLVEMENT AND ITS CONNECTION WITH PHYSICAL ABUSE

By

Blythe A. Steele

A THESIS

Submitted to Michigan State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Criminal Justice

ABSTRACT

GANG INVOLVEMENT AND ITS CONNECTION WITH PHYSICAL ABUSE By

Blythe A. Steele

The often dysfunctional homes of many gang members can be the center of physical abuse by an adult. Unreleased anger, unsupported pain, and the lack of feeling loved may force many of these youths to take vengeance by acting out within the family of a gang. Robert Agnew's revised strain theory offers support to the connection between parental physical abuse and gang involvement. Agnew describes physical abuse as one of many types of aversive situations that frustrate an adolescent, such that the adolescent escapes in the form of anger-based delinquency. This study describes anger-based delinquency as gang involvement. Data were used from the *Cambridge Study in* Delinquent Development by David Farrington. A study from London, England was used for the quality of its data and the fact that it was a longitudinal study spanning over 20 years. This present study was left with the suggestion that stronger measures of parental physical abuse and data from the United States might produce different results indicating an effect of parental physical abuse on gang involvement. To test the effect of parental physical abuse on gang involvement, bivariate and multivariate analyses were performed. Both crosstabulations and logistic regressions revealed no relationship between parental physical abuse and gang involvement, with the exception of control variables such as a peer rating of more or most troublesome.

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INTRODUCTION

Many youths involved in gangs come from a background that placed them in a painful situation rendering them helpless because of age and circumstance. The often dysfunctional homes of many gang members can be the center of physical abuse by an adult (Spergel, 1990). Therefore, unreleased anger, unsupported pain, and the lack of feeling loved has forced these adolescents to take vengeance by acting out within the family of a gang.

Klein, a noted researcher of gangs and gang violence, defined the term *gang* to be a denotable group of adolescents and young adults who recognize themselves with a group name, and who have been involved in a number of illegal incidents that elicited a negative response from law enforcement agencies and citizens (Klein, 1989). Membership in a gang increases a youth's probability of violent offending (Sheldon, Tracy, & Brown, 1997). First, membership in a gang increases overall criminal behavior. Second, certain features of gangs may facilitate violence (Sheldon et al., 1997). Fagan (1989) has found that gang members are far more likely than non-gang members to engage in violent acts.

There are many sociological theories that attempt to explain crime and delinquency, and specifically, the fascination with and the origins of adolescent gangs. Likewise, the revised strain theory by Robert Agnew offers an explanation as to why

adolescents join gangs. The original strain theory states that delinquency results when an individual strikes out in frustration or turns to illegitimate means of achieving goals that could not be achieved through legitimate means. The basis for the revised strain theory is that adolescents are often placed in aversive or painful situations from which they cannot legally escape. This frustrates the adolescent and can lead to illegal escape attempts or anger-based delinquency (Agnew, 1985).

GANG INVOLVEMENT

Research has shown that gangs are a useful channel for the expression of hostility and the strive for power (Yablonsky, 1969). Some gang members show a preference for aggression based on their feelings of inferiority and their fear of being rejected or ignored by others (Gerrard, 1964). Observation (Spergel, 1990) has shown that the leaders or lieutenants in gangs are those who are the most psychologically disturbed and with the lowest impulse control. A gang member is viewed as emotionally unstable and as having difficulty making satisfactory interpersonal relationships. In turn, aggression becomes a coping mechanism receiving constant reinforcement within the gang (Spergel, 1990). An aversive family environment has been linked to gang membership: "Deficient home life is often cited as an explanation of the gang member's disturbance and resort to gang membership....[G]ang members come from stressful family situations" (Spergel, 1990, p. 231). However, Spergel (1990) claims that very little research has been done on the relation between family variables and participation in gangs. What has been argued is that the process of becoming a gang member occurs through an accumulation of parental

physical or emotional neglect, abuse from older street children, punitive educational incidents, and poor role models (Vigil, 1988).

Sheldon, Tracy and Brown (1997) discuss several of the key family-related factors that best distinguish delinquents. Of all the relevant factors, that of parental discipline can be linked to gang involvement. Those parents who use consistently harsh and physical discipline will produce the most habitual and violent offenders (Sheldon et al., 1997).

Many mental health providers have seen signs of post traumatic stress syndrome

in children chronically exposed to violence in their homes and in their communities

(Prothrow-Stith, 1991). Given the connection between the violent environment and the

evidence of post traumatic stress, it is not surprising that these adolescents join a gang:

Studies have shown that gang members have had plenty of experience with violence while growing up. Such youths have seen and have been victimized by violence in their homes and in their communities. These experiences have shaped the attitudes of these young people toward perpetuating violence. Gang youth have accepted violence as the normal and appropriate way to resolve minor and major disputes. These youth have come to believe that there is no nonviolent method for dealing with daily disputes and other problems of life. (Sheldon et al., 1997, p. 89)

Many times, gangs will reinforce what their environment has taught them by

encouraging or praising another's willingness to engage in violence:

If you do not care about yourself, then you are not going to care about what you do to other people or their rights. This is the feeling ingrained in many gang members, those from the inner city as well as suburbia. Some youngsters from the inner city are hardened from a young age by the violence around them....[T]hey become callous to others and do not really care if they kill someone or die themselves. For those more middle-class youths...the violence they experience in their young lives stems from parental abuse, indifference, and neglect.... (Wooden, 1995, p. 10)

Gang members are commonly perceived as poor, urban, and minority. Reality presents any youth, regardless of social or economic status, as being susceptible to gang recruitment if he or she displays certain characteristics. The characteristics might include: ¹The adolescent does not receive positive, loving family attention. If they receive any at all, it is usually violent, negative and without any rationale. The adolescent is a victim of abuse or neglect. Youths that experience harsh punishment and/or inconsistent discipline is a common factor; and the adolescent is usually anti-social, aggressive, hostile, de-sensitized to violence, and sees violence as a reasonable way to resolve conflicts (Schaumburg Police Department, n.d.).

No one can refute that sexual abuse within the home is an aversive stimuli for an adolescent. Hence, studies have been conducted to determine the relationship between sexual abuse and gang membership. Knox (1994) examined this relationship in an anonymous survey conducted in five states studying confined juveniles during 1991. Controlling for sex, it was discovered that male gang members and non-gang members report about the same levels of sexual abuse. However, among female juvenile delinquents a much different pattern emerges. Among females, sexual abuse history was significantly differentiated by gang membership (Knox, 1994). Knox proposed several hypotheses about sexual abuse and gang membership. Of those hypotheses, one in particular determined that

Females who have been sexually abused are more likely to subsequently join a gang out of a social-psychological breakdown. The logic being that the trauma, personal outrage and anger that can be expected in the aftermath of the life of a young child abuse victim may propel or predispose such a juvenile to join a gang subculture. (Knox, 1994, p. 397)

A great many variations of families and family relationships can contribute to youth delinquency and predispose a child to joining a gang. Defects in family relationships, parental character, and early child-rearing practices are found to be the origin of youth affiliation with delinquent groups, (i.e., gangs). Researcher Joan Moore (1991) explained that many of these families from which gang youth derive, for example the Mexican-origin population,

were not particularly happy, and in some cases, they were acutely unhappy,... Much of the paternal violence -- towards the kids as well as towards the mothers -- appears to have been associated with heavy drinking.... More than half of these gang members were clearly afraid of their fathers.... [Twenty] percent of the men and 45 percent of the women grew up with a heroin addict in the home... And finally, 57 percent of the men and 82 percent of the women saw somebody in their home arrested when they were children.... (Moore, 1991, pp. 89,92,100,101)

Gang experts insist that the only way to suppress gangs in a society is to restrict their ability to attract new members. Reality presents new members to be children -underage teens, pre-teens, adolescents, and even infants (Knox, 1994). Something is leading these children to join gangs, and a large part of that "something" is violence and abuse (Knox, 1994). A case in point is that of a child by the name of "Yummy." "...Yummy, a member of the Black Disciples, and a full eleven years old, was executed by his own gang for fear that he may testify against others in a gang-related killing" (Knox, 1994, p. 360). By the age of eleven, "Yummy" had produced an extensive record of arrests and convictions including robbery, arson, and murder. It was also discovered that Yummy was a victim of child abuse and neglect (Knox, 1994).

AGNEW'S REVISED STRAIN THEORY

The revised strain theory by Robert Agnew provides one of the reasons why adolescents may choose to join gangs. Strain theory was the original creation of Robert Merton who borrowed Emile Durkheim's concept of anomie. A definition of anomie refers to the inconsistencies between societal conditions and opportunities for growth. Merton's theory states that there exists no unity between the culturally defined goals (materialistic status achievement) and the legitimate ways and means to achieve those goals. In other words, individuals who see themselves at a disadvantage relative to legitimate economic activities are motivated to commit crime (Sheldon et al., 1997).

In 1960, Cloward and Ohlin expanded Merton's strain theory. They argued that poor self-concepts and frustration result from blocked opportunity aspirations; and that delinquency stems from these frustrations, especially within a gang context. The main emphasis of Cloward and Ohlin's theory is that

The disparity between what lower class youth are led to want and what is actually available to them is the source of a major problem of adjustment. Adolescents who form delinquent subcultures, we suggest, have internalized an emphasis upon conventional goals. Faced with limitations on legitimate avenues of access to these goals, and unable to revise their aspirations downward, they experience intense frustrations; the exploration of nonconformist alternatives may be the result. (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960, p. 86)

Each of this theory's variations contains the common factor of a strain that motivates adolescents to go <u>towards</u> a goal that has been blocked. Sociologists who support strain theory suggest that adolescents turn to delinquency in order to achieve their goals through illegitimate channels, or to vent their frustration (Agnew, 1984). It is difficult or impossible to achieve most immediate goals through illegitimate channels.

The revised strain theory assigns greater importance to the second link between strain and delinquency.

Robert Agnew has developed a revised strain theory that asserts adolescents are forced by necessity to remain in certain environments (e.g., family or school). If those environments are painful or repugnant to the point of wanting to get away, there is little they can do legally to escape. Frustration from being unable to escape can lead to illegal, anger-based delinquency (i.e., gangs) (Agnew, 1985). It is the negative relationships with others within these environments that ignites the feelings of anger and frustration. Agnew and other supporters of strain theory argue that the motivation for deviance is variable. For example, social control may create the possibility for delinquency, but it may not take place unless the adolescent is strained or provoked in some way.

Criticism from researchers calling for revision or abandonment of the current strain theory motivated the presentation of a new revised strain theory. Wavering support of the idea that delinquency results from the blockage of goal-seeking behavior has led to the idea that delinquency results from pain-avoidance behavior. Agnew (1985) states that certain situations may be aversive to adolescents although they do not find achievement of valued goals threatened. "Certain situations may be intrinsically aversive (e.g., the infliction of physical pain, the deprivation of sensory stimuli); they may be conditioned aversive stimuli (e.g., verbal insults); or the adolescent may simply be taught to experience these situations as aversive" (Agnew, 1985, pp. 154-155). The adolescent believes that exposure to the aversive stimuli is undeserved, which can lead to aggression. Revised strain theory does not make conclusions about adolescent valued goals or how

aversive situations might interfere with the achievement of those goals. It simply assumes the feeling of frustration from being unable to escape an aversive situation (Agnew, 1985).

A significant feature of adolescence is lack of power, especially that of being forced to remain in certain aversive situations (Agnew, 1985). The aversive situation may be in the neighborhood in which they live, the group of peers with whom they interact, or most often, their family itself (siblings and/or parents). Whereas most adults have legal avenues they can use, such as divorce, quitting one's job, or moving to another neighborhood, to escape aversive situations, adolescents lack the power to use those avenues (Agnew, 1985). "When escape or removal of the aversive source is not possible, the adolescent may become angry and strike out in rage at the source of aversion or a related target" (Agnew, 1985, p. 156). Revised strain theory supplements theories such as social control and differential association by describing how negative relationships may lead to delinquency (Agnew, 1985). Differential association focuses on how positive relationships with deviant peers contributes to the formation of negative attributes in the adolescent. Social control theory, in contrast, focuses on the absence of meaningful relationships, which convinces the adolescent he has nothing to lose by engaging in delinquent activities. The revised strain theory supplements these two theories by explaining that it is the negative relationships that ignite the feelings of frustration. The frustration from being located in an aversive environment may manifest itself in the form of anger-based delinquency. The aversive environment can come in various forms. For example, literature has examined aversive stimuli such as "physical pain, verbal threats and insults, unfavorable changes in positive reinforcement, unpleasant

odors, excessive noise, personal space violations, irritating cigarette smoke, high temperatures, and disgusting scenes" (Agnew, 1989, p. 374).

Anger-based delinquency can also be operationalized in various ways. In Agnew's longitudinal study of his own revised strain theory, he measured anger-based delinquency in an interpersonal aggression scale that included involvement in gang fights. High scorers on this scale stated that they have gotten into serious fights, have been in gang fights, have robbed others, or have hit their teacher and parents (Agnew, 1989). Agnew's longitudinal study was different from this present study in that he combined several stressful life events into what he called an Environmental Adversity scale. He cautioned that one should not examine the impact of a single stressful life event on the manifestation of anger-based delinquency, but rather one should combine stressful life events into an overall measure of stress or aversion. In other words, the assumption should be made that stress or strain is a function of the sum total of many events (Agnew, 1989). Although it is desirable to include many facets of aversive life circumstances when testing the revised strain theory, this present study uses only one because of a lack of quality measures of aversion within the data set used. It was determined that including all possible measures of aversion in a scale would be difficult in that aversion is felt on an individual basis. By selecting and analyzing only one of the more obvious aversive stimuli (physical abuse), we are better able to examine its particular effect on gang involvement.

To examine the relationship between gang involvement and physical abuse by a parent, I used data from the *Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development* directed by David Farrington. The lack of data using subjects from the United States and containing usable variables regarding gangs and parental abuse prompted my decision to choose the *Cambridge* study.

This study by David Farrington can be used because the *Cambridge* researchers defined a gang much like the previously noted definition by American gang researcher Malcolm Klein (1989). In addition, there is a parallel between European white ethnic gangs and American ethnic gangs. Most authors of gang research trace the evolution of skinheads, which are one type of white ethnic gang, to the 1970s and the working class in Great Britain. The basic values of the original skinheads were those of the British working class (Covey, Menard, & Franzese, 1992). The few differences between gangs from Great Britain and gangs from America include: gangs in Great Britain have been found to be more loosely organized and unstructured than American gangs; although some gangs have a sense of territory, formal leadership may be absent, and some gangs do not identify themselves as being gangs; and most importantly, gang membership appears to have little effect on delinquency in London (Covey et al., 1992). With these exceptions in mind, this present study continued to use the *Cambridge* study because of the quality of its data.

The *Cambridge* researchers felt that no American longitudinal survey of crime and delinquency was as extensive as the *Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development*. The *Cambridge* study boasts of a unique combination of features that supported my decision to use it for data analysis. 1) It is a prospective, longitudinal survey over 20 years. 2) The focus of interest is crime and delinquency. 3) Many variables were measured before the boys were officially convicted to avoid retrospective bias. 4) Because of frequent personal contact with the group of boys and their parents, records were supplemented with interviews, tests, and questionnaire data. 5) All degrees of delinquency were present. 6) The officially delinquent minority became gradually differentiated from their non-delinquent peers, avoiding the problem of selecting control groups. 7) Official and self-report measures of delinquency were used. 8) There was a very low attrition rate, at least up to age 21; and 9) The numerous variables from different sources made it possible to test many hypotheses about delinquency.

The *Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development* began in 1962 with 411 males between ages 8 and 9. As of May 1987, the researchers were attempting to re-interview as many of the original sample as possible. At the survey's inception in 1962, the boys were all living in a working class area of London, England. A majority of the boys were taken from a sample of 8 to 9-year-olds who were attending any of six state primary schools in the area of the research office that chose to cooperate with the study. There were 399 boys from those six schools, and 12 boys were from a local school for the educationally subnormal. The additional boys from the educationally subnormal school were chosen to make a more representative sample of the population of boys living in the area. The population from which the sample was drawn consisted of mostly white

citizens of British origin. Based on their father's occupations, 93.7% could be described as working class. Only 12 boys were black and had at least one parent of West Indian origin.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

The hypothesis to be tested is whether gang involvement is affected by parental physical abuse. A cross section of the *Cambridge* longitudinal study was used for the purposes of this thesis This paper will use two years of data from the twenty year total. These two years, when the subjects were between the ages of 18 and 19, reflect the time during which gang activity is most likely to occur. Research has shown that street-wise males aged 12 to 14 are the best target for recruitment into a gang (Covey et al., 1992). For the next few years, these younger members are used for risky violent activities because they are thought to be insulated from serious criminal penalties (Covey et al., 1992). It must be stated that involvement in gang activities is not a foolproof indicator of gang membership. However, most researchers agree that involvement in gang activities reflects a desire to belong to the gang subculture (Covey et al., 1992; Goldstein, 1991; Taylor, 1990).

A dichotomous dependent variable was created to measure gang involvement. Two sets of variables were combined to indicate membership in a gang and participation in gang activities. Membership in a gang was defined as whether the boy said he went around in a group of four or more mates that had a definite structure, area, pub, club, name, badge, uniform, leader, or initiation requirement. Participation in gang activities was described in various combinations of group fighting and vandalism. As seen in Table 1, approximately 69% of the boys were involved in gangs in the last two years.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

As discussed previously in this paper, parental discipline has been linked to gang involvement. Those parents who use consistently harsh and physical discipline will produce the most habitual and violent gang offenders (Sheldon et al., 1997). Each of the independent variables selected reflects an aspect of parental discipline, with categories indicating harsh or abusive discipline practices, along with disinterested or lax discipline practices. Many of these variables are asked repeatedly during different stages of the longitudinal study. The variables chosen were all determined prior to the boys reaching the 18 to 19 year-old age bracket. This was done to explain parental discipline prior to the boys' involvement in any form of delinquency. Parental discipline practices from the years prior to a child becoming a teenager most likely reflect that parent's perceived discipline ideals (Goldstein, 1991). It is when a young person enters the teenage years, facing upheaval in physical, social and emotional development, questioning adult standards and authority and weakening dependence on parents, that the teenager becomes dependent on the involvement of a peer group (Goldstein, 1991). If that peer group encourages the teenager to engage in delinquent activities, a parent's discipline practices are forced to change to reflect the child's misbehavior.

To measure the concept of parental physical abuse, I chose several variables (see Table 1). One measured both parents' attitude toward their child by looking at whether

either parent was cruel to their child. Another measured whether either parent's discipline practices and rules were strict/harsh/rigid or, in contrast, disinterested/lax/ slack. The presence of physical neglect of the boy was also measured. And finally, this study measured whether the supervision by the parents was poor.

Looking at Table 1, it is noted that under 3/4 of the boys did not have either parent treat them cruelly. Likewise, the parent's discipline practices and rules had a fairly even distribution among harsh/strict/rigid, disinterested/lax/slack, and neither harsh nor lax. Over 80% of the boys reported no presence of physical neglect by their parents. The variable indicating parental supervision showed 75% of the boys as not having poor supervision. From this Table, it appears that the least skewed variable is parental discipline practices and rules. It is possible that these results are distributed in the above stated manner because all of the measures of parental discipline come from the boys' perceptions of their parent's practices. It is interesting to note, however, that given these results, there are still a large number of boys who engaged in delinquent gang activities.

CONTROL VARIABLES

Many other factors besides family related factors can be linked to gang involvement. Some of these factors were controlled for in this research in anticipation of a challenge by different sociological theories. Of the many factors contributing to gang origination, the Illinois State Police (1989) explain that the young men are rebelling against their low social status. Many of these young gang members come from areas of overcrowded, substandard housing, poor or nonexistent health care facilities, broken homes, and few economic opportunities (Illinois State Police, 1989). Another

explanation considers how social control and social learning approaches combine to become the social development theory. Hawkins and Weis (1985) indicated that the social influence of peers becomes salient during adolescence. If the social bond process has been interrupted by, among other things, unconcerned parents with inconsistent discipline, the youth is more likely to be influenced by peers to engage in delinquent activities such as gangs (Hawkins & Weis, 1985).

The control variables selected for this present study consisted of ethnic origin, type and care of family housing, family income, peers rated as like self, and peers rated as troublesome. Although 87% of the boys in the sample were white and of British origin according to Table 1, ethnic origin was still controlled for to possibly dispel the perception of gang members as mostly minorities. The type and care of family housing measured whether the boy's living environment was tolerable or satisfactory. This variable had the purpose of determining how a tolerable versus an intolerable home might effect gang involvement. Table 1 shows that 87% of the boys perceived their housing conditions to be tolerable or satisfactory. Because most gang members have been perceived as coming from low income families (Illinois State Police, 1989), this present study measured whether the boy's family income was adequate or comfortable. Over 75% of the sample perceived their family income to be adequate or comfortable. Differential association was controlled for by examining how the boys rated their peers. One variable measured whether the boy's peers were like himself, and the other variable measured whether the boy's peers were more troublesome than himself. Table 1 indicates that both peer rating variables had an even distribution among their perspective categories.

ANALYTIC PROCEDURES

The data was first analyzed through bivariate analysis in the form of crosstabulations. Most of the indicator variables and the dependent variable originally had a category of not known or unascertainable. All individuals who fell into that category were taken out of the analyses and labeled as missing values. Crosstabulations were calculated to demonstrate the relationship between each independent and control variable and the dependent variable of gang involvement. Crosstabulation was the chosen method of bivariate analysis because all of the variables are categorical. When you want to look at the relationship between two variables that have a small number of values or categories, a crosstabulation is the suggested procedure. A crosstabulation is a table that contains counts and percentages of the number of times various combinations of values of two variables occur.

Multivariate analysis is the next step in the data analysis. It is used to look for relationships between the independent and dependent variables while controlling for other variables. In order to predict the absence or presence of an effect on gang involvement by each predictor variable, logistic regression was used. Logistic regression is similar to a linear regression model, but it is best used in models where the dependent variable is dichotomous. The logistic regression directly estimates the likelihood of an event occurring, as in here, gang involvement.

FINDINGS

After performing bivariate crosstabulations for each indicator variable, all but one of the indicators did not have significant relationships with gang involvement. The results can be interpreted to show that the indicator variables of parental physical abuse, along with the specific control variables of housing condition, peer ratings, and family income, are not related to gang involvement. The chi-square values calculated were far less than the critical values of chi-square for the corresponding .05 alpha level and degrees of freedom. When the calculated chi-square is less than the critical value, the closen Significance level becomes greater than .05. Therefore, I must fail to reject the null hypothesis that parental physical abuse indicators do not affect gang involvement. Even when examining the strength of the relationships through various measures of association, the results showed very weak relationships.

The one variable that proved to be significant was a control variable representing the theory of differential association. The significant variable was that of a peer rating by the boy as more or most troublesome. This control variable had a calculated chi-square of 5.30, which exceeds the critical value of chi-square at one degree of freedom and a .05 alpha level. The Significance level was .021. This indicates a 2.1% chance of making a type I error by rejecting the null hypothesis. Thus, I can successfully reject the null hypothesis that a peer rating as troublesome has no effect on gang involvement. This means that if the boy rated his peers as more troublesome than himself, there is a strong possibility that the boy will be involved in a gang. However, peers rated as troublesome is merely a control variable and not a primary indicator variable of parental physical abuse.

Table 2 represents the crosstabulation for the indicator variables and the dependent variable gang involvement. Several interesting observations can be made from reviewing the results listed in Table 2. For those boys involved in gangs, 73.4% had parents who were not cruel to them, and only 68.3% had parents who were cruel to them. It is also interesting to note that of the boys involved in gangs, 75.9% had parents who were not harsh or lax in their discipline practices (in other words "normal"). This percentage is higher than both percentages for harsh or lax discipline and rules. Another unique result was shown in the parental supervision variable. Of those boys involved in gangs, 73.4% did not have poor supervision, whereas 71% did have poor parental supervision. Family income produced yet another interesting result in the Table 2 crosstabulations. Of those boys who had gang involvement, 74% reported adequate or comfortable family income. Only 70.8% reported that family income was not adequate or comfortable. The remaining results were not surprising and could have been predicted based on the previous review of gang literature. Even though none of the above measures shown in the bivariate analysis has a significant relationship with gang involvement, it is possible that in a multivariate context that includes the effects of other variables, may uncover a significant relationship. As indicated in Table 2, the only variable that proved to be significant was peers rated as more troublesome.

Given the results of the crosstabulations, a logistic regression was performed using all of the indicator variables to examine the multivariate effects of the independent variables, taken together, on the dependent variable. To determine how well a logistic regression model fits the data, I used the Classification Table to compare predicted outcomes to the observed outcomes.

Another way of assessing the goodness of fit of the model is to examine how "likely" are the results, given the parameter estimates. SPSS assigns parameter codes to the indicator variables. The probability of the observed results, given the parameter estimates, is called the likelihood. Negative two times the log of the likelihood is used to measure how well the estimated model fits the data. A good model is one that translates to a small value for -2 Log Likelihood (-2LL). SPSS presents an initial Log Likelihood function for a logistic regression model that contains only the constant. The -2LL for the gang involvement regression had a value of 289.82. A second Log Likelihood is presented that includes all of the indicator variables. The -2 LL for the gang involvement regression at this point had a value of 276.55, that is a value smaller than the -2 LL for just the constant. This indicates a slightly better model.

Yet another assessment of the goodness of fit of a model is the model chi-square. The model chi-square is the difference between -2 LL for the model with just the constant and -2 LL for the current model including the variables. It is a likelihood ratio test that tests the null hypothesis that the coefficients for all of the terms in the current model, except the constant, are 0 (F test of regression). The model chi-square for the gang involvement regression had a value of 13.27 at 10 degrees of freedom, with a Significance level of .21. Again, when the Significance level is greater than .05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. What this means for the gang involvement regression, is that the coefficients for each of the variables are much greater than 0. There appears to be no effect of parental physical abuse on gang involvement.

Table 3 contains the results from the logistic regression equation for gang involvement. The column labeled "B" represents the estimated coefficients (not

standardized) for each of the variables in the regression. "S.E." represents the estimated standard error; and the "Significance" column represents the Significance level. The Significance level determines whether the estimated coefficient is significantly different from 0. As with all levels of significance, if it is greater than .05, then one must fail to reject the null hypothesis. A model should be created with all of the indicator variables as well as a model with only the close to significant variables. The hypothesis test would then be based on the change in the log likelihood.

Table 4 presents the logistic regression model that included only those variables proving to be close to significant in the first regression. This model produced a slight change in the log likelihood (-2LL). The variables of ethnic origin, parental discipline/ rules, peers rated like self, and peers rated as troublesome were the closest to the Significance level of .05. They were placed in the new regression model to assess the change in -2LL, as well as a change in the model chi-square.

It is particularly interesting to note that ethnic origin has now become a significant indicator variable. According to Table 3, Non-British youth are less likely to be involved in gangs than are British youth. This finding contradicts the results in the bivariate analysis of ethnic origin and gang involvement (Table 2). In the bivariate crosstabulation of ethnic origin and gang involvement, there was no relationship, but the Non-British boys were slightly more likely to be involved in gangs than were the British boys.

The new regression calculated -2LL at 310.07. The model chi-square for the new regression increased in value (13.94) and the degrees of freedom decreased (6). In turn, the Significance level decreased to .03. This Significance level is less than .05, which allows one to reject the null hypothesis that the logistic regression model is not a good

model for the data. The first regression model (Table 3) had a model chi-square Significance level of .21. The new regression model (Table 4) proved to be more significant at .03.

The standard error values decreased for each of the selected variables in the new regression model (Table 4). The Significance levels for each of the variables in Table 4 also changed by moving closer to .05. The original regression (Table 3) showed ethnic origin to be the only significant variable at .04. In the new regression (Table 4), ethnic origin still remains the only significant indicator at .02. Although the variable of peers rated as troublesome proved to be significant in the bivariate analysis, once included with other indicators in the multivariate analysis, it was no longer significant.

CONCLUSION

The results of the analyses indicate that there is no significant relationship between parental physical abuse and gang involvement. It is interesting that ethnic origin proved to be related to gang involvement, especially given its skewed distribution. Recalling the earlier description of the data, 93.7% of the sample population was white. Remember, however, that ethnicity in the *Cambridge* study was measured as British or Non-British in origin. Non-British may not necessarily mean minority. Only 12 of the 411 boys were black. The remainder were white. The crosstabulations showed that of the boys involved in gangs, a larger percentage was of Non-British origin. This can easily mean that those boys were most likely white, but originated from possibly another European country, or even the United States. Therefore, we need to look at the results of these analyses very carefully.

Available data must be accepted cautiously and used conservatively. As in the United States, accurate data on the number, nature, structure, and functioning of delinquent gangs are hard to come by. Police, public service agencies, schools, media representatives, and others regularly exposed to gang youths will often exaggerate or minimize the numbers and illegal behaviors of gangs (Goldstein, 1991). These individuals are serving political, financial, or other needs related to the management of gang perceptions (Goldstein, 1991). Hagedorn and Macon (1988) warn that often the source we deem most reliable, that being gang members themselves, is subjective or inaccurate.

Given the array of studies cited earlier, physical abuse has been found to be, by definition, an aversive stimuli and adolescents may manifest aversion through angerbased delinquency (Agnew, 1989). Gang activity continues to be increasingly more violent (Knox, 1994). And violence can be referred to as a manifestation of anger-based delinquency (Agnew, 1989).

Although this study did not find the specific relationship between gang involvement and parental physical abuse to be significant, there is much reason to believe that the findings presented here may be atypical. Perhaps a new study with data from the United States, including stronger measures of parental physical abuse, would produce different results. One of the limitations in this study was the reliance on the existing measures for parental physical abuse and neglect supplied by the *Cambridge* study. If new measures were created in the Untied States using survey interviews specifically designed to measure parental abuse/neglect, we might find more significant results linking parental abuse and gang involvement.

If a relationship does exist between physically abusive homes and a child's decision to join a gang or participate in gang activities, it was not shown in this study. It should be noted that this study was limited in the measures available, and the results of the anlayses could be caused by the skewness of the measures used. However, this study can mark the beginning of a new direction in gang research. For years, researchers have been describing gang members as oftentimes victims of child abuse. Yet, how many studies have attempted to measure the relationship between child abuse and gang involvement? The results of this present study might serve as a motivation to find a connection between physical abuse and gang involvement. If we ever expect to control the gang problem in this country and throughout the world, we need to stop and/or limit the source from which gangs draw their members.

Variable	Code	Frequency
<u></u>	<u></u>	<u>1 request</u>
Dependent		
Gang involvement in the	0 = no	104 (25.3%)
last two years	1 = yes	285 (69.3%)
	2 = missing	22 (5.4%)
Independent		
Fither parent is cruel to the child	0 = no	299 (72 7%)
	l = ves	43 (10 5%)
	2 = missing	69 (16.8%)
	2	0, (10.0,0)
Either parent's discipline and rules	0 = no (normal)	117 (28.5%)
is strict/harsh/rigid or disinterested/	l = harsh, etc.	121 (29.4%)
lax/slack.	2 = lax, etc.	105 (25.5%)
	3 = missing	68 (16.5%)
Presence of physical neglect	$0 = n_0$	349 (84 9%)
of boy	1 = ves	49 (11 9%)
	2 = missing	13 (3 2%)
	2 missing	15 (5.270)
Supervision by parents poor	0 = no	309 (75.2%)
	l = yes	74 (18%)
	2 = missing	28 (6.8%)
Control		
Housing conditions are tolerable	0 = no	41 (10%)
or satisfactory	1 = yes	358 (87.1%)
	2 = missing	12 (2.9%)
Peers rated as more	0 = no	175 (42 6%)
like self	l = ves	178 (43.3%)
	2 = missing	58 (14.1%)
	2	
Peers rated as more	0 = no	178 (43.3%)
troublesome	1 = yes	175 (42.6%)
	2 = missing	58 (14.1%)
Ethnic origin of boy	1 = British	357 (86.9%)
	2 = Non-British	54 (13.1%)
		- (
Family income is adequate	0 = no	93 (22.6%)
or comfortable	l = yes	318 (77.4%)

CODES AND FREQUENCIES FOR DEPENDENT, INDEPENDENT AND CONTROL VARIABLES

<u>Variable</u>	Column % and N for yes on gang involvement		
Indexedent			
Independent			
Either parent is cruel to child	yes	68.3% (28	3)
	no	73.4% (21	(2)
Either parent's discipline and	no	75.9% (85	5)
rules is strict/harsh/rigid or		harsh 6	59.2% (81)
disinterested/lax/slack	lax	74.0% (74	4)
Presence of physical neglect	yes	76.7% (33	3)
	no	73.4% (24	45)
Supervision by parents is poor	yes	71.0% (49	2)
	no	73.4% (21	18)
Control			
Housing conditions are tolerable	yes	73.2% (24	48)
or satisfactory	no	74.4% (29	\mathcal{P}
Peers rated as more or most	ves	78.5% (13	35)
like self	no	69.9% (11	(6)
Peers rated as more or most	Ves	79 8% (13	34)
troublesome	no	68.8% (11)	17) *
Palazia antain afilian	D 141 1	_	
Emnic origin of boy	British Non-Bri	tish 82	(1.8% (242) (2.7% (43)
Family income is adequate or	yes	74.0% (22)	22)
comfortable	no	70.8% (63))
* Indicates variable with Significance level less than .05			

Table 2: CROSSTABULATIONS OF INDICATOR VARIABLES AND GANG INVOLVEMENT

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>S.E.</u>	Significance	
Either parent is cruel	1864	.4678	.69	
Parent's discipline/rules			.24	
strict/harsh/rigid	1447	.4778	.76	
disint/lax/slack	6570	.4729	.16	
Presence of physical neglect	9027	.7735	.24	
Poor parental supervision	.8584	.5580	.12	
Adequate income	3038	.4089	.46	
Tolerable housing condition	.1334	.6364	.83	
Peers rated like self	.4787	.3037	.12	
Peers rated as troublesome	.4421	.3102	.15	
Ethnic origin	-1.0720	.5228	.04 *	
Constant	3.0942	.9820	.00	
* Indicates a variable with a Significance level less than .05				

Table 3: LOGISTIC REGRESSION RESULTS

-2LL: 276.55

Model Chi-Square: 13.27 (10 d/f) Significance: .21

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>S.E.</u>	Significance	
Parent's discipline/rules			.20	
strict/harsh/rigid	2574	.4354	.55	
disint/lax/slack	7048	.4349	.11	
Poor parental supervision	.6570	.4747	.17	
Peer rated like self	4626	.2804	.10	
Peer rated as troublesome	4676	.2868	.103	
Ethnic origin	-1.1815	.5091	.02 *	
Constant	2.3670	.6080	.00	
* Indicates a variable with a Significance level less than .05				

Table 4: LOGISTIC REGRESSION RESULTS WITH CLOSE TO SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES

-2LL: 310.07

Model Chi-Square: 13.94 (6 d/f) Significance: .03 *

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