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Tiffiney Y. Barfield-Cottledge

University of North Texas Dallas Campus

Myrna Cintron

Prairie View A&M University

Jonathan Sorensen

Prairie View A&M University

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An Examination of Female Youth Gangs

Cover Page Footnote

Tiffiney Y. Barfield-Cottledge, Assistant Professor, Department of Criminal Justice, University of North Texas Dallas Campus. Myrna Cintron, Department Head, College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology, Prairie View A&M University. Jonathan Sorensen, Professor, College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology, Prairie View A&M University. Correspondence concerning this manuscript should be addressed to Tiffiney Y. Barfield-Cottledge at 7300 Houston School Road, Dallas, Texas 75241 or via e-mail at cottledge@pacs.unt.edu.

An Examination of Female Youth Gangs

Tiffiney Y. Barfield-Cottledge

University of North Texas Dallas Campus

Myrna Cintron

Prairie View A and M University

Jonathan Sorensen

Prairie View A and M University

Abstract

Cohen's subculture of delinquency theory (1955) posits that male youth gangs exist largely as the result of the status frustration experienced by rejected adolescents in their search for middle class acceptance. Cohen concluded that social and structural factors, particularly neighborhood and school environments, impacted youth gang prevalence. While many studies related to the existence of youth gangs have been conducted, few have focused specifically on female youth gangs. In the current study, an examination of female youth gangs was conducted using self-report data gathered for the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997-2001). Contrary to arguments that gendered-specific criminological theories are needed to explain female gangs, the findings presented here show that the factors suggested by Cohen's theory are applicable to membership in female gangs.

Female youth gangs have become a major societal concern, due in part to their recent proliferation (Egley, Howell, and Major, 2004; Snyder and Sickmund, 2006), but also because of their increasing gang membership in serious and violent crimes (Archer, 2004; Miller and Decker, 2001; Peterson, Miller, and Esbensen, 2001). Unlike male violence, which has either decreased or remained constant since the early 1990s, female violence generally is on the rise. When compared to their non-gang counterparts, female youth gang members have been found to be responsible for more serious crimes and to have a higher propensity toward violence (Bjerregard and Smith, 1993; Jankowski, 1991; Thornberry, 1998). Specifically, female gang members' self-reported behavior revealed that 90% had been involved in violent acts, with 78% taking part in fighting, 69% carrying weapons, and 39% committing aggravated assaults (Deschenes and Esbensen, 1999).

While youth gangs in America have received widespread attention from researchers, limited research has been conducted on female gangs (Chesney-Lind, 1997). Criminological theories have traditionally focused on explaining male delinquency while lacking sufficient explanations of female crime (Heimer and De Coster,

1999; Hughes, 2005; Smith and Paternoster, 1987). Similarly, while there are theories that have traditionally addressed male gang existence and membership, theories explaining female gang existence and membership are limited (Campbell, 1984; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Deschenes and Esbensen, 1999).

Despite the continued growth in number and size of female gangs, little is known about whether or not factors predicated on traditional gang theories account for variations in female gang presence and membership. In order to address this gap in the literature, this study examines how well variables suggested by a traditional male-centered criminological theory—Cohen's *subculture of delinquency theory* (1955), explain female gang membership. Because of its very nature as a grounded theory (a systematic research method where theory is derived from pre-existing data) and based largely on the precepts of Glaser's 1930 grounded theory approach (Akers and Sellers, 2004), Albert Cohen's *subculture of delinquency theory* was the ideal theory to test in the current study. In addition, Cohen's theory is an extension of Robert Merton's 1938 structural strain theory and Edwin Sutherland's 1939 differential association theory. As such it was relevant for the scope and purpose of this study (Cohen, 1955; Williams and McShane, 1998).

Theoretical Background

In 1955, during a time when America was experiencing an increase in youth gang presence and delinquency, Albert K. Cohen introduced his subculture of delinquency theory. Cohen's theory drew on previous

Tiffiney Y. Barfield-Cottledge, Assistant Professor, Department of Criminal Justice, University of North Texas Dallas Campus.

Myrna Cintron, Department Head, College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology, Prairie View A&M University. Jonathan Sorensen, Professor, College of Juvenile Justice and Psychology, Prairie View A&M University. Correspondence concerning this manuscript should be addressed to Tiffiney Y. Barfield-Cottledge at 7300 Houston School Road, Dallas, Texas 75241 or via e-mail at cottledge@pacs.unt.edu.

ecological research that studied the relationship between social factors and the existence of youth gangs (Kvaraceus, 1945; Shaw and McKay, 1931; Thrasher, 1927). Based on findings from these earlier studies, Cohen (1955) presented a logical explanation of subculture theory to account for the formation, prevalence, and membership in youth gangs.

Cohen's Seminal Work: Delinquent Boys

In his 1955 theoretical explanation of delinquent subcultures, *Delinquent Boys*, Albert Cohen studied structural conditions that facilitated gang existence in poor urban areas. According to Cohen, structural factors, particularly, neighborhood, social class, and school variables were significantly related to youth gang existence and membership. Cohen asserted that the delinquent subculture existed as a way of life among certain groups of youth living in urban neighborhoods as a means of counteracting status frustration (feeling experienced by youth when they realize the disadvantages and inequalities in opportunities to achieve goals because of their lower-class status).

Cohen's major theoretical contribution was the development of three subcultural traits by which society could readily identify youth gang subcultures that have become a standard in the literature. Specifically, Cohen (1955) proposed that gang subcultures were non-utilitarian, malicious, and negativistic. Gang subcultures were non-utilitarian because frustrated males maintained group interactions with peers who approved of deviant values thereby rejecting the middle class value system. Cohen further suggested that gang subcultures were negativistic and malicious because members did not commit crimes to gain economic wealth but rather for fun and to destroy those who were a part of a system to which the gang members do not belong.

A second contribution to the criminological literature was Cohen's statement that status frustration leads to three reactions: *college boy*, *corner boy*, and *delinquent boy* reactions. The *college boy* reaction as described by Cohen was the acceptance of middle class values and adjustment through conformity. Unlike the *college boy* reaction, the *corner boy* reaction rejected middle class values including: ambition, individual responsibility, setting long-term goals, control of aggression and violence, recreation, and respect for property (Cohen, 1955). Cohen argued that the *college boy* personality showed sacrifice and effort to uphold middle class values that most *corner boy* personality types directly opposed. The *delinquent boy* according to Cohen was therefore negative, did not conform to middle class standards, legitimized aggressive behavior, and exhibited hostility toward the middle class and thus comprised the delinquent gang subculture. In addition to subculture traits and reactions to status frustration, Cohen asserted that poor academic performance was

specific to lower class youth. He argued that as the result of academic frustration youth would join delinquent subcultures. Cohen further believed that youth sought peer group status at school and when rejected from the middle class social, lower class youth reacted in frustration and formed subcultures.

Cohen's Theoretical Components

Cohen's theoretical components were based on two fundamental perspectives: strain, and differential association. The strain perspective, according to Cohen (1955), was presented in his assertion that lower class youth experience problems in society based on their social position. Accordingly, the differential association and the reaction formation perspectives, then, were predicated on the assumption that lower class youth, who when faced with the same problems, came together to form gang subcultures in reaction to problems shared based on class and status differentials in middle class society.

Cohen's theory, like others generated at that time, focused exclusively on urban, lower class males. Coextensive with the women's rights movement, female gender-specific explanations for involvement in crime sprang up (Adler, 1975; Simon, 1975). More recently, proponents continue to argue that gender-specific theories are needed to explain female delinquency and criminality (Chesney-Lind, 1997). However, in several recent tests, traditional male-oriented theories have enjoyed a degree of success in explaining variations in female crime. Gottfredson and Hirshi (1990), for instance, in applying their general theory of crime to female populations, found that those who exhibited low self-control were likely to commit delinquent acts, although the particular acts were likely to be of the less serious variety (i.e. status offenses).

Similarly, Agnew (2001), in applying his general strain theory, found that females were affected by strain similar to males, however, citing that females when compared to males experienced different types of strain such as those related to physical and sexual abuse. Relying on Cohen's theory as a guiding framework for the current analysis of female gang membership, specific factors were identified for study related to neighborhood characteristics, family/peer influences, social class, and academic performance.

Within the context of this review on female gangs it was hard to distinguish the literature on female gang existence, membership, participation and gang delinquency. This void suggests the need for specified research on female gang membership and social factors attempting to explain the continuous increases. While not intended to test Cohen's theory directly many studies have linked aspects of Cohen's theory to gang membership and delinquency. This section provides accounts of several recent studies on female gangs and delinquency.

Neighborhood Characteristics

Studies have been conducted on neighborhood characteristics and structures to offer explanations of violence and delinquency and have provided an increased understanding of neighborhood dynamics in youth involvement in gangs and delinquency. In their study of gang locations, Tita, Cohen, and Engberg (2005) found a significant relationship between the existence of gangs, lower class status, and social disorganization variables. In their study of neighborhood characteristics and female delinquency, Hunt, Joe-Laidler, and Evans (2002) found that women who lived in congested and violence prone neighborhoods were more likely to have lower levels of education and limited legitimate economic opportunities.

Similarly, Curry, Decker, and Egley (2002) conducted a study of gang involvement and delinquency among middle school students based on the location/neighborhood of their middle schools. Findings indicated that two of the three schools- those located in poor neighborhoods where gangs were known to exist, experienced higher rates of delinquency than the middle school in the non-gang neighborhood (De Coster and Heimer, 2001; Jang and Johnson, 2001).

Family/Peer Association

The relationship between family and peer association and youthful delinquency has also been implicated in the literature. While a major caveat of the Gifford-Smith, Dodge, Dishion, and McCord (2005) study is the all male sample, the study provides support for both family and peer pressure as well as the need for more studies focusing on female populations. Specifically, in their study of attachment to parents, Gifford-Smith et al., (2005) analyzed the videotaped dialogue of 186 adolescent boys and their friends, and found that the influence of family members and peers, along with age, gender, prior record of delinquency, attachment to parents, and attitudes towards delinquency were all significantly related to delinquent behavior.

Similar results reported by Zatz and Portillos, (2000) showed that peer socialization was significantly related to female gang membership, involvement and existence (Deschenes and Esbensen, 1999). In his 2000 study of 500 middle school and high school females, Wang (2000) set out to study the perceptions of 334 females in regards to the link between peer influence, status, family problems, and gang participation. While not a direct test of gang membership, findings indicated that female respondents agreed that peer pressure

(71%), protection of status (70%), acceptance (68%), and home problems (66%) were leading factors related to gang participation.

Social Class

Empirical support for Cohen's subculture theory and the relationships between social status, poverty, and delinquency were predicated on the previous findings of Kvaraceus' (1945) which revealed that poverty and delinquency were significant among delinquent youth when compared to non-delinquent youth. Cohen (1955), supported by others, further posited that social structural conditions including social class and status among youth in school were purported to cause gang formation, membership and delinquent behavior. In their longitudinal study of violence and female gangs Fleischer and Kreinert (2004) examined 74 young women over the course of several years. Their findings indicated that female gang members reported living in poverty and were from single parent homes where their parents received government aid as an economic supplement.

Academic Performance

Cohen's reaction formation concept explained that poor academic performance resulted in frustration that produced higher rates of failure among lower class youth leading to membership in delinquent gang subcultures (Howell and Lynch, 2000). Accordingly, one of the most tested correlations was the link between school experiences, gangs, and delinquency (Curry et al., 2002). In their 2005 study of middle and high school students, Nihart, Lersch, Sellers, and Mieczkowski surveyed 1,029 middle school students and 625 high school students regarding their feelings towards parents, teachers, and police. The findings of this study indirectly supported Cohen's proposition that grades, particularly poor grades, were related to low social class status and gang membership (Jang and Johnson, 2001).

While traditional gang theories focused on explaining male gang existence and delinquency, the literature has been left void of criminological theories explaining female gang existence and gang membership. Much of the research conducted on females has been conducted on the relationship between the Women's Rights Movement and increased delinquency (Adler, 1975; Simon, 1975). The concepts of Cohen's Subculture of Delinquency theory tested in this study have found some empirical support. The hypothesis that status frustration evolved as the result of neighborhood structures and associated social factors, status frustration (guided by the use of secondary data) was not directly analyzed.

The Current Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct a partial test of Albert K. Cohen's (1955) *subculture of delinquency theory* to see whether social structural variables predicted female gang membership. Specifically, it was predicted that juvenile female gang members were more likely to live in neighborhoods where gangs flourish, live in urban areas, have more family and peers who were gang members, receive more government aid and exhibit lower school performance than non-gang members.

Method

A secondary data analysis was conducted using data from the 1997 -2001 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY). The NLSY data were gathered in phone interviews with 8,984 youths age 12 -17. Of those, 51 % (4,599) were male and 48 % (4,385) were female. As such, this was an ex -post-facto causal comparative study using data from a nationally representative sample. While the original purpose of the NLSY data was to collect data documenting the transition from school to work experienced by youth, this study utilized variables within this data set to test theoretical assumptions on female gang membership. In this two-group design, data were examined to study the relationship between social factors and female gang membership.

Sample

NLSY female respondents classified as gang members (n1 = 150) represented the targeted population for this study, and females who were not members of gangs (n2 = 150) comprised the comparison group. A random sampling of non-gang females was conducted to obtain a weighted sample size equal to 150, which yielded a representative sample of the NLSY population of females. Female gang members comprised the entire population of female gang members in the sample (n1 = 150). For the purpose of this study, gang membership was defined as female youth who responded "yes" to the question of ever being a gang member. Comparative analyses were conducted herein to identify differences between the two groups. A total of 300 female youth respondents constitute the sample upon which the analyses and results of the study are based.

Variables of the Study

The following predictor variables were selected from the larger dataset for the current analyses: neighborhood gang presence, living in urban/rural neighborhoods, receiving government aid (social class), family/peer gang membership, and ever repeat a grade

(academic performance). The neighborhood variables were asked in two questions: (a) Do you live in a rural or urban neighborhood? and (b) Are there any gangs in your neighborhood? Social class was defined using the survey question that identified whether or not the respondent's parent(s) ever received government aid. The family/peer gang membership variable comprised an amalgamation of two variables including family/peer gang membership. Academic performance was defined by grade retention. All of these variables were recoded into dichotomies, with "1" indicating a positive response and "0" a negative response. Two additional control variables, age and race, were included in the analyses. While age was retained as a continuous variable, race was recoded so that White (majority) females were coded "1" and all other racial/ethnic (minority) groups were coded as "0." Each of these groups is compared on the key Cohen variables to more fully assess the adequacy of the theory.

Gang membership was the outcome variable associated with several social measures including: gangs in the neighborhood, living in urban/rural neighborhoods, family/peer gang membership, receiving government aid, and ever repeat a grade. Following the statistically

significant chi-square (χ^2) and phi (Φ) estimations, logistic regression was conducted to determine which of the predictor variables best-predicted female gang membership. Logistic regression was chosen because of the dichotomous nature of the outcome variable of gang membership. Seven variables were used as predictor variables in the final logistic regression model including the two control variables: age and White/minority status. All seven predictors were entered into the model and met the inclusion criterion for the exploration. Control variables were included in the model to account for their possible influence on the relationship between the predictors and outcomes.

Results

Age

Table 1 presents a breakdown of control variables by gang membership. Female respondents in this study ranged from 12 to 17 years of age. The average age of the female respondents was 14.4 years old, varying somewhat according to their gang status. For gang members (n = 150), the most common age was 15 years old (29.3%). For females who reported not being in a gang, the most common age was 13 years old. While the analysis showed that gang females were slightly older on average, a t-test revealed no statistically significant differences in age between the gang and non-gang groups.

Table 1.
Control Variable by Ever Belonged to a Gang

	No		Yes		χ^2	Φ
	f	%	f	%		
Age					8.407	.167
12	17	11.3	9	6.0		
13	36	24.0	25	16.6		
14	31	20.0	35	23.3		
15	29	19.3	44	29.3		
16	26	17.3	29	19.3		
17	11	7.30	8	5.3		
Race/Ethnicity					60.375	.452**
Minority	23	15.3	86	57.3		
White	127	84.7	60	43.7		

Note: **Denotes significance at the $p < .01$ level.

Race/Ethnicity

Within the total sample of 300 females, majority group (White) respondents (62.3%) comprised the largest proportion of the sample while minority group respondents (37.6%) comprised the smaller portion. Differences in race/ethnicity were noted when the sample was divided by gang membership. Less than half of the gang members were majority group members (43.7%), while non-gang members were comprised mainly of majority group members (84.7%). Chi-square analysis showed that there were significant differences in the observed and expected values for the "race" and "gang" responses ($\chi^2 = 60.375$, $\Phi = .452$). To measure the strength of association between these two categori-

cal variables, the phi statistic revealed a moderate association. Thus, the race/ethnicity of the respondents explained approximately 20% of the variance in gang membership ($\Phi^2 = .2043$).

Neighborhood Characteristics

Table 2 provides a bivariate comparison of the predictor variables by gang membership. When respondents were asked the question, "Are there any gangs in your neighborhood?," approximately 85% of gang members versus only about 31% of non-gang females reported that that gangs were present in their neighborhoods.

Table 2.
Predictor Variables by Ever Belonged to a Gang

	No		Yes		χ^2	Φ
	f	%	f	%		
Gangs in Neighborhood					88.716*	.545
No	103	69.1	23	15.3		
Yes	46	30.9	126	84.7		
Neighborhood					47.192**	.401
Rural	93	62.4	33	22.8		
Urban	56	37.6	112	77.2		
Family/Peer Gang					128.259**	.654
No	121	80.7	23	15.3		
Yes	29	19.3	127	84.7		
Government Aid					9.321**	.188
No	65	47.4	37	29.1		
Yes	72	52.6	90	70.9		
Ever Repeat a Grade					14.807**	.235
No	92	67.6	59	44.4		
Yes	44	32.4	74	55.6		

Note: **Denotes significance at the $p < .01$ level.

Statistics revealed that these two variables were not independent, with gangs in the neighborhood accounting for approximately 30% of the variance in gang membership among respondents. Further examination showed that observed and expected values for living in urban/rural neighborhoods also varied significantly across gang membership. The assertion that living in urban versus rural neighborhoods increases the chance of gang membership, while not new, was substantiated by the current study's findings. More than three-fourths of gang-affiliated respondents reported living in urban areas compared to just over one-third of non-gang females who reported living in urban areas. These results revealed that living in urban/rural neighborhoods was significantly related to gang membership status among the female respondents.

Family/Peer Influence

The association of family/peer and gang membership also supported Cohen's assertion about gang members. Approximately, 85% of the gang-affiliated respondents reported having family/peer gang members, while only 15% reported they did not. The pattern was reversed for non-gang females. Specifically, the association between gang membership and having family/peers who were gang members was significant and explained approximately 43% of the variance between the two. Accordingly, the relationship between this variable and gang membership was, on average, an inverse one. Similar to the results of having gangs in the neighborhood, respondents who reported having family/peer as gang members were approximately 7 times more likely to be gang members than those who did not.

Government Aid

In examining the association between receiving government aid and gang membership, preliminary observation of the data revealed differences in gang and non-gang females, with gang females reporting that

their parents had received significantly more government aid than females who did not belong to a gang. Examination of predictor and outcome variables showed that observed and expected values for the question: "Has your parent ever received government aid?" varied significantly across gang membership. The variance component was $\chi^2 = 9.321$; $\Phi = .188$. While these two variables were not independent of one another, the phi statistic revealed a small association that accounted for only 3.5% of the variance between the two variables.

On the academic performance measure more than half of the gang members reported repeating a grade, while less than one-third of the non-gang females reported ever repeating a grade. The chi-square analysis comparing the differences between the observed and expected values among the outcome variable "ever belonged to a gang" and the predictor variable "ever repeat a grade" revealed a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 14.807$, $\Phi = .235$). While these two variables were not independent of each other, the phi statistic revealed only a mild association between the two, explaining only 5.5% of the associated variance between these variables.

Academic Performance

On the academic performance measure more than half of the gang members reported repeating a grade, while less than one-third of the non-gang females reported ever repeating a grade. The chi-square analysis comparing the differences between the observed and expected values among the outcome variable "ever belonged to a gang" and the predictor variable "ever repeat a grade" revealed a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 14.807$, $\Phi = .235$). While these two variables were not independent of each other, the phi statistic revealed only a mild association between the two, explaining only 5.5% of the associated variance between these variables.

Logistic Regression Model

Table 3 presents the results of the logistic regression model predicting gang membership. For this regression model, each predictor variables and the two controls variables were regressed on the outcome-gang membership. Multicollinearity within the correlation matrix was not strong (that is, $\Phi < .80$) and did not prevent inclusion of the chosen variables from contributing significantly to the logistic regression model. Overall, the logistic regression model was quite successful in predicting gang membership, accounting for 63.8% of the variance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .638$) and correctly classifying 84.8% of the female respondents.

Table 3.

Multivariate Logistic Regression Model Predicting Gang Membership

Variable	b	SE	Wald	Exp(B)	95% C.I.	
					Lower	Upper
Neighborhood Gangs	1.916	.433	17.863	6.796**	2.795	16.528
Urban/Rural	1.151	.412	7.818	3.162**	1.411	7.086
Family Gang	1.946	.409	22.693	7.002***	3.144	15.596
Government Aid	.776	.404	3.692	2.174	.985	4.799
Ever Repeat a Grade	.984	.399	6.080	2.676*	1.224	5.851
Age	.113	.136	.688	1.120	.857	1.463
Race	-.123	.141	.766	0.884	.671	1.165

*Denotes significance at the $p < .05$ level. ***Denotes significance at the $p < .001$ level.

Discussion

All of the predictor variables suggested by Cohen's theory included in the regression model were related in the predicted direction, and all but one was statistically significant. The Exp (B) shows that females who lived in neighborhoods with gangs, were nearly 7 times more likely to have ever been a gang member, compared to females living in neighborhoods without gangs controlling for all other variables in the equation. Likewise, respondents who had family/peer gang members were 7 times as likely to have been gang members themselves. Thus, like Cohen (1955) and Sutherland (1939), these findings suggest that female respondents who had close associations with gang members were more likely to be gang members themselves, compared to respondents who had no close association to gang members.

Females who repeated a grade in school were nearly 3 times more likely to have ever been gang members compared to females who had never repeated a grade in school. These results revealed a weak association between ever repeating a grade and ever belonging to a gang. This weak association may be explained largely as a result of the ever repeating a grade variable representing an indirect measure of academic performance. Although weak, these findings, like Cohen's (1955), showed that female gang members were more likely to have lower academic performance than non-gang females. Similarly, living in urban/rural neighborhoods was significantly related to gang membership status among the female respondents. Females who lived in urban neighborhoods were over 3 times more likely to have ever been a gang member compared to those who lived in rural neighborhoods. The assertion that living in urban versus rural neighborhoods increases the chance of gang membership, while not new, was substantiated by the current study's findings.

According to Thornberry, Lizotte, Krohn, Farnworth, and Jang (1994), social class as a predictor of gang membership was strongest when measured with three variables: parent income, parent education, and parent receipt of government aid. Due to limitations of the NLSY data, this study's measure of social class was limited. As such, receiving government aid was a marginally significant predictor of female gang membership, particularly when the significance level for government aid was relaxed to .10. While the government aid variable was the most robust measure of social class entered into the regression model, receiving government aid marginally yielded significance at the $p = .055$ level. Even though no statistical significance for this variable emerged at the $p < .05$ level, females from families which had received government aid were still more than 2 times as likely to report ever belonging to a gang compared to females from families which had not received government aid.

Limitations

Several limitations of the current study warrant comment. First, the study did not directly address all aspects of Cohen's (1955) *subculture of delinquency theory*. Specifically, Cohen's theory addressed several gang types and gang member characteristics that are not addressed in this study. Instead, this study examined those social structure concepts including gang presence in neighborhoods, living in urban versus rural neighborhoods, academic and social class measures, and differential association concept via family/peer gang membership, and delinquency.

Second, although similar analyses have been conducted, this study focused on data from a single NLSY year (1997). Consequently, the generalizability of these findings is limited and future research would benefit from the comparison of data from multiple years. A third potential limitation to the generalizability of these findings was the homogenous study of female respondents ($N = 300$). It is likely that additional comparison groups comprising male respondents would provide results better suited to generalization, as this study's sample is representative of the youth population in America. While the data are now more than 10 years old, this study was an exploratory data analysis of a traditional criminological theory against the idea of new gendered theories to address female gang membership.

Future Implications

The argument for the need of gendered theory was not supported by the findings of this study. It is true, however, that female gang presence continues to increase. With this in mind, perhaps policy implications surrounding female gangs and delinquency should be addressed with traditional criminological theory albeit contrary arguments by feminist theorists. In light of the findings, suggestions for addressing female gang presence and delinquency would include creating policies that address social conditions. Both quantitative and qualitative examinations will add to the depth of the research on female gangs and lead to effective policy implementations in all levels of government planning.

Other recommendations include providing additional resources to communities to effectively address social issues that facilitate continued gang presence and influence over the weak (society's adolescents). The present study demonstrated that the application of Albert K. Cohen's subculture of delinquency theory to female youth gangs offered an empirically significant explanation. Based on the results of this study, future research endeavors should include a replication with a larger sample size using male and female comparison groups.

Summary

The fact that females are under-represented in criminological research and that there are insufficient explanations of female gang existence and delinquency is undisputed here (Belknap, 2001; Campbell, 1984; Chesney-Lind, 1989, 1997; Simpson, 1989). Many feminist theorists have argued against the application of male dominated theory to female populations. The results of this study, however, revealed that Cohen's (1955) theory does offer an explanation of female gangs. Like Cohen's male gang members, the current study found that female gang members were more likely to (a) live in neighborhoods with gang presence, (b) live in urban neighborhoods, (c) have family/peer gang members, (d) receive government aid, and (e) have lower levels of academic performance when compared to their non-gang counterparts. The findings from this study support a broad literature that has found empirical support for Cohen's subculture of delinquency theory (Ardelt and Day, 2002; Lauritsen, 1993; Nihart et al., 2005; Reiss and Rhodes, 1963; Rowe and Farrington, 1997; Warr, 2002). Contrary to arguments that gender-specific criminological theories are needed to explain female gangs and delinquency, the findings presented here support the application of Cohen's traditional theory to female youth gangs.

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